



WES ECOSYSTEM FUND APPLICATION GUIDE



TABLE OF CONTENTS

WES ECOSYSTEM FUND

Section A – General Information

1. Introduction
2. About the WES Ecosystem Fund
3. Application Process details and deadline
4. Eligibility requirements
 - 4.1 Eligible applicants
 - 4.2 Eligible projects
 - 4.3 Eligible activities
 - 4.4 Eligible costs
 - 4.5 Ineligible costs
 - 4.6 Expected results and outcomes
5. Assessment Criteria
6. Approval and Contribution Agreement
7. Stacking provision/Other government assistance
8. Governance, Management and Budget Allocation

Section B – Application Form Instructions

Appendix A – Glossary

SECTION A – GENERAL INFORMATION

1. INTRODUCTION

This application guide has been developed to assist in the completion of a project proposal for the WES Ecosystem Fund (Ecosystem Fund). It provides information on how to submit an application for funding. It also describes the criteria that will be used to assess your application.

It is important to read this guide **before** you begin filling out the application form so you clearly understand the objectives of the Ecosystem Fund and determine if you are eligible to receive funding.

Your application must be **complete** and have all of the required information as outlined in this guide to be considered for funding.

If you have any additional questions, please visit the [Frequently Asked Questions](#) page or contact us at ic.wes-sfe.ic@canada.ca or at 1-800-328-6189.

2. ABOUT THE WES ECOSYSTEM FUND

Overview:

The Government of Canada is committed to advancing gender equality, women's economic empowerment, and supporting women entrepreneurs through the new [Women Entrepreneurship Strategy](#) (the Strategy), announced in [Budget 2018](#). As part of the Strategy, the Government has made funding available over five years to ensure women across Canada have access to the business supports they need to start or grow a business, through various non-profit third party organizations (including, but not limited to [business support organizations](#), accelerators and incubators).

Ecosystem Fund Objectives:

The Ecosystem Fund is a \$85 million investment over five years that will help close service gaps and strengthen capacity within the [entrepreneurship ecosystem](#) for women entrepreneurs by providing [non-repayable contribution funding](#) to approved projects led by non-profit organizations to deliver support for women entrepreneurs (including social enterprises and cooperatives). All projects must address the needs of [diverse groups of women](#).

Non-repayable contribution funding will be available through two streams:

National/Multi-Regional Stream: \$15 million of the Ecosystem Fund investment will go towards funding projects which are national or multi-regional in scope. Priority will be given to projects that are national in scope, and deliver benefits in all provinces and territories. The minimum funding amount that will be considered for a national or multi/regional project is \$1 million.

A multi-regional project is one that combines three or more of the following regions: Western Canada¹ Northern Ontario², Southern Ontario³, Quebec, Atlantic Canada⁴, and Northern Canada⁵.

Regional Stream: \$70 million of the Ecosystem Fund investment will go towards regional projects. A regional project may be delivered in one of the above identified regions.

3. SUBMISSION DETAILS AND DEADLINE

A complete application package for the Ecosystem Fund must be submitted by November 22, 2018 23:59 PST and must include:

- 1- The Women Entrepreneurship Strategy Application Form; and
- 2- Required supporting documents (see [Attachments](#) section below).

Application Intake:

Applications should be submitted through the **Women Entrepreneurship Strategy portal** by the November 22, 2018 23:59 PST deadline. Receipt of your application package will be acknowledged within two business days. All applications will be reviewed after the deadline. If your application package is incomplete, your application will be rejected.

It is highly recommended that your application be submitted before the deadline to ensure there are no unforeseen issues at the time of submission. Late submissions will not be considered for funding.

Applicants living in rural or remote areas with limited internet access may send their application package (postmarked no later than the deadline date) by **registered mail** to:

Women Entrepreneurship Strategy - Small Business Branch
Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada
C.D. Howe Building
235 Queen Street, 5th Floor, West Tower, Mail Box 13
Ottawa, ON K1A 0H5
Canada

Application Assessment:

Applications will be assessed on a competitive basis and funding will be awarded to proposals that best align with the [objectives](#) of the Ecosystem Fund and the assessment criteria.

¹ British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba

² For additional information on Northern Ontario see: <http://fednor.gc.ca/eic/site/fednor-fednor.nsf/eng/fn03338.html>

³ For additional information on Southern Ontario see: https://www.feddevontario.gc.ca/eic/site/723.nsf/eng/h_01903.html

⁴ Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, and Prince Edward Island

⁵ Yukon, Northwest Territories, Nunavut

4. ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

4.1 Eligible applicants:

Applicants may apply independently or as a partnership with other organizations to deliver project activities. If applying as a partnership, a letter of support from each partner applicant (signed by their authorized official) must be included with your application.

Eligible applicants must be not-for-profit organizations such as, but not limited to:

- Business and entrepreneur support organizations;
- Innovation hubs;
- Organizations that certify diverse suppliers in Canada;
- Indigenous organizations;
- Accelerators;
- Organizations that support social enterprises or cooperatives; or
- Post-secondary institutions.

Ineligible applicants:

- For-profit organizations.

The [lead applicant](#) will be responsible for the completion and signing of the application form, managing the project and contribution funding and reporting on results.

Please note: The Province of Quebec's M-30 legislation may apply to Québec based applicants. All Quebec based organizations must demonstrate their compliance with the Act prior to entering into a contribution agreement.

For further information, consult the following website prior to submitting your Application for Funding: [An Act respecting the Ministère du Conseil exécutif \(M-30\)](#).

4.2 Eligible projects:

The project **must** address the needs of women, ensuring inclusion of and/or a focus on, diverse and under-represented populations. Projects should be a maximum of five years in length.

For the **National/Multi-Regional Stream**, activities and products **must** be delivered in both official languages.

For the **Regional Stream**, any project involving services to members of Official Language Minority Communities **must** ensure that communications and services to the public will be in both English and French.

4.3 Eligible activities:

Eligible activities are those that address a gap and/or build capacity in the entrepreneurship ecosystem for women, including, but not limited to:

- Supplier diversity activities that target women entrepreneurs;
- Initiatives to support women in traditionally [underrepresented sectors](#);
- Networking, matchmaking, and mentorship opportunities;
- Incubator and accelerator programs;
- Initiatives to support the participation of diverse and underrepresented women in entrepreneurship;
- Efforts to scale up programs that support women entrepreneurs across regions and on a national basis; and
- Other activities that will support the objectives of the Ecosystem Fund.

All projects must demonstrate how the proposed work will support women and how it will be inclusive, and/or focus on diverse women. Applicants are strongly encouraged to focus on increasing the representation of women entrepreneurs in sectors where they have been traditionally underrepresented.

If your application is approved, you will sign an agreement with the Government of Canada that outlines the conditions of funding. Your project will be publicly disclosed when successful recipients are announced. Any project costs incurred before the signing of the agreement will not be eligible for reimbursement.

4.4 Eligible costs:

Eligible costs include all costs necessary to carry out the project and are deemed reasonable under the Ecosystem Fund.

Eligible costs include, but are not limited to:

- Cost of labour;
- Capital costs: purchase of machinery, equipment and infrastructure;
- Operating costs: management fees or working capital;
- Consultancy fees;
- Costs related to intellectual property;
- Preproduction;
- Commercialization costs;
- Subcontracting costs;
- Production and distribution of promotional materials and management tools;
- Anticipated cost of maintaining the useful life of an asset for a reasonable period;
- Production of management tools; and
- Other costs necessary to support the purpose of the funding, as approved by the Minister.

4.5 Ineligible costs:

Ineligible costs include, but are not limited to:

- The refinancing of an existing debt;
- The purchase of any assets for more than the fair market value;
- Land acquisition; and
- Costs of amortization and goodwill.

4.6 Expected results and outcomes

Applicants will be expected to identify and report on project outcomes. Project outcomes should help facilitate the increased engagement of women entrepreneurs in the economy by addressing gaps or strengthening capacity in the entrepreneurship ecosystem.

The following are expected outcomes and performance indicators:

Outcome(s)	Performance Indicator(s)
Support women starting a business	Number of clients supported in starting a new business
Support women entrepreneurs to grow in markets abroad	Number of clients supported in growing their business in markets abroad
Support women to grow an existing business	Number of clients supported in growing an existing business
Strengthen business or entrepreneurial skills for women entrepreneurs	Number of clients supported to strengthen entrepreneurial skills
Support women entrepreneurs to access or participate in supplier diversity initiatives	Number of clients supported in supplier diversity initiatives
Support participation of women entrepreneurs in traditionally under-represented sectors	Number of clients supported to engage in traditionally under-represented sectors
Support access to networking, matchmaking or mentorship for women entrepreneurs	Number of clients connected with networking, matchmaking or mentorship opportunities
Other outcomes that advance the objectives of the Fund	As relevant to the identified outcome
Applicable to all above objectives	Number of underrepresented clients supported by business support organizations (by province/territory)

Successful applicants will also be required to provide progress and performance reports.

5. ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

Applications will be reviewed in a three-step process as follows:

STEP 1: Initial Screening: All application packages will be screened to ensure that they are complete and meet the eligibility criteria. If an application package is incomplete or fails to meet the eligibility criteria, applicants will be notified in writing that their application will not be considered further.

STEP 2: Review: Eligible application packages will be assessed. The criteria in the evaluation grid below will be used during this process.

STEP 3: Decision: Funding will be based on application packages' evaluation results, government priorities and available funding.

Criteria for assessing proposals will include:

Expertise and Capacity (lead applicant and partner applicants will be assessed on expertise and capacity as a whole, if applicable)	
Expertise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of women's entrepreneurship, including the women entrepreneurship ecosystem in Canada/region • Experience working with entrepreneurs • Experience working with diverse, intersectional groups of women
Capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience in effectively managing projects of a similar size and scope • Experience in financial administration of projects of similar size and scope • Key partners needed to carry out proposed work are included
Implementation	
Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gaps in the ecosystem have been clearly identified • Methodology used to uncover these gaps is well defined and relevant • Clarifications are provided on how addressing these gaps will impact and/or strengthen the ecosystem • Proposed project activities effectively address ecosystem gaps • Activities will achieve project's objectives and link to overall initiative objectives • Information is given on how the work will be done, who will do this work and when the work will be completed • Clear and feasible timelines are provided • Proposal demonstrates how targeted needs of diverse, intersectional groups will be effectively addressed
Performance Measurement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposal outcomes will address gaps or strengthen capacity in entrepreneurship ecosystem

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance indicators are clear and reasonable • Proposal clearly indicates how the organization will achieve project outcomes
Risk Mitigation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risks are identified and mitigation measures are reasonable
Budget	
Budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides adequate details and description of eligible costs in budget • Proposal demonstrates value for money

The Government of Canada reserves the right to accept a proposal, in whole or in part, and give consideration to factors such as government priorities, geographic coverage, and diversity.

Input may be sought from other federal government partners to benefit from their expertise in project assessment and selection.

6. APPROVAL AND CONTRIBUTION AGREEMENT

Once the competitive assessment process has been completed, applicants will be informed of the status of their submission.

Following project approval, the Government of Canada may enter into a [Contribution Agreement](#) with the successful applicant (who then becomes the recipient). This Government of Canada prepared document will include the legally binding responsibilities and obligations of both parties.

7. STACKING PROVISIONS AND OTHER GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE

Total Canadian government assistance for all eligible costs under the Ecosystem Fund, including federal, provincial/territorial and municipal governments, cannot exceed 100% of total eligible costs funded. The [stacking limit](#) applies to all activities captured in the Contribution Agreement.

Funding recipients under the Ecosystem Fund are obligated, as set out in the Contribution Agreement, to disclose all Canadian government (federal, provincial, territorial, municipal) financial assistance they have requested and/or received toward eligible Ecosystem Fund activities under the Contribution Agreement. In the event that the recipient exceeds the stacking limit, the Government of Canada will adjust the Contribution Agreement accordingly to respect the above mentioned limit.

8. GOVERNANCE, MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET ALLOCATION

Should the successful recipients of the Ecosystem Fund operate as a partnership, governance and administrative structures must be put in place, prior to the signing of a contribution agreement.

SECTION B - APPLICATION FORM INSTRUCTIONS

APPLICANT INFORMATION

This section should be completed by the applicant. You must make sure that all the information you provide is accurate.

Brief Overview of the Organization (maximum 1750 characters):

Please provide a short description of your organization, including the mandate and history.

Activity Types (select all that apply):

Select the types of activities that are included in the project. Select “Other” if any of the proposed activities do not fall under the selections provided.

Brief Description of Activities (maximum 1750 characters):

Briefly describe the main activities to be undertaken that are key to completing the project, including the key partners associated with these activities, if applicable.

PROJECT CONTACT

Please provide an alternative project contact.

PROJECT INFORMATION

Project Name (maximum 200 characters): Provide a title for your project

Estimated start and end dates: The start and end dates refer to when project costs are estimated to start and stop being incurred. Projects should be a maximum of five years in length. Applicants should submit a proposal with a target start date within the first quarter of 2019. Eligible project costs can only begin after the signing of a Contribution Agreement.

Address of physical location where the largest portion of the project will occur: Indicate where the main project work will be undertaken, if different than the applicant location.

Activities on federal land: From the [Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, 2012](#) section 2(1), **federal lands** means:

(a) lands that belong to Her Majesty in right of Canada, or that Her Majesty in right of Canada has the power to dispose of, and all waters on and airspace above those lands, other than lands under the administration and control of the Commissioner of Yukon, the Northwest Territories or Nunavut;

(b) the following lands and areas:

(i) the internal waters of Canada, in any area of the sea not within a province,

(ii) the territorial sea of Canada, in any area of the sea not within a province,

(iii) the exclusive economic zone of Canada, and

(iv) the continental shelf of Canada; and

(c) reserves, surrendered lands and any other lands that are set apart for the use and benefit of a band and that are subject to the [Indian Act](#), and all waters on and airspace above those reserves or lands. (*territoire domaniale*)

Organizational Capacity (maximum 3500 characters):

- Describe your organization's experience in managing and financially administering projects similar in size and scope;
- Outline the experience your organization has in working with entrepreneurs and with diverse, intersectional groups of women; and
- Demonstrate how your organization is well-positioned to identify and address gaps and strengthen capacity in the women entrepreneurship ecosystem.

Details on geographical location, targeted diverse women groups, and official languages (maximum 3500 characters):

- Describe the reach of your project.
 - o Who will be served and in which regions are they located;
 - o Which diverse group(s) of women is the project to include; and
 - o How will you ensure that the project activities and products are communicated in both official languages?

The requirement for official languages applies only to projects under the National/Multi-Regional Stream unless a Regional Stream project proposes to serve an official language community.

Describe which ecosystem gap(s) this project will address (maximum 3500 characters):

- Describe which gaps in the women entrepreneurship ecosystem your organization has identified;
- Detail how these gaps were uncovered;
- Provide evidence of these gaps; and
- Outline why it is important for this project to address these gaps.

Project Objectives (maximum 3500 characters):

- Provide a detailed description of the project's overall short and long-term objectives and desired outcomes;
- Indicate how your organization will use this funding to address the gaps that you have identified; and

- Describe how your project will strengthen capacity in the ecosystem.

Key Activities and Description of Activities:

- Provide a detailed description of each activity you will undertake in this project;
- Outline how each activity will support the overall objectives of the project and how it aligns with Ecosystem Fund objectives; and
- Include feasible timelines and who will be responsible for the work under each activity.

Risks and Mitigations (maximum 3500 characters):

- Describe the main risks that could have an impact on your organization’s ability to carry out the activities proposed or achieve project objectives; and
- Indicate the probability (low, medium or high) and the mitigation strategies for each risk.

Key Partners (maximum 3500 characters):

- Outline key partners in the project and what their role will be; and
- Include a letter of support for each partner as an attachment to this application.

Expected Outcomes Chart (maximum 1750 characters for each outcome):

- Describe how your activities will contribute to the planned outcomes of the Ecosystem Fund (Please refer to [Section A 4.6](#)).

FUNDING FROM GOVERNMENT SOURCES

Funding from Government Sources: Please list all government funding (municipal, provincial or federal) your business has received **in the last two years**.

PROJECT FUNDING SOURCES

Give a breakdown of funding by fiscal year for the project. Enter the amounts by fiscal year that you are requesting from the Ecosystem Fund on the first line. If there is money coming from any other source, please enter on the remaining lines. Please enter “0” in all cells that have no amounts.

* Please note, the Government of Canada’s fiscal year begins April 1 and ends March 31.

TOTAL PROJECT COSTS BY COST CATEGORY

Project costs can only start after a Contribution Agreement has been signed between the recipient and the Government of Canada. All project costs must be directly related to approved project activities.

Populate line items under each eligible cost category with a description of what these costs entail and how this amount was calculated (ex: 1 computer software licence @ \$400).

Eligible costs are described in [Section A 4.4](#) of the guide.

* Please note, the Government of Canada's fiscal year begins April 1 and ends March 31.

ATTACHMENTS

Your application package **must** include the following:

1. A scanned copy of the application package signed by an authorized official.
2. Annual financial statements for the past two years. Acceptable financial statement standards include:
 - audited;
 - review engagement; or
 - notice to reader
3. Incorporation document.
4. Letters of support (a letter of support is required from key partners and partner applicants (if applicable)).

AUTHORIZING OFFICIAL CONTACT INFORMATION

Authorized Official is an individual who is authorized to legally sign on behalf of the organization.

Under the "Signed at" box, please include the geographical location (city) where the application form was signed.

SUBMITTING YOUR APPLICATION

Please follow the instructions when prompted to submit your application.

APPENDIX A – GLOSSARY

Activities:

Activities are undertakings that are eligible for funding under the Ecosystem Fund (see [eligible activities](#)) and required to complete a project.

Applicant:

An individual or entity that has applied for funding.

Application:

A set of documents submitted to the Government of Canada in order to participate in an application for funding process. For the Ecosystem Fund, this includes the application form and all additional documents included in the “attachments” section of the form.

Business Support:

Organizations that provide business services (i.e. financing, mentoring, networking, business planning, financial literacy, etc.) to meet the needs of the wider business community.

Cash Contribution:

Refers to the money an applicant or another funding source contributes towards the project.

Contribution Agreement:

A written agreement between the successful applicant (who then becomes the recipient) and the Government of Canada. It includes the legally binding responsibilities and obligations of both parties.

Diverse Groups of Women (or Women from Underrepresented Groups):

Includes, but is not limited to, women with disabilities, Indigenous women, women in rural or remote regions, recent immigrants, visible minority women, and women from Official Language Minority Communities (OLMCs).

Eligible Costs:

The costs to which Initiative funding may be applied and which are established in the Contribution Agreement.

Ineligible Applicant:

Applicants that do not meet the eligibility criteria to receive funding from the Ecosystem Fund.

Ineligible Application:

Applications that do not meet the Ecosystem Fund eligibility criteria.

Ineligible Costs:

Costs that are not eligible for reimbursement through the Initiative.

In-Kind Contribution:

Donated goods and services such as: training or technical services, supervision, workspace and equipment, secretarial support and other resources provided without charge by partners. These contributions must be estimated at fair market value.

Intersectional Groups:

Intersectional groups are those with overlapping or intersecting social identities (for example LGBTQ groups in rural and northern areas or women in remote areas with disabilities).

Key Partners:

Are organizations which are fundamental in the delivery of the proposed project. These partners provide additional expertise and support to the recipient.

Lead Applicant:

The Lead Applicant will be responsible for submitting the application and will be the main point of contact during the application and assessment process. The lead applicant must be identified in the mandatory field on the application form.

Letters of Support:

Letters of support are required for each Partner Applicant or Key Partner and should state how they will contribute to the project. The letter of support has to be signed by an authorized official of partner organization.

Non-Repayable Contribution Funding:

This Initiative is a non-repayable contribution. In order to be reimbursed for expenses, costs must be incurred, eligible, related to work that is outlined in the approved budget and work plan, and fall within the start and end dates of the project.

Partner Applicants:

Partner applicants are proposed members in a partnership application. Partner applicants must be identified in the mandatory fields on the application form. Any organization incorporated and active in Canada that meets the eligibility requirement of the Ecosystem Fund is eligible to be a partner applicant.

Project:

The combined proposed activities needed to accomplish your objectives and outcomes under this Initiative. A project is undertaken within specific time, cost and performance parameters.

Recent Immigrant:

A person who has settled in Canada within the last ten years.

Recipient:

An Applicant that signs a Contribution Agreement with the Government of Canada and receives funding. Once an Applicant signs the agreement, they become a Recipient.

Stacking Limit:

The maximum level of total Canadian government (municipal, provincial/territorial, federal) funding authorized for any one activity, initiative or project of a recipient.

Underrepresented Sectors:

Sectors where women are traditionally underrepresented.

Value for Money:

Refers to applications that achieve economy, efficiency, and effectiveness with the funds requested for project delivery.

Women Business Support Organizations:

Organizations that provide targeted business support services to meet the needs of women entrepreneurs and their businesses.

Women Entrepreneurship Ecosystem:

The totality of organizations that support women entrepreneurs both directly and indirectly. This includes women's business support organizations, federal, provincial/territorial and municipal government departments and agencies, financial institutions such as the Business Development Bank of Canada, post-secondary

institutions and academia, non-profit organizations such as Futurpreneur Canada, sector-specific national and provincial associations, and other business support organizations.

Women from Underrepresented Groups (or Diverse Women):

Includes but is not limited to women with disabilities, Indigenous women, women in rural or remote regions, recent immigrants, visible minority women, and women from Official Language Minority Communities (OLMCs).