2SLGBTQI+ Entrepreneurship Program

Ecosystem Fund Funding Guidelines

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These Funding Guidelines have been developed to provide information about the 2SLGBTQI+ Ecosystem Fund and to assist in the completion of an application for the Fund. It provides information on how to submit applications, eligibility criteria for prospective applicants, as well as the assessment criteria against which the project application will be assessed.

Before starting your submission, please read this guide fully. If submitted applications do not follow the instructions outlined in this guide, it may lead to the application being ineligible for funding.

➔ **After reading through these guidelines, please be sure to also consult our [Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)](#); for answers to questions that have come up since the Fund has been launched.**

1. Background, overview, objectives

Funded through the Government of Canada by Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada (ISED), the 2SLGBTQI+ Entrepreneurship Program's Ecosystem Fund is an $8.5M funding stream for non-profit organizations that support 2SLGBTQI+ entrepreneurs. It aims to break down barriers to starting, maintaining, and growing a business among Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs) across Canada. This support will target non-profit organizations that work with, and support, 2SLGBTQI+ entrepreneurs to enhance organizational sustainability, in order to drive growth, competitiveness, innovation, and productivity towards broader economic and social benefits.

The Ecosystem Fund will provide funding to non-profit organizations that will help close service gaps and strengthen capacity within the 2SLGBTQI+ entrepreneurship ecosystem in Canada. It will also focus on fostering connections and cultivating networks, mentorship opportunities, and resources/supports for 2SLGBTQI+

entrepreneurs. It will allow non-profit, 2SLGBTQI+ or entrepreneurship focused organizations to develop new services or expand those they already offer.

The 2SLGBTQI+ Ecosystem Fund will contribute to the following overall objectives:

- Increasing program, capacity-building, and skills development opportunities for 2SLGBTQI+ entrepreneurs to start, scale, grow, and maintain a business and/or adjust to new economic realities;
- Growing the capacity of 2SLGBTQI+ and entrepreneurship organizations, particularly in regions where this ecosystem support is limited or non-existent, so that they can better support 2SLGBTQI+ entrepreneurs;
- Increasing the awareness of issues faced by 2SLGBTQI+ entrepreneurs, including gathering data and building knowledge on the 2SLGBTQI+ entrepreneurship landscape, to improve the coordination of supports and close gaps in service for 2SLGBTQI+ entrepreneurs; and
- Fostering a stronger, interconnected community of 2SLGBTQI+ entrepreneurs and ecosystem organizations.

Through the Ecosystem Fund, the project expects to support 2SLGBTQI+ and entrepreneurship focused organizations in growing their capacity to support 2SLGBTQI+ entrepreneurs, particularly in under-served communities. Activities under the Ecosystem Fund will deliver on the following outcomes:

- 2SLGBTQI+ small businesses and entrepreneurs are aware of support and partnership opportunities available to them, and
- 2SLGBTQI+ small businesses and entrepreneurs have access to programs and services to start, scale, maintain, and/or grow their businesses.

The Ecosystem Fund will prioritize projects which provide services to 2SLGBTQI+ entrepreneurs in regions or demographics currently under-served by existing infrastructure. This includes, but is not limited to:

- 2SLGBTQI+ entrepreneurs in rural or remote geographic areas,

- Indigenous 2SLGBTQI+ entrepreneurs,

- Trans and gender diverse entrepreneurs,

- 2SLGBTQI+ entrepreneurs from visible minority groups, and/or

- 2SLGBTQI+ entrepreneurs with disabilities.

More information can be found on the Program's website:

https://cglcc.ca/programs/2slgbtqi-entrepreneurship-program/

2. Eligibility requirements

The following section outlines the eligibility requirements for those organizations that are considering applying to the Ecosystem Fund:

a. Eligible organizations

For an organization to receive funding from the Ecosystem Fund, it must meet the following criteria:

- Be an incorporated non-profit organization or registered charity in Canada, and
- Fall under one of the following categories:
  - o Have an established mandate focused on supporting 2SLGBTQI+ communities, or
  - o Offer programs and services for entrepreneurs, aimed at capacity-building, skills development, and/or networking
  *Priority will be given to organizations that fit both categories or applications that include partnerships between these two types of organizations. Please review the **Partnerships** section below for more details.*

When assessing applications, we will be looking for the following details:

- Applicants, and/or partners, must be able to demonstrate experience and expertise in running entrepreneurial programming, and
- Whether the organization has a strong connection to communities it serves. This may mean representation on the board, leadership team, or staff delivering the project, and/or established advisory groups, relationships, or similar.

Please note:

Applications submitted by non-2SLGBTQI+-led or focused organizations, as the lead applicant, must demonstrate a strong commitment to principles of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion within the organization (e.g. internal policies, existing DEI committee, description of actions taken), as well as one or more of the following:

- A partnership, or existing relationship(s), with 2SLGBTQI+ organizations or community leaders;
- Prior impactful programming, working with 2SLGBTQI+ communities;
- Proven authentic engagement with 2SLGBTQI+ communities (e.g. an advisory group, consultants, letters of support or endorsements from 2SLGBTQI+ communities).

b. Eligible activities

There are two main categories of activities that can be funded through the Ecosystem Fund:

1. Projects that support the learning and development of 2SLGBTQI+ entrepreneurs and strengthen capacity within the 2SLGBTQI+ entrepreneurship ecosystem in Canada.

Examples may include, but are not limited to:

- Capacity building and skills development opportunities (e.g. training and education, strategic business and/or financial planning, networking, matchmaking, mentorship and coaching, and advisory services);
- Projects that help 2SLGBTQI+ entrepreneurs to start, scale, grow, and/or maintain a business;
- Mentoring, creating and providing access to networks, or related supports;
- Access to technology and tools;
- Access to new markets and customers;
- Compilation, development, and delivery of learning materials, policies, procedures, tools, and workshops responsive to the objectives of this initiative;
- Advancing or supporting procurement and supplier diversity efforts;
- Involve innovative business development and deployment supports and/or strategies (e.g. service improvements, and pilot or experimentation approaches);
- Meetings, events, workshops;
- Entrepreneurship awareness programs;
- Other activities that support the objectives of this initiative.

2. Capacity-building activities that will help the organization(s) to better support and service the 2SLGBTQI+ entrepreneurship community.

Examples may include, but are not limited to:

- Hiring of staff;
- Internal governance, strategy, or policy development related to inclusion and improving the organization's ability to serve the 2SLGBTQI+ entrepreneurship community;
- Establishing or strengthening inclusive networks and partnerships that identify and share knowledge and best practices and/or improve coordination of supports for small businesses and entrepreneurs;

- Development and implementation of a Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) framework;
- Activities that foster education and connections;
- DEI education and training for organization staff, as part of larger, ongoing processes;
- Research and scoping activities geared towards developing entrepreneurship programming for 2SLGBTQI+ communities.

All proposed funded activities must also meet the following criteria:

- Funded activities must start on, or after, **April 1, 2024;**
- Activities must be completed by **March 31, 2026**;
- Informed, practical actions have been taken to make the activities as accessible as possible;
- Projects must focus on 2SLGBTQI+ entrepreneurs or 2SLGBTQI+ majority-owned businesses;

c. Eligible costs

Eligible costs under the Ecosystem Fund are those which are reasonable and required to carry out the project activities proposed in the application. Examples of Eligible costs include (but are not limited to):

- Personnel costs (e.g. salaries and benefits) and material used;
- Reasonable capital expenditures directly related to the delivery of the project (e.g. laptops);
- Costs related to marketing, promotion, and communication;
- Costs associated with travel necessary to attain project objectives;

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- Professional fees (e.g. consultants, research, IT, technical expertise, legal, translation, M&E);
- Costs associated with procuring space or equipment necessary to carry out the project, including for workshops, events, and meetings;
- Costs that support the use of tools and products for capacity-building and skills development (e.g. educational licensing, third-party software).

***Applicants are strongly encouraged to earmark a portion of the funds for measurement and evaluation activities.

Indirect administrative costs (overheads) may be up to 15% of the total contribution amount.

d. Ineligibility

Ineligible organizations:

The following entities are **ineligible** to apply as lead applicants for funding from the Ecosystem Fund:

- Individuals (private citizens, entrepreneurs);
- For-profit companies;
- Crown corporations;
- Any other organization that doesn't meet the eligibility criteria.

Ineligible activities:

Ineligible activities under the Ecosystem Fund include (but are not limited to):

- Business-as-usual activities not related to projects funded from the Ecosystem Fund;
- Providing any type of direct funding (e.g., loans/financing/grants) to third-parties;

- Activities that will charge a fee or participation cost to participants;
- Profit-generating activities.

Ineligible costs:

Ineligible costs under the Ecosystem Fund include:

- debts, as well as the refinancing of an existing debt;
- any form of loans, financing, or grants to third parties;
- amortization or depreciation expenses;
- land and building acquisition;
- costs of intangible assets such as goodwill, whether capitalized or expensed;
- consultant costs provided by a consultant who is not at arm's length or has a conflict of Interest with the Recipient;
- honoraria;
- fines or penalties;
- costs related to litigation;
- lobbyist fees;
- fees or payments to any member or officer of the funded organization's, or partners', Board of Directors;
- performance bonuses;
- any project costs that are incurred before the signing of the Contribution Agreement.

3. Funding amounts

Funding will be provided based on the size of the organization and the scope of the project. As part of the application process, organizations will be expected to provide a detailed project description and a budget showing how the funds will be used to

support their project activities and achieve the project objectives. The amount requested should be within one of these three categories:

- **Local (city or town based) organizations and projects:**
    - Funding from $10,000 to $150,000
- **Regional organizations and projects:**
    - Funding from $15,000 to $250,000
- **Provincial or national organizations and projects:**
    - Funding from $20,000 to $400,000

Proposed projects may be as short, or as long, as needed to achieve their objectives and implement their activities. However, all project activities must conclude by **March 31, 2026**, and all project funding must be used by this date.

4. Partnerships

To further strengthen relationships between organizations within the ecosystem, applicants may choose, but are not required, to submit applications in partnership with other organizations.

For example, a 2SLGBTQI+ service organization may choose to partner with an organization that has expertise in entrepreneurial programming to deliver that programming to 2SLGBTQI+ entrepreneurs. However, an application by a partnership should only be submitted by ONE applicant - the lead organization.

Within a partnership, one of the organizations should be a 2SLGBTQI+ service organization or association. The lead applicant organization must meet the eligibility criteria in **Section 2.**

Partnerships may include private sector actors. However, private sector partners will be expected to make a financial or in-kind contribution to the project. Private sector partners are not intended to be beneficiaries of project funding.

Private sector organizations can be engaged in a sub-contracting or procurement relationship. However, in this context, they will not be considered to be functioning as official partners on an application and should not be listed as such.

The lead applicant will be responsible for the submission of the application form, the completion of the project, financial management (including signing of the contribution agreement and managing funds internally with partner organizations), and reporting on results. When developing the application content, both the lead applicant and partner(s)'s experience and expertise may be used to demonstrate the skill set and capacity to meet the required assessment criteria and ensure successful project delivery.

> *For example, in the case of a new partnership formed to apply for this call, Partner A may have experience in delivering programming which targets 2SLGBTQI+ entrepreneurs, while Partner B may have experience in delivering supports to Northern communities. Collectively the partners can demonstrate their ability to serve 2SLGBTQI+ entrepreneurs in Northern communities. The partners can also use their combined experience to demonstrate their capacity to effectively manage and financially administer projects of a similar size and scope.*

If applying as a partnership, the application submission must include a Partnership Agreement for each official project partner. This Agreement should include:

- support statement of why the partner wants to be involved in the project;
- the roles and responsibilities of the partner, as well as the exact services or activities that will be contributed by the partner;

- explanation of why the partner was chosen and the existing relationship (if any) with the lead applicant;

- how the lead applicant and the partner will work together to integrate the project components

- a dispute resolution statement of what partners will do in case a dispute arises;

- any financial or in-kind contributions from the partner; and

- a signature from a signing authority at both the lead applicant and partner organization.

The application form will include a space to identify project partners as well as allow applicants to upload a Partnership Agreement.

5. Timeline

The anticipated timeline, for the major milestones, of the Ecosystem Fund is:

November 27, 2023	Call for Applications Launches
January 31, 2024	Call for Applications Closes
February/March 2024	Review and Selection Process
March/April 2024	Successful applicants notified and Contribution Agreements circulated
April 2024 - onwards	1st tranches of funding sent to recipients and project activities begin
Project end dates will vary, based on the scope of the project and the timeline of activities funded. However, all activities must conclude on, or before, March 31, 2026.	

Depending on the quantity of applications received and the quality of projects that are proposed, some applications may be earmarked to begin the following year, when more funds become available.

6. How to apply

The Call for Applications will open on **November 27, 2023**.

All applications for the Ecosystem Fund must be received no later than **January 31, 2024** at **11:59pm (Pacific Time)**. The application portal will close automatically at that time.

There are three ways that applications can be submitted to the Ecosystem Fund:

I.   Written Application

Written applications can be submitted via CGLCC's online application system, which you can access on the [Ecosystem Fund website](#).

A PDF version of the application form, including an Application Guide, can be downloaded for reference on the [Ecosystem Fund website](#).

II.   Video Application

Video applications must also be submitted via CGLCC's online application system, , which you can access on the [Ecosystem Fund website](#).

Video applications must address and answer the same application questions that are in the written application.

A Video Application Instructions and Tips Sheet can be found on the [Ecosystem Fund website](#).

Other application requirements, listed in 'Additional Documents and Details' section, must still be submitted via the application portal, or other arrangements may be made with your Grant Manager.

III.   Oral Application

If organizations anticipate barriers or difficulties with submitting written or video applications, oral applications are available and can be scheduled with your regional Grant Manager (Contact information in **Section 12**) ahead of the January 31, 2024 deadline.

Oral applications will be recorded (unless requested otherwise), for upload or transcription purposes.

Oral applications will be expected to address and answer the same questions that are in the written application.

An Oral Application Instructions and Tips Sheet can be found on the [Ecosystem Fund website](#).

Additional Documents and Details

Along with one of the application types outlined above, applicants will be asked to submit the following as part of their application package:

If *submitting a written or video application, there will be spaces to upload these documents in the application portal.*

If *submitting an oral application, you will work with your Grant Manager on a timeline to submit these documents before the application deadline.*

- Most recent audited financial statements, signed by the board;
  (if the organization is not required to have audited financial statements, then a Review Engagement may be submitted. If the organization is too small for a Review Engagement, the organization's Balance Sheet or Annual Budget may be submitted instead)
- Incorporation document that shows non-profit status (for the lead applicant);
- Proposed Project Budget – please use the excel template, which includes instructions on how to complete the budget, that can be found on the [Ecosystem Fund website](#) and upload it in the portal.
  Please contact your Grant Manager if you require any support through this process.
- Partnership Agreement(s), if applicable (as described in Section 6 – Partnerships);
- The organizational governance structure of the lead applicant, including a list of Board Members (Names and Titles);

If there are any issues or anticipated difficulties with any of the items or processes listed above, please get in contact with your regional Grant Manager and we will work with you to help you in the completion of your application.

Each organization may only submit one application for funding, per funding cycle. If more than one application is submitted, only the latest one will be reviewed.

For applications submitted in partnership, the preference is for the lead applicant to be the 2SLGBTQI+ service organization, unless they are not incorporated as a non-profit or do not meet the eligibility criteria.

The deadline for application submission is: January 31, 2024 (11:59 am Pacific Time)

It is highly recommended that applications are submitted before the deadline to ensure there are no unforeseen issues at the time of submission. The application portal will close automatically after the deadline.

7. Review Process and Assessment Criteria

Following the application deadline, all applications will be reviewed for eligibility and completeness by CGLCC staff members. All eligible applications will then go through an internal review process and be assessed by multiple CGLCC Grant Managers. Staff will then create a shortlist of applications which will be provided to an external selection committee, made up of sector leaders and experts. The external selection committee will make the final decisions on funding.

Applications will be reviewed and assessed based on the following criteria:

- Meeting the eligibility criteria;
- Demonstrated experience working with and serving 2SLGBTQI+ communities;
- Demonstrated experience supporting entrepreneurs and implementing entrepreneurial programming;
- The project is scoped and planned to a high standard with a demonstrated consideration of logistical requirements and potential risks. This is supported by a realistic and viable timeline;
- Expected project impact(s) and outcomes are clear, meaningful, and well described;
- The application demonstrates a strong understanding of what success looks like and has clear ideas on how to measure it;

- The applicant and project team represent the communities they are serving, or the application demonstrates the applicant(s) have developed strong relationships within those communities;
- The applicant and project team have the experience and expertise to deliver the project;
- The provided budget is realistic and feasible, and clearly shows contributions of all project partners (if applicable);
- If the application is submitted with partners, there is evidence that the partnership is well-intentioned by all parties and the provided Partnership Agreement(s) demonstrate a working relationship based on mutual understanding and experience; and
- 2SLGBTQI+ entrepreneurs or those considering entrepreneurship will clearly benefit from the project.

8. Expected Results and Outcomes

The following are expected outcomes and performance indicators for the Ecosystem Fund:

Outcome	Performance Indicator(s)
Outcome: Small businesses and entrepreneurs, particularly 2SLGBTQI+ small businesses and entrepreneurs, have access to programs and services to start, maintain and grow their businesses	- The total number of 2SLGBTQI+ SMEs supported by the project. - Number of 2SLGBTQI+ SMEs owned and managed by equity deserving groups that have been served by the project (e.g. women, visible minorities, Indigenous persons, youth, persons with disabilities, newcomers). - Percentage of participants satisfied with program services.
2SLGBTQI+ small businesses and entrepreneurs, are aware	Number of individuals reached and/or engaged through promotional activities.

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of supports and partnerships available to them	

Recipients of funding may also be asked to collect business participant information (Business Number, Company legal name; Address; and Company website).

9. Approval, Contribution Agreement, and Reporting

If approved, recipients will be expected to sign a Contribution Agreement, which will include the legally binding responsibilities and obligations of both parties and the terms of funding. Successful projects and funded amounts will be publicly disclosed.

Successful applicants will work with their Grant Manager to develop a reporting timeline, based on the size, scope, and length of their funded project. We understand that reports take up valuable time, so all efforts will be made to minimize the amount of time spent on reporting and Grant Managers will be available to support successful organizations.

Successful applicants will be asked to report on the applicable Ecosystem Fund Performance Indicators and general reporting timelines will include:

- Informal e-mail and phone check-ins with your Grant Manager;
- Progress Reports, including updates on financial expenditures to facilitate subsequent tranches of funding; and
- A final report, due 30 days after the completion of the project.

Funded organizations and projects will play a role in the larger 2SLGBTQI+ Entrepreneurship Program's M&E activities to help inform research for future evidence-based program development and funding decisions. These activities will be

funded and implemented by CGLCC and an M&E consultant and all efforts will be taken to minimize the time that funded organizations will have to put towards these activities.

10. FAQs

For the most up-to-date FAQs, please check our website:

https://cglcc.ca/programs/2slgbtqi-entrepreneurship-program/

11. Resources

The following is a list of resources that may help support a 2SLGBTQI+ organization with their application (this list may be updated as information becomes available):

- List of potential entrepreneurial programming organizations that applicants may consider partnering with:
    - Futurpreneur - https://www.futurpreneur.ca/en/
    - StartUp Canada - https://www.startupcan.ca/
- Gender-based Analysis Plus – an analytical tool used to support the development of responsive and inclusive policies and programs and to assess how different women, men, and gender diverse people may experience policies, programs, and initiatives.

12. Contact Information

Grant Manager – Central and Northern Canada (Nunavut, Manitoba, and Ontario) and national organizations

Janelle Salisbury

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Grant Manager – Western and Northern Canada (Yukon, Northwest Territories, British Columbia, Alberta, and Saskatchewan)

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