

Frequently Asked Questions – Watershed Security Fund Grants Program

Last updated: June 19, 2024

1. Who is eligible for funding?

Eligible Organizations for WSF grant funding include Indigenous or non-Indigenous:

- Registered Non-profits
- Educational Institutions
- Social Enterprises (C3)

Or

- First Nations (including First Nation governments, Tribal Councils and others)
- Local/Regional Governments

Eligibility is not restricted to Canada Revenue Agency registered charities or qualified donees. In addition to those listed above, some other types of organizations may be eligible.

2. Can an organization make more than one application per intake?

Generally, organizations are eligible to make one application for one project per intake.

For this first intake and with such a small grants budget this first year, we are generally trying to manage the volume of applications while enabling a diversity of organizations, projects and communities to put forward applications and have access to funding.

For Tribal organizations and other larger multi-community/regional or province wide organizations - who may be leading, coordinating or providing administrative housing for a number of entities or project teams working on different projects in different communities - there may be flexibility in this regard. Some questions may be best discussed through a conversation with program staff or other follow up. Our preference would be for applications to come from community connected organizations themselves, however, if that organization prefers to have an umbrella entity make an application on their behalf to reduce their administrative burden or for other reasons, they are eligible to do so. We'll be looking for a clear indication that the project is community led and driven and that funding provided through the grant is serving and resourcing local capacity and staff.

We appreciate everyone's understanding as we consider the many important roles that different types of organizations play in watershed work.

3. I work for a faculty department at a university and my colleagues and I are interested in submitting a proposal. Is only one proposal allowed per institution?

When considering applications that involve universities, our preference and priority would be for those applications to come from a community connected organization themselves, with the university entity as a partner which could be funded through a portion of the grant. This approach aligns with our principal to support community connected and community driven work (see assessment criteria) and it reduces the likelihood of multiple applications coming from one university. If a community organization that is partnering with a university entity prefers the university entity to make the application on the community's behalf to reduce their administrative burden or for other reasons, universities are eligible organizations, but we will be looking for a very strong sense of partnership and indication of that from the community partner itself when assessing applications.

For universities with different faculties, departments or institutes that may be involved in several different watershed projects, we could receive applications from more than one, if they are for different projects/communities, but we'll be looking for that strong community connection noted above when reviewing and prioritizing applications.

We might not be aware of proposals submitted by other faculties at our university.

We hope that organizations working on similar types of projects within a university will seek ways to coordinate and collaborate. For this first intake and with such a small grants budget this first year, we are generally trying to manage the volume of applications while enabling a diversity of organizations, projects and communities to put forward applications and have access to funding.

4. Once you have received a grant, can you apply for another grant?

We are still working through some of these scenarios with our Grants Working Group, but we imagine that organizations who receive a WSF grant could be eligible to apply for another grant in future years when existing funded work is nearing completion or complete, contingent on the strength and success of their project, and our goals to fund a diversity of organizations at various stages and the other assessment lenses we're weighing. Funding the same organization twice in the same year would be very unlikely at this stage, with such a small initial grants budget.

We are taking a developmental approach, so - for example - a funded project in Stream 1 (Headwaters, grants up to \$50k) may be supporting readiness building for a next stage project which could be eligible for funding at higher levels in future years, subject to the strength of their next application (i.e. prior funding at a lower level is not a guarantee of a subsequent grant). Organizations who already have plans, partners and a foundation of readiness in place, may choose to apply in Stream 2 (Creek, grants up to \$150k) or Stream 3 (River, grants up to \$500k) and are not required to have had a prior Stream 1 grant to be eligible.

Priorities and eligibility guidelines for future years will continue to be developed as we learn from this first year and as the longer-term strategic direction for the Fund is co-developed. REFBC and FNFC – with the First Nations Water Caucus – are providing interim stewardship of the Fund and a co-governed entity will oversee and manage the Fund in the long term.

5. If an organization makes an application, can they also be involved as a partner in an application made by another organization? For example, if a First Nation makes an application, can they also be involved as a funded partner in an application for another project made by another organization?

As a partner, you can be involved in another application/project. We also hope that organizations working on similar types of projects will seek ways to collaborate and coordinate efforts.

6. Our organization cannot provide letters of support quickly, although we have strong relationships with First Nations. Can we submit the letters of support after submitting the application?

If you've indicated you are working in partnership with a First Nation, we'll be looking for meaningful evidence of that to accompany your application. We understand there are challenges and constraints in getting letters of support from busy partners. If your project involves partnerships and relationships with First Nations, there should be a number of other meaningful ways to demonstrate that (e.g. MOU, emails, evidence of shared involvement in events and other related projects), which don't burden Nations who are often fielding many such requests. After you submit your application, if you also want to provide a letter of support and just need a little more time, we can receive letters of support during our review process (e.g. in July for the June intake). Letters of support can be in email or letter format. Copies of letters or emails addressed to other funders can also be provided. Please provide letters or copies of emails in pdf format.

7. What will the reporting structure for WSF be? Will it be after 6 months or a year? Do we need to provide details such as how much of riparian areas were restored or how much hydrometric data was collected?

We will typically look for a project update or reporting once a year. We will be working with the Grants Working Group over the next few months to design the reporting and shared learning approach for the grants program, and hope to share more information on this soon. In alignment with our values and principles, we do not want project reporting to be an undue burden for project teams. Listening to, responding to and amplifying the voices and experiences of project teams, and sharing the stories of the work, learnings and outcomes will be the primary goal.

8. For the funding that will be rolled out in October, are we bound by the fiscal year to spend the funds?

You will not be bound by the specific fiscal year to spend the funding. Funded projects do not need to spend their grant funding within a specific fiscal year. Applications can be made for short term or multi-year projects (of up to 3 years).

9. Does this grant program apply to areas across Canada, or are you only accepting applicants from specific watersheds? What about transboundary projects?

This funding is only for BC based projects and initiatives. However, some transboundary work may be eligible if a significant portion is BC based.

10. Is the budget form mandatory to include with the application submission?

The budget form is required for applications in Stream 2 (Creek, up to \$150k) and Stream 3 (River, up to \$500k). Applications in Stream 1 (Headwaters, up to \$50,000) are not required to fill out the budget form; instead, they provide a summary description of budget expenses on the overall application form (section 6).

If you reach out to our Program Coordinator (grants@watershedsecurityfund.ca) well in advance of the deadline, there may be other options, such as submitting a budget form you previously prepared for another funding program, in lieu of our budget template. Please allow plenty of time so we can jointly ensure it provides the information we need to receive and review your budget information.

11. Can I send my application to program staff before I submit it, and will it be possible to give us feedback?

We do not currently have enough staffing to review and provide feedback on applications in advance, but we'd be happy to respond by email or set up a short call with one of our program staff if you have questions you'd like guidance on.

12. If we have more than one potential proposal/application, any advice on how we should choose which one to bring forward?

We suggest you choose whichever project is the strongest fit to your interests, community priorities and level of readiness. You might also want to look at the descriptions of our three funding streams. For example, in Stream 1 (Headwaters, applications up to \$50k), we are very

open to supporting projects or initiatives at early stages of development. For projects seeking higher levels of funding, we'll be looking for projects that are further along in their design, development and degree of collaboration or with a foundation of prior related work to build from. At higher funding levels, we'll look to prioritize projects led by organizations who are generally further along the I4DM continuum towards First Nations Led, Partnered or Informed work. Others may be considered, if there are demonstrated actions to build understanding of relationships with First Nations in B.C., and to address restoration and restitution of watershed damage caused by non Indigenous communities and industries which negatively impact Indigenous rights.

13. How many projects do you expect to fund for each of the funding streams, with such a small budget?

Decisions on how many projects will be funded in each of the streams have not been made and will depend on the mix of applications received. But for illustrative purposes, with this year's grants budget of \$7-10 million we could potentially fund about 50 projects, with a mix of grant sizes (some up to \$50k, some up to \$150k and some up to \$500k). We realize this is not a lot compared to the enormous needs in community and the high costs of restoration work. We hope there will be additional contributions to the fund in the future that enable a larger annual budget for grants.

14. What are the areas where WSF grants are not able to fund?

WSF Grants are not able to fund:

- Activities that primarily provide financial benefits for individuals
- Debt retirement, reserves, mortgage paydowns
- Retroactive expenses (costs incurred prior to funding being approved)
- Purchase of land or large scale development of buildings
- Endowments
- Partisan political activities
- Projects or initiatives that do not take place in what is known as BC.

15. How is the Fund planning to address community needs given the limited initial funding and tight timeline?

It is early days for the Fund, and we are on a tight timeline to respond quickly to community needs, with a modest amount of dollars available initially. We will do our best to bring forward a good program, recognizing that we will continue to build, resource, and adapt it over the coming year and beyond. We hope there will be additional contributions to the fund in the future that enable a larger annual budget for grants.

16. What types of projects will the grant funding support?

In this first year of the program, grant funding will support projects and initiatives that prioritize reconciliation, ecosystems health, climate resilience, and sustainable economies in any of these areas of work:

- *Watershed Collaboration, Planning and Governance*
- *Watershed & Ecosystems Restoration*
- *Nature-based Infrastructure*
- *Watersheds and Food Systems.*
- *Monitoring and Assessment*
- *Land & Water-based Learning, Knowledge Sharing*

We recognize the holistic, interwoven aspects of watershed work and understand that most projects will connect across several areas.

WSF funding is focused on land and freshwater systems with the watershed basins of B.C., and marine projects are not a focus for this funding.

17. How will you prioritize and assess applications?

Advancing UNDRIP is an overarching priority for the Fund and there are a number of ways we'll look to support that in funded projects. We'll also be interested in ways that projects address one or more of these dimensions:

- *Free, Prior, Informed Consent (FPIC)*
- *Regional Equity*
- *Community Connection*
- *Economic Resiliency, Jobs, Training and Mentorship*
- *Diversity of Interests & Collaboration*

More information on our priorities and assessment criteria is available in our program and application guide on our website.

18. Are you prioritizing funding for First Nations? Are non-Indigenous led organizations able to apply for funding?

Our goal is to center First Nations voices, experiences, approaches, and leadership while also making space for resourcing important work of non-Indigenous led initiatives that contribute to holistic, collaborative, shared ways forward for addressing watershed needs.

As the inherent rightsholders of the lands and waters of what is now also known as B.C., who have protected and cared for them for millennia, First Nations must have a central role in this

work if we are to uphold commitments to UNDRIP and achieve transformative change towards healthy, secure watersheds¹. It is also recognized that repairing the harms of 150 years of colonial and settler impacts cannot fall solely on the shoulders of First Nations.

To help us understand applicants' organizational relationship to First Nations, we are using a tool called the I4DM developed by the Circle on Philanthropy. On the application form, we provide a link to information on the matrix and ask project teams to familiarize themselves with it, so they can self identify their relationship to First Nations using the I4DM, or they can let us know if they don't currently have a relationship with First Nations.

Across the three funding streams, at higher levels of funding there will be some prioritization of projects led by organizations who are generally further along the continuum towards First Nations led or partnered work. Right now, we have general guidelines on this for each of our three Funding Streams (see question below), rather than specific funding targets and percentages.

More information on the Circle's I4DM is available at these links: [Circle for Philanthropy I4DM Definitional Matrix](#) and [article](#)

19. Our organization is a non-First Nations led organization and we would like to better understand UNDRIP and how we can build understanding and relationships with First Nations in BC? Do you have any advice or resources?

There are many good resources to support this, and we recommend you start by learning about the Nation(s) in whose territory you are working.

For insights on the relationship between UNDRIP, decolonizing practices and watershed security work, a number of good resources were produced through the Healthy Watersheds Initiative:

- United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People: Heathy Watersheds Initiative Evaluation Framework and Report by Tara Marsden, Naxginkw / Senior Indigenous Advisor- see link: <https://healthywatersheds.ca/news/the-united-nations-declaration-on-the-rights-of-indigenous-peoples/>
- UNDRIP Posters, see link: <https://healthywatersheds.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/UNDRIP-Posters.pdf>
- Decolonizing Watersheds with Nahanee Creative- see link: <https://healthywatersheds.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/HWI-Nahanee-Creative-Final-Report-Feb-15th.pdf> and <https://healthywatersheds.ca/news/learning-and-unlearning-together/>
- **Examples of First Nations and non-First Nations approaches to UNDRIP** are also available on pages 48 - 51 of "Our Water Our Future: Healthy Watersheds Initiative Final

¹ See [Indigenous Watersheds Initiative Interim Impact Report](#)

Outcomes Report” link here: https://healthywatersheds.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/HWL_MajorOutcomesReport.pdf

A webinar recording on “**UNDRIP & You: What does UNDRIP mean for your organization?**” is available through REFBC’s website – link here: <https://refbc.ca/undrip/>

For local governments, there is a resource available through the Climate Caucus on “Aligning Local Climate Action with UNDRIP” – see link: <https://www.climatecaucus.ca/resources/undrip-and-local-climate-action>

20. Who is making decisions on funding?

The Watershed Security Fund Grants Program is fortunate to benefit from the collective wisdom, experience and leadership of a Grants Program Working Group, convened in April 2024 to support and provide direction on the co-development, design and implementation of the Grants Program (see <https://watershedsecurityfund.ca/grants> for a list of members of the Grants Working Group). Watershed Security Fund Grants Program Staff will work with the Grants Program Working Group to collaboratively bring forward recommendations for grants to be confirmed by the Watershed Security Fund Joint Executive.

21. What is the role of the Province of BC in the Watershed Security Fund?

The Province made an initial investment of \$100 million to establish the Fund. As work on the Fund gets underway, the Provincial role will be advisory in nature.

We have received many good questions and are still working hard to compile and respond as best we can. Please check our website for updates to our FAQs. Thank you for your time and interest in our program.

Some helpful links –

WSF Website - <https://watershedsecurityfund.ca/>

Grants Website with access to application and budget forms - <https://watershedsecurityfund.ca/grants/>

Circle for Philanthropy [I4DM Definitional Matrix](#) and [article](#)

Webinar #2 - June 17, 2024, 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM Webinar #2 Registration https://uso2web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_osYBstHgQgijlkn8z7TuA#/registration

Watershed Security Fund General WEBSITE FAQ’S – see link <https://watershedsecurityfund.ca/faq/>