

Ontario Active School Travel Fund

Frequently Asked Questions

ELIGIBILITY

1) How big of an area should an application cover?

Communities may decide the types and locations for their initiatives, and operate at a scale of their choosing so long as Municipal and School Board support is secured, and the project scope is justified on the application form. Communities are encouraged to choose a scale of operation that is appropriate for efficient and effective implementation.

2) How many schools need to be involved in order to receive funding?

At least one school board must be listed as a formal project partner. There are no restrictions on the number of schools that must be involved.

3) Does a proposed initiative need to serve a whole school district? Or can it focus on a group of priority schools?

Communities may select the schools that they will work with. Green Communities Canada recommends selecting neighbouring schools and schools with a large proportion of children living within the “walk zone.”

4) Can one community submit more than one application?

No – this funding is designed to support a range of projects across Ontario and avoid concentration in any one location. Therefore only one application can be accepted per community. For the purposes of this Fund, a community is defined as a lower-tier or single-tier municipal area.

5) If there are multiple applications received from a single community, how do you decide which one will move forward?

A Priority Area for the Fund is to strengthen stakeholder partnerships through collaboration and coordination. As such, we expect anyone who is considering applying to the Fund to talk to the key stakeholders in their region to ensure that they avoid any duplication of efforts and develop a comprehensive, partnership-based proposal. We expect stakeholders in a community to collectively identify a single proposal that would lead to the strongest foundation for continuing growth in active school travel in their community.

If in the unlikely event that more than one eligible application is received from within a single community, GCC will contact the lead applicants and ask them to come to a consensus on which one of the applications should be accepted as the funding request for that community.

6) Can a community that received funding in Round 1 or Round 2 apply to Round 3?

Communities that received funding in Round 1 or Round 2 may not apply to Round 3, regardless of the amount requested. For the purposes of this Fund, a community is defined as a lower-tier or single-tier municipal area.

Communities that were unsuccessful in Round 1 or Round 2 may revise and resubmit their application for Round 3 funding. All applicants from previous Rounds received a feedback report from the peer review committee and should modify and strengthen their application accordingly.

7) If a community received funding in Round 1 or Round 2 will they be excluded from Round 3?

Yes – communities that received funding from Round 1 or Round 2 cannot apply to Round 3.

8) Can a School Board collaborate with more than one municipality to submit multiple applications?

Yes – given that School Boards often have a broad geographic area that includes more than one Municipality, a School Board may be a project partner for more than one application, provided that each application is for a separate and distinct community, and that the School Board has schools in that community.

9) Can more than one school board work together to support an application? E.g. can two different school boards apply for funding within one community?

Yes. We require a minimum of one School Board as a project partner, but we expect that most applications will involve at least two School Boards (e.g. English Public and English Catholic) in support of an initiative in a chosen community. Letters of support from each participating School Board must be submitted with the application.

10) Can a Health Unit apply as the lead applicant with letters of support from the School Boards?

A Health Unit could apply as the lead applicant, with letters of support from at least one School Board and one Municipality.

11) Can a regional organization, such as public health, be a lead applicant on multiple applications?

Given that public health agencies often have a broad geographic area that includes multiple distinct communities, a public health agency may be a project partner for more than one application, provided that each application is for a separate and distinct community.

A regional organization such as public health is not precluded from acting as the lead applicant for more than one proposal, however if that situation does occur, than as lead applicant they should demonstrate:

- the rationale for each initiative within their region
- that there is discussion and coordination happening at the regional level,

- that they have the capacity, skills and experience to successfully implement multiple initiatives in parallel, should more than one of their applications be awarded funding.

12) If a Regional government applies for the grant do we require support from all municipalities and school boards in our region, and what expectations are there for engagement from lower-tier municipal partners?

If a Regional government is the lead applicant, they will need to secure support only from the municipality(ies) relevant to the community(ies) that they plan to work in and the school board(s) relevant to the schools that they plan to work with.

A priority area for the Fund is to strengthen stakeholder partnerships through collaboration and coordination. As such, we expect anyone who is considering applying to the Fund to talk to the key stakeholders in their region to ensure that they avoid any duplication of efforts and develop a comprehensive, partnership-based proposal. We expect stakeholders in a community to collectively identify a single proposal that would lead to the strongest foundation for continuing growth in active school travel in their community.

CRITERIA

13) Do all of the listed priority areas need to be included in the proposal?

Communities are encouraged to develop proposals that address all of the priority areas. The coverage of these priority areas will be taken into account when evaluating all applications received. Initiatives that address all four of these priority areas will be more competitive in the application process.

14) Doesn't the requirement to demonstrate a "track record of engagement" favour communities that have existing initiatives?

No, the evaluation process for applications does include features to address this concern: Question 3.2 in the Application Form is asking the lead applicant to describe a) their track record of involvement in active school travel initiatives, and b) their ability to lead a successful local partnership-based project. For lead applicants who are new to active school travel, their response should focus on leadership experience, and working with partners to deliver local initiatives. An applicant can still achieve a 'full score' for Question 3.2 if they demonstrate strong capability and previous success in leading partnership-based initiatives in their community.

USE OF FUNDS

15) Can funds go towards human resources for a project in the district or communities – either by for salary/hiring staff (FTE) or to pay a consultant?

Yes funds can be used to pay for human resources for a project. Please note that a key aim of the Fund is to build community capacity by increasing awareness, knowledge,

collaboration and skills amongst community members that will have a lasting impact. Whilst not prohibited by the Fund, the use of consultants to carry out project activities is of lesser value to capacity building, compared to using existing staff, recruiting new staff, or forming partnerships with local partners to use their human resources.

16) Can the funding be used for initiatives to get kids active during school time?

No. This Fund is specifically earmarked for initiatives that foster physical activity in the form of active travel to and from school. Educational activities with an active component (e.g., cycling skills workshop) and special events (e.g., active transportation assembly) can take place during school time.

17) Is the fund available to support projects that include activities outside of school time?

Yes as long as the activities are connected to the school community and contribute to the goal of increasing active school travel.

18) Can teacher release time be a funded activity?

Yes.

19) Can the funds be used for bike racks?

Yes provided that it is done as part of School Travel Planning activities, for example implementation of a School Travel Plan that had identified bike racks as an action item.

20) Can our activities extend to encouraging students to take the bus?

Yes provided that it is done as part of School Travel Planning activities, for example implementation of a School Travel Plan that had identified bus ridership as an action item.

21) Can part of the Fund be used to get key stakeholders on board, or do they need to be on board already?

Yes, the funds can be used to increase stakeholder engagement and participation (not all of the key stakeholders have to be on board at the outset).

22) Grant recipients are expected to send a representative to the Ontario Active School Travel Summit - can the Funding be used towards the costs of attending?

Fund recipients will receive an external bursary (from GCC) for one representative to attend the Ontario Active School Travel Summit. Additional representatives are welcome to attend and may be included as an expense in the proposed budget.

23) Could minimum bussing distance standards be something that is included as part of a policy review?

Yes.

24) Would programs for high school/secondary school be eligible for this funding?

No. Funding is restricted to elementary schools.

25) Can funds be used towards infrastructure?

Yes provided that it is completed within the grant period and is done as part of School Travel Planning activities, for example the implementation of a School Travel Plan that

had identified infrastructure improvements as an action item. However it should be noted that the type and extent of infrastructure that could be delivered within the grant timeline and budget is likely to be limited to small scale improvements such as bike/scooter racks, paint markings and signage.

26) Can the funds be used to support the creation of marketing materials, such as posters and branding that would support active school travel? E.g. by hiring a graphics designer

Yes provided that the purpose of the marketing materials was to support one or more of the four priority areas for the Fund.

27) Would developing resources to facilitate parent engagement be acceptable within parameters of this funding?

Yes provided that the purpose of the resources to facilitate parent engagement was to support one or more of the four priority areas for the Fund.

28) Can the funds be used for a Walking School Bus?

Yes provided that it is done as part of School Travel Planning activities, for example implementation of a School Travel Plan that had identified a walking school bus as an action item.

GRANT AMOUNT AND TIMELINE

29) Is the max of \$60,000 for each year of the project, or is it a max \$60K per proposal?

The funding available is a maximum of \$60K per proposal.

30) Is it possible that funding will be awarded for some items within an application and not others (therefore, receiving a portion of the total funds requested), or would it be all or nothing?

It is intended that applications will be funded in their entirety or not at all. However, a Review Committee will provide recommendations to GCC on whether funds requested should be accepted as described or reduced. GCC reserves the right to determine the final amount of funding awarded to each applicant.

31) Will funding be available from the Ministry of Education or GCC in subsequent years?

The Ontario Active School Travel Fund is a provincial pilot program that aims to establish a foundation for continuing growth in active school travel. At present, funding is only available until March 2022. The intention of the Fund is to build capacity within communities and support long-term (local) commitments to promote active school travel. GCC will provide centralized learning supports and tools (e.g., training and mentoring; data collections tools and database), but communities should consider how active school travel initiatives will be supported and sustained beyond 2022.

32) Does the grant period need to span a total of 18 months? Could it be shorter?

The grant period must span at least 15 months to allow for completion and submission of final progress reports in March 2022, though other core activities may be completed sooner.

33) What will be the implementation period for Round 3 funding?

Round 3 recipients will be funded for implementation from January 2021 to June 2022.

34) Is the grant paid out as a lump sum or is it metered out over time?

The grant will be paid in two or three installments over the grant period – the amount and payment dates will be determined at the time when funds are awarded.

MATCHING FUNDS

35) Does all of the matching funds need to be made available up front, or can some be scheduled towards the end of the grant period? (I.e., agencies may have already finalized budgets for 2021 – but could add funding to 2022 budgets).

A minimum commitment of 50% of the grant requested in the form of matching funds (cash and in-kind) must be secured by the application deadline, but the timing of when the matching funds are available to flow to communities may occur at any point during the course of the project. Communities are encouraged to seek additional in-kind and cash contributions over the course of the project, particularly as March 2022 approaches, to support continuity of funded initiatives.

36) What percentage of the matching funds needs to be cash, and what percentage can be in-kind?

There is no restriction on the ratio - the matching funds may come entirely from in-kind contributions or entirely from cash contributions, or a combination of the two.

37) Can the matching funds come from one single organization?

Yes.

38) All of our organizations have already committed funding to active school travel. Is the expectation that applying agencies will find additional funds to further commit, while keeping previous funding structures in tact?

One of the Priority Areas for this Fund is to leverage resources and support long-term program sustainability. Because of this, matching funds must come from sources not already committed to active school travel prior to the initiative.

For example, if existing funding structures outline cash and staff time contributions until June 2021, renewal of commitments beyond June may be counted towards the proposed initiative. As another example, if a staff member currently spends 1 day per week on active school travel, any additional hours or days needed for the proposed initiative can be counted towards matching funds.

PROJECT BUDGET

39) In the Project Expenses, do ‘administration costs’ include the salary for an STP facilitator?

No - the salary costs for an STP Facilitator should be listed under ‘Direct Personnel Costs’ in the Project Expenses.

40) What are considered ‘Administration Costs’?

Administration costs may include operating overheads and administrative costs associated with delivering the project, such as accounting and administrative staff, rent of office space, office supplies/equipment and utilities.

DATA COLLECTION

41) Will communities be responsible for the costs associated with data collection and evaluation?

Yes. Funded communities are expected to conduct data collection and evaluation for their initiative as part of their project and evaluation plan, in addition to tracking metrics that are required by Green Communities Canada for overall program evaluation (e.g., student travel mode). Funded communities are responsible for the costs associated with collecting data (e.g. Personnel to conduct surveys).

42) Who is responsible for obtaining school board ethics approval for data collection at the school level?

The lead applicant is responsible for obtaining school board ethics approval. Green Communities Canada will provide guidance for this process.

43) What happens if the local ethics and research committee will not allow in class hands-up survey?

GCC will provide advice and guidance to recipient communities to submit ethics applications and respond to the concerns of local research ethics committees.

44) Is it mandatory to complete the student and family travel surveys?

Communities are required to administer the Student Travel Survey on a bi-annual basis (baseline and follow-up) for each participating school during the funding period.

45) Will GCC provide data collection tools and central repository to communities?

Yes - GCC will provide data collection tools and a central database for recipient communities.

46) Does the evaluation plan apply for all schools or just the School Travel Plan schools identified?

All schools involved in the proposed initiatives must be included in the evaluation plan.

47) Can you provide some detail around what the student travel surveys entail - will they require school boards ethics review?

Funded communities are required to administer the Student Travel Survey on a bi-annual basis (baseline and follow-up) for each participating school during the funding period. The Student Travel Survey is a quick (5 mins) hands-up survey conducted in the

classroom every day for one week. Students are asked to indicate what travel mode they used for their journey to school that day, and what mode they will use for their journey home. Templates for the survey can be viewed in the School Travel Planning Toolkit (see Phase 2) at:

<http://ontarioactiveschooltravel.ca/school-travel-planning/school-travel-planning-toolkit/>

The Surveys are usually conducted by teachers with their class, with overall administration and collation of the survey managed by the School Travel Planning Facilitator or Project Coordinator.

LEARNING SUPPORTS

48) Will GCC provide central supports for promotions such as ‘Bike to School Week’?

Yes - central support services provided by GCC will include promotional materials for Winter Walk Day, Spring into Spring, Bike to School Week and Walk to School Month.

APPLICATION PROCESS

49) Who can we direct questions to during the application process?

Green Communities Canada does not have the capacity to respond to individual requests, or to provide feedback on an application. Please review the Program Guide and the Q&A Webinar for guidance. If, however, you are experiencing any technical difficulties with the Application Form, please contact us by email at info@ontarioactiveschooltravel.ca .

50) Can two eligible organizations submit a joint application? E.g. a municipality and a school board together

Whilst partnership and collaboration is strongly encouraged to form a project team and develop a comprehensive approach, there can only be one organization fulfilling the lead applicant role. The lead applicant is responsible for leading the application, and - if successful – signing a funding agreement, receiving the funds, managing the project and submitting progress reports to the Funder.

51) What aspects of the Fund criteria are different in Round 3, compared to Round 2?

The Fund criteria for Round 3 is described in the Program Guide dated October 2020. There are no major aspects of the criteria that have changed since Round 2.