

Posted: July 15, 2026

Project Specialist (Independent Contractor) - Eastern Ontario Rail Trail Loop (EORTL)

Location: Ontario's Highlands Region (Remote, plus travel within region required)

Contract Term: September 1, 2026 – March 31, 2027 (potential 1-year recurring extension)

Position Overview

[Ontario's Highlands Tourism Organization](#) (OHTO), in collaboration with the [Eastern Ontario Rail Trail Loop \(EORTL\)](#) Project Partnership, is seeking an experienced and highly collaborative Project Specialist (Independent Contractor) to lead the coordination and implementation of the EORTL tourism product and destination development initiative.

This role will assume key project coordination responsibilities currently led by OHTO, supporting a multi-partner initiative focused on developing a 320-kilometre, export-ready signature cycling experience by 2030.

The Project Specialist will play a critical leadership role in advancing the EORTL 5-Year Roadmap, aligning partner investments and priorities, and establishing a sustainable model for partnership growth and project delivery.

The Project Specialist will report to the Director of Industry Development, Ontario's Highlands Tourism Organization (OHTO), and to the Eastern Ontario Rail Trail Loop Project Partnership (collectively). This role operates within a shared governance model, requiring close collaboration with municipal, regional, and industry partners.

Why this role matters

This role is central to transitioning the EORTL from planning to execution and supports the Partnership's 2030 vision to achieve ongoing coordinated sustainable investment, growing the partnership, and positioning the Loop as one of Canada's premier cycling tourism experiences.

Key objectives

- Coordinate and deliver the EORTL Partnership Workplan (2026–2027)
- Advance implementation of the EORTL 5-Year Roadmap, Community Engagement Plan, and Marketing & Communications Needs Assessment
- Strengthen the partnership through active recruitment of new municipal partners
- Establish a sustainable, partner-funded project delivery model
- Increase visibility and positioning of the Loop through funding, recognition, and awards

Responsibilities & Deliverables

1. Partnership Workplan & Budget Development

- Lead the development of the annual EORTL Partnership Workplan in collaboration with Project Partners
- Consolidate partner-identified priorities into a clear, aligned, and actionable plan
- Develop and manage the annual project budget, based on the confirmed partner financial contributions, available funding sources and carry-over funds, and the strategic priorities from the EORTL 5-Year Roadmap
- Ensure alignment between budget allocation and approved project activities

2. Project Coordination & Implementation

- Coordinate the implementation of the Partnership Workplan across all partners
- Support Project Partners with monitoring progress and reporting on their annual Workplans, as outlined in their annual MOU
- Maintain alignment with approved scope, governance, and funding requirements

3. Partner Engagement, Recruitment & Governance

- Act as the central coordination point for all Project Partners
- Facilitate regular meetings, communications, and decision-making processes
- Support partners in identifying and implementing local action items
- Identify and recruit new municipal and regional partners, including lower-tier municipalities and trail-adjacent communities, and stakeholders identified as Primary and Secondary hubs along the Loop
- Support annual renewal of partnership agreements (MOUs)

4. Vendor & Contractor Coordination

- Act as a liaison with external vendors and contractors, as contracted by OHTO and Project Partners
- Support procurement processes and ensure cost-effective delivery of services
- Monitor deliverables and performance of third-party resources

5. Funding, Grants & Awards Strategy

- Support and coordinate grant and funding applications in collaboration with OHTO and partners
- Identify and pursue new funding opportunities aligned with project priorities
- Develop supporting materials and data to strengthen applications

- Identify and pursue relevant award programs (regional, provincial, national) to elevate the profile of the EORTL
- Coordinate nomination submissions and supporting documentation

6. Communications

- Coordinate internal communications across Project Partners
- Support presentations, stakeholder engagement, and speaking opportunities
- Ensure all communications align with EORTL and/or OHTO brand standards and approval processes
- Contribute to increased awareness and engagement with the Loop

7. Performance tracking & reporting

- Track progress against Workplan deliverables and budget
- Provide regular progress updates to OHTO and Project Partners
- Support development of the Year-End Partnership Report and financial reconciliation
- Identify risks and implement mitigation strategies

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

The Project Specialist will be evaluated against the following performance indicators as part of the contract renewal process, should ongoing funding for the position be available:

Partnership Growth & Engagement

- Number of new municipal or regional partners recruited into the partnership
- Retention and renewal rate of existing partners (annual MOU participation)
- Level of partner engagement (meeting participation, action item completion)

Workplan & Project Delivery

- Timely development and approval of the annual Partnership Workplan and budget
- Percentage of Workplan initiatives successfully implemented
- Progress against 5-Year Roadmap priorities

Financial Management

- Alignment of project expenditures with approved budget
- Success in leveraging partner contributions and additional funding
- Value of external funding secured through grants or partnerships

Funding, Grants & Recognition

- Number and value of grant applications submitted and secured
- Number of award nominations submitted and recognitions achieved
- Increased visibility and credibility of the EORTL initiative

Reporting & Accountability

- Timeliness and quality of progress and year-end reporting
- Accuracy of financial tracking and reconciliation
- Demonstrated ability to identify and resolve project risks

Qualifications & Experience

- Proven experience in multi-stakeholder project management and/or partnership or consortium-led initiatives
- Experience in cycling tourism, trail development, or destination product development
- Strong facilitation and relationship management skills
- Experience managing complex, multi-jurisdictional projects
- Demonstrated ability to manage budgets, workplans, and reporting
- Grant writing and funding program experience
- Familiarity with Ontario municipal structures

Contract Terms

- Contract term: September 1, 2026 – March 31, 2027 with possible option to renew
- Contract extension is contingent on:
 - Contractor performance review and ability to meet KPIs
 - Approval of annual financial contribution from the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Gaming (April 1, 2027)
 - Available financial contributions from project partners

Application Process

Interested candidates should submit a brief proposal that includes:

- experience executing similar projects
- familiarity with the region and the EORTL project
- compensation expectations, including hourly rate

Proposals may be submitted to theloop@ohto.ca. Only successful candidates will be contacted for an interview.

Ontario's Highlands Tourism Organization is an equal-opportunity employer. We encourage applications from individuals of all backgrounds and experiences. We thank all applicants for their interest in the position.

Application Deadline: Friday, August 7, 2026 at 4:00 PM EST.