

Co-operators Community Funds FAQ's

What are Co-operators Community Funds?

Established in 1995, Co-operators Community Funds support local economic development initiatives across Canada that lead to enhanced employability and job creation for underserved youth (aged 16 – 34) and/or individuals with mental health challenges, helping them build the capacity for economic self-reliance, sustainable livelihoods, and strengthened pathways to employability.

Who is Eligible?

Funding is directed toward employability-focused programming that helps underserved individuals build the capacity for economic self-reliance and sustainable livelihoods. **Please note, at this time, Co-operators Community Funds prioritize projects that lead to enhanced employability and job creation for underserved youth (aged 16 – 34) and / or individuals with mental health challenges. At least one (or both) of these two aforementioned audiences needs to be a primary audience targeted through your programming.**

For illustrative purposes, below are some common characteristics of underserved youth, however please note this is not intended to be an exhaustive list:

- BIPOC youth (Black, Indigenous and People of Colour)
- 2SLGBTQIA+ youth
- Newcomer, immigrant and refugee youth
- Youth experiencing housing instability or homelessness
- Youth experiencing poverty or low household income
- Youth facing mental health challenges
- Youth situated in rural, remote or under-resourced communities
- Youth experiencing discrimination or social exclusion
- Youth coping with substance use or addiction challenges
- Youth with limited access to education or employment opportunities
- Youth in (or transitioning from) care
- Youth with disabilities
- Youth involved with the justice system

For organizations dedicated to supporting individuals with mental health challenges, it is acceptable for program participants to self-identify as having a mental health challenge. It is not necessary for program participants to have a formal, clinical mental health diagnosis.

We recognize the importance of programming that is inclusive and acknowledge there may be instances where a programming cohort includes participants that do not identify as being an

underserved youth or as a person experiencing mental health challenges. However, in order to be well-aligned with our primary target audience, a strong majority (i.e. 75% or greater) of participants supported through the program for which you are applying should correspond with our primary audience focus.

Co-operators Community Funds supports the following types of organizations:

- Registered charities
- Non-profit organizations
- Social enterprises
- Co-operatives

All organizations must be Canadian-based and providing programming/services to Canadian communities.

What type of employability-focused programming is eligible for funding?

Co-operators Community Funds supports a broad array of employability-focused programming.

For illustrative purposes, below are some examples of employability-focused programming, however please note this is not intended to be an exhaustive list:

- Wage-subsidized placements
- Internships
- Skilled trades and construction readiness programs
- Early childhood education readiness programs
- Catering and culinary training
- Woodworking and carpentry training
- Retail sales training
- Bicycle repair training
- Landscaping enterprises
- Digital media training
- Entrepreneurship training
- Mentorship and coaching

Programs that enable participants to earn recognized certificates or licenses that enhance employability. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Trades certification and safety training
- Safe food handling certificate
- Smart serve
- Early childhood assistant certificate
- Machinery license

- Workplace hazardous materials information systems (WHMIS) training
- Standard First Aid/CPR
- Programming that provides participants with individualized assessments and planning, a variety of wraparound supports, and post-program placement retention supports are also very positive attributes.
- Preference will be given to programs that provide a substantial level of in-class and experiential training. As a guideline, programs should offer a minimum of 120 hours of training delivered through meaningful participant engagement. (Please note this is a general guideline. Organizations should structure their program in a way that will best serve the participants and the intended outcomes of the program.)
- Both in-person and virtual training models are eligible. While virtual programming can improve accessibility for participants, programs that incorporate in-person or hybrid components are valued. In-person models are well-regarded for creating collaboration opportunities, relationship-building, and hands-on training.
- While supports related to things like resume writing, interview prep, and job search techniques are important, we view these as fundamental elements for an employability skills program. Organizations that offer these supports in conjunction with broader employability skills training are more likely to stand out.
- Organizations are eligible to apply for funding to pilot or launch a new employability-focused program. In such situations, the organization should be able to demonstrate successful implementation and positive outcomes associated with past programming.
- As a programmatic funder, our priority is to support the direct delivery of employability-focused programming. Organizations whose primary focus is to offer referral services where a partner organization is responsible for program delivery should have the delivering organization submit the funding application.

How can funding be allocated?

Funding may be used to support program related expenses that directly contribute to participant engagement, learning outcomes, and successful program delivery. Below are some examples of funding requests that would be considered:

- Staff/facilitator costs: funding may be allocated toward salary, wage, honoraria or other compensation for staff/facilitators who are directly involved in the delivery of the program.
- Wage stipends for program participants: funding may be allocated to participants to support their participation in programming and training.
- Participant transportation and meals: funding may be used to help reduce participant barriers by providing transportation and/or meal costs. These expenses should represent a small portion of the overall funding request and be directly related to the delivery of the program and participant attendance.
- Participant supplies: funding may be used to support the purchase of materials or supplies required for participants to fully engage in the program. Requests for these items should

demonstrate direct connection to program participation and represent a small portion of the budget.

What types of projects are NOT eligible for funding?

Co-operators Community Funds does not provide financial support for:

- Capital expenditures
- Conferences, workshops, and seminars
- Travel expenses
- Fundraising initiatives
- Deficit reduction
- Retroactive expenses
- Summer camps

How can I submit my application?

Details regarding timing of upcoming application intakes are available on Co-operators Community Funds webpage. When applications are being accepted, organizations are invited to email us at The_Cooperators_Foundation@cooperators.ca to express interest in applying. You will be asked to respond to some brief pre-screen questions so that we can assess initial fit with key criteria (i.e. primary audience focused on underserved youth aged 16 – 34 and / or individuals with mental health challenges; and employability-focused program delivery).

How are applications evaluated?

Applications are assessed through a comprehensive review process that considers both program quality and alignment with the fund's objectives.

Applications are evaluated based on a number of considerations, including:

- Support of community economic development initiatives that lead to job creation and/or enhanced employability of underserved youth (aged 16-34) and/or individuals with mental health challenges.
- Fit with Co-operators values and strategic priorities.
- Capacity-building of underserved individuals, including tangible employability-related skill development and wrap-around supports.
- Evidence of strong community partnerships.
- Leadership and capacity to deliver programming and achieve stated outcomes.
- Innovative approach or testing of models, and capacity to scale or expand programming.
- Outcomes and measures of success clearly outlined.
- Possibility for engagement with Co-operators.
- Sufficient funding confirmed for program delivery.
- Realistic funding request and clear illustration of how funding will be utilized/allocated.
- Demonstrated intent to sustain programming in future.

- Overall strength, clarity, and feasibility of the proposed program.
- Completeness of the application and supporting documentation.

What can I expect during the review process?

Applications undergo a two-stage review process:

Stage 1: Initial Review

- Applications are reviewed by members of Co-operators Sustainability and Citizenship team to assess eligibility, alignment with funding priorities, and overall program fit.

Stage 2: External Consultant Review

- Applicants that advance to the second stage are assigned to an external consultant for a more in-depth assessment. As part of this stage applicants will participate in an interview to discuss their program, intended outcomes, and delivery approach.
- Organizations are encouraged to have a representative(s) who will be directly involved in the planning/delivery of the program be present for the interview.
- Following their review, consultants provide a written summary of each organization to Co-operators Sustainability and Citizenship team, which helps inform our final decision-making process.

Timeline:

- For the application intake that opens mid-October with a mid-January deadline, the application review process begins mid-January, with final funding decisions communicated toward the end of April.
- Please note that timelines may vary based on application volume and review requirements.

How much funding is available?

Organizations may apply for up to \$30,000 in funding. Funding requests cannot represent more than 50% of the total program budget. Applicants must demonstrate that additional funding sources are secured or being actively pursued.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to request the amount of funding realistically needed to successfully deliver their program, rather than simply defaulting to the maximum funding amount available.

Multi Year Funding

Multi Year Funding is only available to organizations that have been funded at least once previously through Co-operators Community Funds.

Eligibility for multi year funding is determined by demonstrated program success and meaningful outcomes achieved through prior funding. As such, multi year funding is available by invitation only and is partly based on content included in the organization's final evaluation report submission.

Organizations that have previously been funded and submitted a completed final evaluation report are welcome to apply again in future funding rounds.

For any additional questions, please contact the_cooperators_foundation@cooperators.ca