



**Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program  
CleanBC Communities Fund stream**



## **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)**

This document supports the ICIP CleanBC Communities Fund (CCF) [program webpage](#) and [Program Guide](#). Applicants are advised to refer to these resources prior to applying.

### **GENERAL**

**Q: Do you have any tips for preparing to apply to the program?**

**A:** Yes:

- Ensure your project is supported by:
  - Long-term community plan and project is included in the capital plan;
  - Council/Board/Band Council supports the project;
  - Sufficient fund is available to cover your share of the project cost and any cost overruns;
  - Cost estimate is up to date and sufficient contingency is provided;
  - Multiple options are considered prior to deciding on the proposed option for the project;
  - Asset Management Plan is complete and up to date or in the process of updating; and,
- Ensure that a potential project is ready to go:
  - Land is purchased, permits/approvals are in place where possible;
  - Project timeframe aligns with program timelines
- Read the Program Guide and Application Questions to ensure that the project will be eligible and that it will meet the program criteria and outcomes. An application closely aligned with the Program objectives, outcomes, and requirements has better chance of success in receiving the grant.
- Contact Ministry staff in advance with questions.
- Apply for a business BCeID if your organization does not already have access to the Local Government Information System, as applications will be via this system and it can take three weeks to obtain access.

### **WHO CAN APPLY?**

**Q. Can improvement districts apply for funding under the program?**

**A.** Improvement Districts themselves are not eligible to apply. Applications must be made by a sponsoring regional district or municipality. If the application is successful in obtaining program funding, the ownership of the infrastructure and associated assets must be transferred to the sponsoring local government.

**Q: Can I partner with another local government or First Nation to apply for funding under this program?**

**A:** Yes, one eligible ultimate recipient can partner with another eligible recipient to apply for funding. A partnership agreement or MOU should be provided with the application. Another organization is considered a partner when they contribute value to the project (generally funding, either for construction

of the project or for ongoing operations and maintenance). Funding will be awarded to the primary applicant, who would be expected to fulfill the requirements of the Shared Cost Agreement.

## **WHAT PROJECTS ARE ELIGIBLE?**

**Q: In previous programs, projects were not required to meet outcomes. Why does this program require projects to meet outcomes?**

**A:** This program uses a federal outcome-based approach rather than a category-based approach. Projects that meet the specified outcomes as listed in the Program Guide will be eligible for funding. The use of outcomes focuses funding on particular desired results and provides more flexibility around the types of projects able to be applied for under the program.

**Q: The Program Guide identifies that the program is designed to support projects that can be completed within three years. Does this mean that projects that can be completed in a shorter timeframe are ineligible?**

**A:** All projects that can be completed within the timeframe of summer 2023 to March 2027 are eligible, including those that can be completed in a shorter period. We encourage longer projects to apply for a grant for one phase only, as long as that phase independently meets the selected Program outcome, eligibility, and GHG competitiveness.

**Q: Can we award the tender prior to the project being approved for funding?**

**A:** No, a project is deemed ineligible if a tender has been awarded prior to the final project approval.

**Q: Can we submit an application for a project that was unsuccessful under a previous infrastructure grant program?**

**A:** Yes, if the project has good alignment with the program outcomes and criteria. We recommend that you contact Ministry staff to discuss your previous application and areas where improvements can be made prior to re-submission under ICIP. Note that some application questions are different in subsequent intakes of a funding stream.

**Q: Why is a staged approval used, with BC Approval in Principle prior to final federal approval?**

**A:** A staged approval approach allows applicants to apply without having to complete the more extensive federal requirements required only for shortlisted projects.

**Q: What is the federal environmental assessment form?**

**A:** This form has been developed by Infrastructure Canada for applicants to complete to help determine if there are any federal environmental assessment requirements that could apply to the project or a requirement to consult with Indigenous groups. The form will be required after a project application is given Provincial approval in principle and will be required prior to approval by Canada. The form assists in identifying factors that could trigger an assessment only, and applicants are required to ensure that requirements of both federal and provincial environmental assessment processes are met and continue to be met, and that additional approvals and permits are identified and obtained. Applicants are encouraged to provide any supporting information related to the consultation process, with the application.

## POTENTIAL REQUIREMENTS FOR LARGE PROJECTS

### **Q: What is a Value Engineering Assessment?**

**A:** Value Engineering, in this context, is an exercise of project review carried out by experts in Value Methodology and in technical fields relevant to the project. The exercise incorporates functional analysis and resource optimization resulting in identification of the best value, in terms of the overall project and its components, to meet the required outcomes and performance expectations during the life cycle of the infrastructure. The process can lead to innovative ways to meet those needs. This requirement will be applied on a project-specific basis, and applicants are advised to contact program staff before considering undertaking Value Engineering.

## PROJECT COSTS

### **Q. Our project incurred costs before we were approved for ICIP funding. Are these costs considered eligible and can we claim them for reimbursement?**

**A.** Only costs incurred after the final approval date are eligible, except for the costs associated with climate lens assessments, community benefit plans, and Indigenous consultations. Not that if any tenders or contracts are awarded before final grant approval from Infrastructure Canada, the entire project becomes ineligible.

### **Q: Do invoices need to be paid prior to submitting a claim to the Province for reimbursement under the grant?**

**A:** Yes, invoices must be incurred and paid by the applicant prior to reimbursement under the program. The program is claims-based.

### **Q: There are changes or variations to our original, approved project works and/or timelines. Do we have to notify the Province?**

**A:** Yes, the proponents are required to receive approval from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and, in some cases, from Infrastructure Canada for any variation from an approved project. If changes are not pre-approved, costs incurred may not be eligible for reimbursement.

### **Q: We have decided not to proceed with our project as originally outlined. Can we use the program funds for another infrastructure project in our community?**

**A:** The funding is specific to the project, not the community. Please contact program staff to discuss as soon as the decision is made.

### **Q: Are we allowed to plan to use our own staff time to carry out project construction?**

**A:** The use of external contractors to carry out project construction is a preference under the program. However, use of the organization's staff time may be allowed in certain cases where it is not economically feasible to tender a contract and where the employee is engaged directly in respect of the work that would have been the subject of the contract. This 'own-force labour' arrangement must be approved in advance and in writing by the Province and by Canada.

**Q: We are unable to move forward with the project after funding is awarded. Can we be reimbursed for costs incurred prior to the cancellation?**

**A:** No, any cost incurred to the cancelled project will not be reimbursed. Funding requires that projects be completed and meet the outcomes of the program.

**Q: Are the costs incurred for Federal Impact Assessment eligible under this program?**

**A:** Yes, FIA costs incurred after final grant approval are eligible for reimbursement. Please consider the potential expenses involved in preparing a while preparing the project cost estimate.

**Q: Are costs incurred for Climate Lens Assessments, Community Employment Benefits plans, and Value Engineering eligible under this program?**

**A:** Yes, these costs are eligible where a project is successful in obtaining funding under the program. Costs associated with Climate Lens Assessments and Community Employment Benefits plans incurred prior to project approval are eligible. The ultimate recipient should plan to meet the incurred costs for these which can be reimbursed through a claim once a Shared Cost Agreement with BC is in place.

**Q: Are costs associated with completing climate lens assessments and community benefit plans able to be reimbursed if the application is not successful in obtaining grant funding?**

**A:** No, only projects that are awarded funding will be able to claim costs for these items.

## **USE OF OTHER FUNDING SOURCES AND BORROWING**

**Q: Can we use funding acquired from other federal grant programs as our contribution to project funding under the program?**

**A:** It cannot be utilized as part of the ultimate recipient contribution to the project. Funding from other federal government programs can contribute to overall project funding, as long as it is not used as part of the applicant financial contribution. Federal government funding is subject to stacking rules, please refer to the Program Guide for information. Utilizing other grant funding has the potential to reduce the grant funding under this program (i.e. it would be counted as federal funds and the grant amount would be reduced accordingly).

When you enter information on other senior government grants within the online application form, the potential impact on funding under this program will be calculated. Note that funding under this program may also have the potential to affect funding under other programs.

**Q: Where can I find out more about the borrowing process for long term borrowing / loan authorization bylaws?**

**A:** More information can be found here: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/local-governments/governance-powers/bylaws/provincial-approval-of-bylaws/loan-authorization-bylaw-requirements>. Refer to the section on Borrowing Process. Bringing the loan authorization bylaw to third reading is the initial step in the process.

**Q: We will need to borrow funds above the local government's assent free borrowing limits to carry out the project. Can I submit the loan authorization bylaw at a later date after submitting the application?**

**A:** The loan authorization bylaw is required to have had its third reading. A copy of the bylaw that has received 3<sup>rd</sup> reading should be submitted upon application to the program. The local government then can choose to proceed with the process of obtaining approval of the bylaw, including Inspector and electoral approval, if required, after they find out whether they have obtained funding under the program, or to proceed with the entire approval process immediately. The Ministry of Municipal Affairs, Local Government Finance branch can provide advice on bylaw wording if needed (Ph: 250-387-4060).

**Q: We are having trouble completing the 3rd reading for a loan authorization bylaw by the intake deadline. What should I do?**

**A:** Please contact program staff for options. Where a delay is justified, a short extension may be granted. The 3<sup>rd</sup> reading will still be required for the project to be assessed and move further in the selection process.

## **HOW DO I APPLY**

**Q: Do I need to answer all of the questions on the application form?**

**A:** Yes. Please note that answering N/A to required questions may affect your project's scoring and ranking in the technical assessment process. There is a need to ensure that projects align with program and senior government priorities, and to gather enough information to assess applications accordingly.

**Q: Why is the content of the application form different than for past infrastructure funding programs?**

**A:** Each funding program has differing objectives and requirements. The questions lead the applicants in providing the appropriate information needed for technical assessment. In addition to program criteria, federal criteria and reporting requires that we capture information upfront where possible, and several questions are associated with these requirements.

**Q: I don't know how to answer one of the questions on the application form. What should I do?**

**A:** Please contact program staff for guidance if you do not know how to answer a question. We can help answer any questions you may have.

**Q: Where can I obtain assistance in completing the application form?**

**A:** Program staff are happy to provide advice and clarify where we can. However, please note that we are a small team. With a large number of potential applicants, we are limited in capacity, so we ask that applicants with questions review the program materials on the website first. This will increase the quality of the conversation and corresponding advice.

**Q: What are some tips for submitting an application with multiple phases?**

**A:** The application should clearly identify the breakdown of the different phases. A detailed break-down for all phases should be included in the Detailed Cost Estimate Template. Contact program staff if you wish to discuss how phasing will affect your application.

## **PROJECT SELECTION**

### **Q: What is the evaluation process for applications under the funding?**

**A:** This is a merit-based program and applications are subject to a comprehensive review and assessment process. Program staff conduct a technical and financial assessment for every project that is eligible under the program and where all required information is submitted as part of the application. The projects are evaluated and ranked on merits of meeting the program objectives and senior government priorities and other requirements outlined in the Program Guide. The assessment includes consideration of project risks and mitigation measures; community need, regional distribution of funding, previous funding, and track record of responsibly completing projects. A list of ranked projects is submitted to the Steering and Oversight Committees and the recommendations are then submitted to Canada for final approval. Our programs are always oversubscribed and not all applications that qualify will receive funding.

Under the CCF stream, the GHG Preliminary Assessment forms the majority of the project's score.

### **Q: How do I create a strong application?**

**A:** A strong application clearly demonstrates that the project is well planned, aligns with program outcomes and goals, and add value while meeting all the program requirements. Ensuring that the project is supported by long term community plan, is included in the capital plan with detailed budget, that appropriate stakeholders have been consulted, and appropriate permits identified, demonstrates that asset management plan is in place for operation and maintenance and asset renewal, and has good alignment with organizational objectives, improves chance of success.

A well written application is clear and concise, with full but succinct answers that directly address the questions. Try not to leave questions unanswered. Ensure that attachments are in a searchable format and appropriate reference to the sections of the attached documents are made in the application. Include supporting documents such as letters of support from health authorities where applicable and from any project partners (or a MOU), documents related to consultation process and environmental assessment, as applicable.

Please contact program staff for assistance if you have trouble answering any application question.

### **Q: I am applying on behalf of a smaller, lower capacity organization. How can we compete with larger local government organizations?**

**A:** A community's size and capacity is given consideration during the technical review process. In recognition that organizations have varying capacity, a provincial lens will also be applied separately from the technical assessment considering factors such as regional distribution / community scale / capacity.

## **SUCCESSFUL PROJECTS**

### **Q: Will an environmental assessment be required?**

**A:** Applicants are expected to determine whether all applicable legislative or regulatory requirements will or have been met, including requirements for federal or provincial environmental assessment. Shortlisted applicants will be required to complete a form from Infrastructure Canada to help determine whether there are any federal environmental assessment requirements, and if there is a requirement to consult with Indigenous Groups. Links to additional information on federal and provincial environmental assessment requirements and processes can be found within the Program Guide.

### **Q: Do I need to retain ownership of infrastructure assets once the project is complete?**

**A:** Yes. There will be a requirement in the Shared Cost Agreement with the Province that ultimate recipients will need to maintain ongoing operations and retain title to and ownership of the asset for at least 5 years following completion of the project. Assets may be transferred to Canada, British Columbia, or a municipality or regional district within this timeframe. There are allowances for shared asset ownership, but please discuss with Program staff prior to applying.