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## Program Description

The focus of this program is to invest in projects that will have the greatest impact on tourism revenues by enhancing visitor information services in Nova Scotia.

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### Introduction and Background

In 2003 the Visitor Information Services (VIS) Strategy was released containing recommendations designed to enhance the quality and level of information services, resulting in increased expenditures by visitors. This Strategy is a key part of the building process as the industry strives toward its goals. The goal of this Strategy is to drive incremental tourism receipts through the implementation of a comprehensive visitor information service strategy that is market-driven, proactive, year-round and capable of providing efficient and effective assistance to our visitors/customers.

This investment program will assist in advancing key priorities identified within this strategy - including the development of sustainable visitor servicing programs. This will be achieved through the implementation of the Department's Visitor Information Kiosk Program.

**Visitor Information Kiosk Development:** Supports the implementation of the Department's recently released series of "How-to" Visitor Information Kiosk kits ([http://www.gov.ns.ca/tch/tda\\_visitor\\_kiosk.asp](http://www.gov.ns.ca/tch/tda_visitor_kiosk.asp)). Supporting the development of sustainable visitor servicing programs is a key priority of the VIS strategy. The successful development of these kiosks will provide visitors with effective, year-round information and services 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

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### Investing in Tourism

In order to achieve the goals of the VIS strategy, Nova Scotia's Tourism stakeholders need to raise the bar on every aspect of Tourism. New thinking and new investments are critical to achieving the "real" growth in our industry. **The Visitor Information Services Enhancement Program** is designed to support the enhancement of quality visitor information services that build on our competitive ability to meet and exceed visitors' needs and expectations.

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### Objective

To support the development of Visitor Information Kiosks through the utilization of the department's series of Visitor Kiosk "How-to" kits. This initiative supports the VIS Strategy's priorities through the development of sustainable visitor servicing programs.

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## **Eligible Projects**

Priorities for funding will be directed to projects that enhance visitor servicing in Nova Scotia through the development of visitor information kiosks that demonstrate a potential impact on tourism revenues.

The kiosk design, fabrication and installation will be based on the recently released series of ‘How-To’ kits, which were developed to assist groups implement information kiosks within their community. Three kits exist, each representing a different size kiosk designed to provide visitors with varying levels of information. The kiosks will compliment existing community visitor information centres by providing visitors access to information when these traditional information providers are not open. The Kiosks will also extend visitor services to communities that do not currently have a visitor information centre. Each kit provides detailed construction plans, a materials list and step by step instructions for construction. The guides will provide individuals and/or groups with little or no design/construction experience, with the tools and instructions to successfully develop a visitor information kiosk for their community. Downloadable pdf versions of these kits are available by visiting [http://www.gov.ns.ca/tch/tda\\_visitor\\_kiosk.asp](http://www.gov.ns.ca/tch/tda_visitor_kiosk.asp).

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## **Eligibility**

Eligible applicants for this program include:

Non-commercial / not-for-profit organizations, (e.g., local development associations, industry associations), municipalities, boards of trade, chambers of commerce, or other entities undertaking not-for-profit initiatives.

**All projects must be endorsed by the appropriate regional tourism industry association.**

Funding will be considered in assisting with the following eligible costs:

**Eligible costs include:** Capital costs (e.g., materials, labour) and interpretive sign/panel design and fabrication.

**Ineligible costs include:** Land acquisition, purchase of equipment for project construction, construction design plans, ongoing maintenance costs, administration and project management.

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## **Level of Investment**

Decisions for investment are based on several criteria including local, regional, and provincial development plans. The VIS Enhancement Program will consider up to a maximum of 50% of

eligible costs with the balance coming from the applicant and other potential sources. The total government (federal and provincial) investment should not exceed 80% of the total project cost. Applicants are expected to secure at least 20% of total eligible costs. The 20% applicant contribution can be comprised of cash and in-kind contributions from local fund-raising initiatives, municipal contributions, and other community organizations. No more than half (50%) of the applicant's contribution should be in-kind. Please note that the in-kind contributions will be considered only to offset measurable, incremental costs that are necessary to make the project possible.

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### **Application Process & Expenditure Deadline**

1. Discuss your project with your regional tourism industry association (RTIA), and municipality to ensure it is compatible with regional strategic tourism efforts.
2. Contact Department staff to discuss your project.
3. Based on feedback from staff, complete the application form as per the attached guidelines and submit to the Department of Tourism, Culture and Heritage for formal review and evaluation.

Application deadline for submission under this program is **August 31, 2009**.

**Project expenditures must take place before March 31, 2010.**

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### **Criteria and Evaluation**

Only those projects which demonstrate their ability to achieve the strategic priorities of the annual Tourism Plan and the VIS strategy will be considered. As this is a competitive process, projects are scored based on their abilities to meet the criteria outlined in the application. A minimum score of 70% is required to receive funding under this program. Proposals must demonstrate that the project is financially do-able (including leveraging of funding) as well as the ability to yield desired revenues and return on investment.