



<b>POLICY TITLE</b>	Niagara Benchlands Destination Development Fund Grant		
<b>CATEGORY</b>	Financial		
<b>POLICY NUMBER</b>	A09 FIN 002 AD		
<b>DEPARTMENT</b>	Administration		
<b>POLICY AUTHOR</b>	Director of Economic Development and Communications		
<b>POLICY TYPE</b>	Corporate Policy		
<b>APPROVED BY</b>	Council		
<b>EFFECTIVE DATE</b>	MAY 30, 2022	<b>REVIEW DATE</b>	MAY 30, 2027

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### **POLICY STATEMENT**

The policy supports six (6) guiding principles outlined in the Lincoln’s Tourism Strategy and Action Plan (2020-2025):

- Maintain character of place: Focus on tourism that sustains/enhances the geographical character of a place—its environment, culture, aesthetics, heritage, and the well-being of its residents.
- Collaboration: Facilitate and enable full collaboration among all Lincoln and area tourism stakeholders in the private, public, non-government organization (NGO), and not-for-profit sectors.
- Yield over numbers: Focus on the desired type and quality of visitors and visitor yield rather than pursuing mass tourism. The opportunity is to attract new visitors from growing markets and stimulate repeat visitation.
- Accountability: Measuring, reporting, and modifying products and visitor experience to achieve economic benefits. Make sure that all actions are measured and there is accountability for the resources used.
- Grow experiential tourism: The opportunity in a destination like Lincoln with significant market-ready products/services is to develop and market the experiences that will differentiate the destination. Creative visitor experience development can help to spread visitation year-round.
- Sustainable tourism: Safeguard the natural resources and the unique agrarian landscape and communities/lifestyle through visitor experiences that do no harm, and where possible, contribute to the regeneration of damaged resources.



## **POLICY PURPOSE**

The purpose of the Niagara Benchlands Destination Development Fund Grant Policy is to assist the Town of Lincoln in growing awareness of the Niagara Benchlands tourism destination while increasing opportunities for sustainable economic growth, job creation, as well as continued economic prosperity in Lincoln's tourism sector.

By supporting Lincoln's tourism-based businesses and organizations with financial aid, encouraging greater collaboration amongst private-sector businesses, and utilizing Town-owned marketing and promotional channels; the policy ensures that municipal funds are disbursed in meaningful, equitable, and measurable ways.

The Niagara Benchlands Destination Development Fund Grant Policy provides a framework to evaluate and consider applications against the goals and objectives of the municipality. The policy establishes eligibility requirements and outlines application and reporting requirements.

## **LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY**

There are no related authorities.

## **POLICY SCOPE & EXEMPTIONS**

This policy applies to new and expansion-driven projects in both the short and long term, encouraging local businesses and tourism operators to collaborate and foster innovative, capacity-building tourism products and events that have a measurable impact on Lincoln's tourism economy.

## **POLICY ADMINISTRATION**

### **1. Roles and Responsibilities**

The Economic Development Department is responsible for administering the Niagara Benchlands Destination Development Fund Grant Policy and application.

Applications will be reviewed and evaluated by an Evaluation Committee using an evaluation matrix to ensure a fair and equitable adjudication process.

The Evaluation Committee will be comprised of the following key personnel:



- Two (2) representatives from the Town Council, Chair and Vice-Chair of Economic Development and Planning
- One (1) representative from the local DMO
- Two (2) Town Staff from Economic Development (Director of Economic Development and Communications, and Tourism Coordinator)
- One (1) Town Staff from Community Services
- One (1) Town Staff from Legislative Services

The Evaluation Committee will perform a detailed review and provide Council with recommendations for approval. Council will approve the release of funding up to the amount included annual operating budget. Funding award decisions of the Council are final and will not be subject to appeal.

## 2. Funding

The 2022 Niagara Benchlands Destination Development Fund has an annual allocation of \$25,0000.

Tourism-based businesses and organizations located in the Town of Lincoln must be able to provide a minimum financial contribution in the value of 50% of the proposed project's total operating budget. For example, if the total operating budget for the project is \$3000, the applicant must prove a minimum financial contribution of \$1500 to be eligible to receive funds.

Funding awarded to local businesses could be up to, 100% of the application ask, or a portion thereof.

It is understood that there are limited funds that Council allocates and not every project can be funded.

## 3. Project Eligibility

The following categories have been established for accessing the funds:

- The project must support new tourism events or festivals, or the expansion of existing programming.
- The project must foster the development of new tourism products, such as a Winterlicious culinary activation, or a culinary/beverage taste trail, for example.
- The project must support feasibility studies and business plans that investigate the potential for the development of increased visitation and



visitor spending, for example, Bed and Breakfasts coming together to form an association to help advance their interests here in Lincoln.

Priority consideration will be given to projects that demonstrate:

- The greatest cross-sector collaboration amongst other tourism-based businesses, organizations, and key suppliers in the Town of Lincoln's tourism ecosystem.
- Are led by a business/organization of strategic importance to the tourism sector in the Town of Lincoln.
- A measurable contribution to Lincoln's tourism economy.
- A solid rationale for the project's capacity to draw external visitors and create opportunities for increased visitor spending or overnight stays.
- Job creation in Lincoln, particularly in the areas of tourism, culture, and value-added agriculture.
- A need for financial assistance.
- Potential for wider media exposure for the Niagara Benchlands, including locally, nationally, and internationally.
- A strong accessibility and inclusivity plan, that supports underrepresented groups such as:
  - Women
  - Indigenous Peoples
  - Members of Official Language Minority Communities
  - Age-Friendly Communities
  - Persons with Disabilities
  - Racialized Communities
  - LGBTQ2+

The goal would be to support as many applicants as possible. While a project could satiate all program criteria and eligibility requirements; applications that show the greatest amount of sector collaboration and greatest alignment with the overarching goals of the Fund will be considered for award.

#### 4. Niagara Benchlands Destination Development Fund Grant Application

The Niagara Benchlands Destination Development Fund Grant Application will be available annually in the Spring.

Eligible tourism-based businesses and organizations in Lincoln will have 30-days following the initial fund announcement to review, complete and submit an application. Incomplete or late applications will not be accepted. Following the close of the application window, completed applications with projects that are



deemed eligible will be forwarded to the review and evaluation committee to prepare final recommendations for award to bring before Council at a later date.

## **POLICY COMMUNICATION**

The Niagara Benchlands Destination Development Fund Grant Application policy will be posted on the Town of Lincoln's website.

Annually, the Niagara Benchlands Destination Development Fund Grant application window will be advertised to local tourism-based businesses and organizations using both the Town as well as the Niagara Benchlands website, social media, and e-mail marketing channels.

## **DEFINITIONS**

"Local business/organization" means any company that provides goods or services to consumers with a defined geographical location within Lincoln. This includes: Jordan, Jordan Station, Vineland, Vineland Station, Beamsville, Rockway, Campden, and Tintern

"Tourism-based business/organizations" means a business or organization whose primary business operation supports Lincoln's diverse tourism economic value chain.

### **Lincoln's Tourism Economic Value Chain**

- 1.) Accommodations
- 2.) Culinary
- 3.) Farms & Farm Markets
- 4.) Outdoor Adventure/Eco-Tourism
- 5.) Retail and Shopping
- 6.) Tours and Attractions
- 7.) Arts, Culture, and Heritage
- 8.) Wine
- 9.) Beer
- 10.) Sprints



## **RELATED PROCEDURES**

There are no related procedures.

## **REVISION HISTORY**

- May 30, 2022 – New Policy; Council Resolution RC-2022-76; Report AD-10-22 to Committee of the Whole on May 11, 2022