

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

ABOUT

What is Free to Play?

Free to Play supports children by creating the conditions for them to play their own way; moving, imagining, taking risks, and connecting with others how they choose. Caregivers and community members can help create the conditions for outdoor play by providing the time, space, and freedom for children to explore, take safe risks, and play on their own terms.

The Fund aims to:

- Increase opportunities for outdoor play;
- Reduce barriers that limit everyday outdoor play opportunities;
- Contribute to the well-being, confidence, and healthy development of children in your community; and
- Contribute to a long-term shift that values outdoor play as essential to childhood.

What is Outdoor Play?

Outdoor play is voluntary engagement in an activity that takes place outdoors, is fun and rewarding, and is driven by children's own curiosity and motivation. It gives children room to explore, move, take risks, and play their own way, often alongside other children, caregivers, and community members. Outdoor play can also reflect land-based play, rooted in relationships of reciprocity between people and the land.

Outdoor play may include:

- Running, climbing, digging, building, splashing, rolling, imagining, pretending
- Playing with natural materials like sticks, mud, water, sand, grass, or snow
- Taking risks, testing ideas, and learning how to navigate challenge and uncertainty



ELIGIBILITY

Who can apply?

Eligible applicants include registered charities, incorporated non-profit organizations, and Indigenous Governing Bodies. All project activities must take place within the service area of a participating community foundation: [Participating Community Foundations](#).

Are individuals eligible to apply?

No. Individuals are not eligible to apply.

Are municipalities or local governments eligible?

Yes. Municipalities, local governments, and Indigenous Nations may apply as incorporated entities capable of delivering community-based projects within a participating foundation's service area.

Can multiple branches of the same organization apply?

Multiple branches may apply only if each branch is a distinct legal entity with its own governance, accounting, and financial systems.

What if my local community foundation is not participating?

If your local community foundation is not currently participating, additional opportunities may become available as the Fund grows. Applicants are encouraged to stay connected and monitor future updates.

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ACTIVITIES & PROJECT ELIGIBILITY

Are one- or two-day events eligible?

No. One-time or short-term events without lasting impact are not eligible. Projects should create ongoing opportunities for outdoor play.

Are organized sports or recreation programs eligible?

No. Adult-led or structured sports and recreation programs are not eligible. Free to Play focuses on child-led, self-directed play.

Are virtual programs eligible?

No. Virtual programs for children are not eligible.

Can I apply for equipment only? Like a play structure?

Playground equipment may be eligible if it is part of a broader project. Equipment alone is not enough. Projects must show how children will be supported to use the space for outdoor play.

Is small outdoor infrastructure or naturalization eligible?

Yes. Small improvements such as adding logs, plants, loose parts, or natural features are eligible. Land purchases and major construction are not.

Can existing programs be adapted to include outdoor play?

Yes. Existing programs may be expanded or adapted if the changes clearly support outdoor play for children and the objectives of Free to Play.

What ages are considered “children”?

There is no strict age limit. In general, children are considered to be ages 0–14 aligned with Statistics Canada’s definition.

Is adult supervision allowed in Free to Play projects?

Yes. Adult supervision may be appropriate and required. Projects should show how adults support safety and inclusion without directing or controlling children’s play. See the [Risk Benefit Assessment Toolkit](#) as you determine levels of risk in your project.

How should projects support children and participants with disabilities?

Projects are encouraged to include appropriate supports, accommodations, or adaptive approaches so children and participants with disabilities can take part fully in outdoor play. This may include trained staff, inclusive design, or additional supervision, while still respecting children’s independence to play.

EXPENSES & BUDGET

What expenses are eligible?

Eligible expenses may include staff time, materials, training, evaluation, translation, communications, transportation, and honoraria. All costs must be directly related to the project. See the [Applicant Guide](#) for full list.

Are general administrative costs eligible?

General administrative costs must be clearly connected to delivering the project.

Can funding be used for land, buildings, or electronic devices?

No. These costs are not eligible. See the [Applicant Guide](#) for full list.

Are honoraria eligible?

Yes. Honoraria for Elders, Knowledge Keepers, or community members supporting outdoor or land-based play are eligible.

Are transportation costs eligible?

Yes. Transportation costs directly related to project activities are eligible.

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APPLICATION PROCESS

How do I apply?

Applications open on November 28, 2025 at 9:00 AM PST and close on February 24, 2026 at 5:00 PM PST. Each organization may submit one application, collaborating organizations can work together on the same application. Some community foundations will use a participatory grantmaking process. Confirm your community foundation's approach before applying. Confirm your community foundation's approach [here](#).

How are applications reviewed?

Applications are reviewed based on how well they align with Free to Play goals, respond to community needs, are ready to be delivered, and create lasting impact. Some community foundations use participatory grantmaking.

What reporting is required?

Organizations approved for funding will sign a Funding Agreement before receiving their fund payment(s). Our goal is to have light-touch reporting with an emphasis on reflections, learnings, and stories from children/families.

Depending on your organization type, you will complete the following report(s):

- Midway Check-in (selected recipients): Some organizations will complete a short check-in with their local community foundation halfway through their project to share high-level updates, challenges, and successes. After you complete this check-in, you'll receive the second half of your funding.
- Final Report (required for all recipients): All funded organizations will complete a final report to share their results, reflections, and stories of impact.

Can I apply in French or English?

Yes. Applications may be submitted in either language.

When will I hear back about my application?

Applicants will be notified of funding decisions by Spring 2026.

How much funding can an organization apply for?

Funding amounts vary by community foundation. Each participating community foundation sets the maximum grant amount for its area.

Confirm the funding request range in your community by reaching out to your local community foundation: [Participating Community Foundations](#).

PARTICIPATORY GRANTMAKING

What is participatory grantmaking?

Some community foundations involve community members with lived experience in reviewing applications and making funding decisions. If your community foundation will be doing a participatory process:

- Reach out to your community foundation directly for details on how to participate.
- Create an account and register your organization in the application system. Please note: you do not need to fill out the full application. Registration only.

Confirm your community foundation's approach [here](#).



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