

Frequently Asked Questions

Accreditation
Program



THE
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What is the difference between being an accredited business and being a member of ITAC?

Being a member of the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada is joining a community of like-minded businesses who support each other through product development, marketing, grant opportunities and thought leadership. In other words, ITAC helps support the internal workings of your business.

Becoming an accredited The Original Original business demonstrates that you are a business that offers an authentic, high- quality product that meets an ISO certified standard and makes you eligible to use an external branded mark of excellence that communicates this to travelers. It also provides special access to additional resources and support from ITAC.

What are the benefits of being accredited by the program?

Once accredited, a business can promote themselves as The Original Original and use the mark to demonstrate that they meet all the requirements of a Market Ready authentic indigenous owned business.

As part of The Original Original, businesses will be given preference in select marketing campaigns and initiatives and have special access to other resources and support from ITAC.

Some of the benefits that you will receive as an accredited Original Original are:

- *Every listing accredited will have The Original Original icon on ITAC's Destination Indigenous listing*
- *The Original Original accredited businesses will receive preferential treatment in sales and promotion campaigns such as Itineraries, magazines, website listings, media and sales newsletters/media communiques, SEO - CRM - Website*
- *Special pricing for future ITAC events*
- *Opportunity to be featured in program promotional material, including video, at major events such as the International Indigenous Tourism Conference*
- *Exclusive access to select development and marketing initiatives*

What does it mean to be ‘Market Ready’ under the accreditation?

Being Market Ready under the accreditation means that you meet all the required standards of business excellence within the tourism industry and are ready to provide a quality product to visitors.

As a tourism business you can qualify under three Market Ready categories. Each category is equally significant and is designed to indicate which market you are best positioned to serve, they are as follows:

Business Ready

Business Ready enables new start-ups, entrepreneurs and others just entering the market to get recognized for meeting good business practices. Most businesses in this category tend to focus on local markets.

(Indigenous Tourism Businesses will be officially recognized as Business Ready by demonstrating they have a minimum of 30 business features out of a possible 39 on the application form. To reach this goal, businesses must demonstrate they have the required 17 features (marked with) and any other features, for a minimum of 30 in total.)

Visitor Ready

Visitor Ready is for tourism businesses that are seeking to attract visitors beyond local markets. These businesses may be expanding and increasing their capacity such as serving larger groups or extending their operational season. Generally, these businesses are mature, and have operated for a minimum of 2 or 3 years. They have well-established operational policies and procedures that enable the business to grow and manage more risk.

(Indigenous Tourism Businesses that will be officially recognized as Visitor Ready must first meet the requirements as Business Ready, and by demonstrating they have a minimum of 22 additional business features out of a possible 28 on the application form. To reach this goal, businesses must demonstrate they have the required 12 features (marked with) and any other features, for a minimum of 22 in total.)

Export Ready

Export Ready businesses are focused on international visitor markets and have the added capacity to manage specialized travel trade services for visitors from a broad range of culturally diverse markets. Export Ready businesses are part of a larger travel trade ecosystem. To be successful, most rely on business relationships with tour operators, destination marketing organizations, and various travel distribution channels.

(Indigenous Tourism Businesses that will be officially recognized as Export Ready must first meet the requirements as Visitor Ready, and by demonstrating they have a minimum of 6 additional business features out of a possible 8. To reach this goal, businesses must demonstrate they have the required 4 features (marked with) and any other features, for a minimum of 6 in total.)

Can I use The Original Original logo without going through the accreditation program?

ITAC is currently in the process of transferring businesses that are currently identified as “Export Ready” and are members with our marketing upgrade package to The Original Original program. These businesses, who previously met the export ready criteria set by ITAC, will not have to complete an application to be considered accredited and to use The Original Original logo but instead will sign an application waiver and a license agreement which will enable the business to use the logo for the next two years. At the end of the license term, the business will then need to renew their accreditation and agreement just like any other business.

If you are not a current export ready business registered with ITAC you must complete the accreditation process to be eligible to use The Original Original mark.

What happens if I see someone misusing The Original Original logo/brand?

Misusing The Original Original brand is a break of our brand usage guidelines and should be brought to ITAC’s attention as soon as possible. Misuse of the logo puts the success of this accreditation and brand reputation at risk, and we want to ensure that each business who has earned this accreditation remains proud of their accomplishment.

If you are suspect of misuse of the brand, please contact our program administrator. They will follow up with an investigation and address the situation accordingly.

PROGRAM ADMINISTRATOR

Subject Line: Misuse of The Original Original
Samantha Bradley, Provincial and Territorial Engagement Manager
Samantha@IndigenousTourism.ca

How long does it take to complete the application?

In reality - that is up to you! The application was designed to be comprehensive, but it was also designed to be as streamlined as possible. It could take between 1.5 hours to 5 hours depending on how much information you provide. Please keep in mind that the more detailed information provided upfront means less followup during the assessment process.

In the policy we have outlined that an applicant has 1 year to fully complete and submit an application. If there is a pending application that has not been active for 6 months, then ITAC has the right to delete the application from the online program.

When will I know if I am accredited?

Once you have submitted an application you will receive notification from ITAC within 30-40 days on whether your application has met the requirements. You will receive an email outlining the next steps should you qualify for The Original Original.

If you have not met the requirements for the accreditation, you will be contacted by our Business Support Coordinator who will support you in the areas that were found to be insufficient. ITAC has many resources and programs that are designed to help you in meeting the requirements of the Accreditation Program. If your application is denied you will receive an email stating this outcome. Upon denial, and if you are an eligible business (i.e., majority Indigenous owned) ITAC will continue to work with you to analyze the gaps you have within your market readiness and provide resources that can address those gaps and lead to successful accreditation, and successful business practices.

Can I complete the application on paper and mail it in?

We do require all applicants to submit online. We can make exceptions for those with limited internet and computer access. Please call us at 250-617-9788.

How is my application being assessed?

Once an application is finalized on our digital platform, it will be assessed by a minimum of two separate reviewers. If there are questions during the review process, a business will be contacted and asked to provide additional information. The Original Original Policy document outlines in detail how applications are assessed. You can find the policy link on our corporate page, located **here**.

Is there a cost to apply?

There will be a fee associated with applying to the program in the future, but because of extra government support to implement the program, **we are able to offer application and accreditation to businesses free of charge at this time.**

How do I get more support for my business to reach higher levels of accreditation?

ITAC is in the process of hiring additional resources to ensure that we have the support needed for businesses to successfully apply to the accreditation program. This resource will also work with businesses to address the gaps identified within the program to help reach a higher category. ITAC currently has funding to create programs to address these gaps and will be releasing more information about this in the future.

Help! I accidentally closed my application half way through? Can I retrieve it?

Yes, the program automatically saves your application, which means that you can close and re-log in at your convenience. We can also open your application for revisions once you have submitted.

Working Through the Online Inside Program

What is the difference between the self-assessment checklist and the application?

We provide applicants with the opportunity to complete a self-assessment to determine which Market Ready category they should apply to using our online platform. **The results of the self-assessment are only used to help guide the application process, whereas the application answers and all relevant supporting documentation will be accessed by ITAC reviewers and used to determine eligibility for accreditation.**

I am an Export Ready business but the assessment says I fall under Visitor Ready? What does this mean?

The Original Original Accreditation Program follows a very high standard for business readiness, and falls under an ISO standard. This means that **some of the required criteria for accreditation may not be incorporated into our membership standards yet.** ITAC is committed to working with you to ensure that you are accredited under the Market Ready level you desire. If you feel that you are Export Ready and that there is a discrepancy you can reach out to our Administrator for further assistance and clarification.

PROGRAM ADMINISTRATOR

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