

What are Small-scale Ecosystem Grants?

This program supports small-scale projects that help to improve ecological health and native biodiversity in the Basin.

Who can apply?

Eligible applicants include registered non-profits, local governments and First Nations in the Columbia Basin Trust region (ourtrust.org/map).

Applicants operating outside the [Basin](#) must partner with community-based organizations operating within the region and must show that the project benefits the Basin.

When is the application deadline?

The Small-scale Ecosystems Grants accepts inquiries and applications on a continuous basis throughout the year. The program will close when available funds have been committed.

If you are an eligible applicant interested in applying, contact ecosystems@ourtrust.org to discuss your project idea with us. If your project meets the program criteria, you will be invited to submit an online application.

What types of projects are eligible?

The Program supports small-scale projects that restore or improve natural ecosystems processes and functions for a variety of ecotypes, including terrestrial, aquatic and wetlands.

Eligible projects address at least one of the following objectives:

- restore or conserve aquatic, wetland, and/or terrestrial ecosystems such as fish habitat, riparian areas, forests or grasslands; or
- conserve a species of conservation concern.

Eligible projects:

- have on-the-ground action (rather than strictly research, education or planning) to support ecological health and resilience at a local level that yield meaningful and measurable benefits;
- take place on crown land, local government land, First Nations land, or conservation land;
- demonstrate progress in completing necessary planning, permitting and project development activities that will make the project shovel-ready;
- have a small local footprint and a targeted habitat, species and/or ecosystem type for restoration;
- aim to be completed within two years;
- include an effectiveness monitoring component to help understand how the project implementation is achieving its intended outcomes and goals, such as including statistics on species usage before and after the restoration or improvement;

- reflect input received from Indigenous Peoples, community/non-profit groups and technical experts;
- incorporate climate change mitigation and adaptation practices;
- help address regional ecological priorities and issues;
- do not displace landowner responsibilities under existing management plans; and
- do not displace or duplicate government efforts or industry responsibility.

What types of projects are not eligible?

Projects are not eligible if they:

- have the potential to duplicate or displace government or industry responsibility. This includes any restoration related to habitat fragmentation or other negative ecosystem impacts that have occurred because of identifiable industrial or commercial development or access (e.g. road development, hydroelectric reservoir drawdown zones, etc.);
- displace or negatively impact existing tenure holders, licensees and/or permitted users;
- primarily benefit the applicant itself or the members of a membership-based organization;
- take place on personally or commercially held private land, BC Hydro or Fortis land, or Provincial/Federal Parks;
- are primarily focused on environmental education or research;
- include activities that are ongoing or routine in nature;
- take place outside the Columbia Basin; and
- undertake activities of political parties, advocacy or lobby groups, or organizations that are exclusive or discriminative in nature.

Are job experience opportunities eligible?

The Trust hopes to support the creation of new job experience opportunities for full-time Basin residents to build on their existing education and increase their job-related and technical skills through direct employment on projects. If interested in discussing this opportunity, email ecosystems@ourtrust.org to learn more about funding eligibility. Please indicate the job title, duties, work-term and wage of the position. Projects that receive funding through the Small-scale Ecosystem Program are eligible to apply for one wage subsidy.

What job title(s) can I apply for?

Project technicians who are not project coordinators or in project management roles.

How much will the Trust fund?

The Trust is prepared to support:

- 50% of one employee's wage for up to 40 hours a week for up to one year (total wage must be a minimum of \$17.85) plus MERCS (calculated at 12.5%) per hour; and
- \$100/week to provide valuable work-integrated learning and training opportunities beyond entry level skills.

Who is not eligible to be hired through this program?

Full-time students are ineligible for support.

Does the program help me find the employee?

No, you must recruit and hire the employee.

How much will the Trust fund?

Up to 80% of total project costs can be requested from the Trust. Up to 50% of the combined cost of wage and MERCs for one new job experience may be requested. The typical maximum amount of Trust funding for any one project is \$80,000, not including wage subsidy funding.

The application should clearly demonstrate that at least 20% of total project costs will be received from sources other than the Trust, and that 50% of wage and MERCs costs will be paid by the employer.

How does the Trust select projects for funding?

The Trust uses the following selection criteria to prioritize funding. The Project:

- meets Program eligibility requirements as outlined above;
- addresses regional ecological priorities and aligns with community and technical input;
- has a low likelihood of residual adverse effects on cultural and community values, or other ecological values;
- takes into account existing land uses and land use planning objectives within the proposed project area;
- clearly demonstrates community support indicated by activities like fundraising, financial commitments and partnerships;
- demonstrates readiness to move forward by having the required authorizations, permits, prescriptions, etc. required to implement the project in hand or in process; and
- is self sustaining in the long term with a plan for any required ongoing maintenance.

The Trust strives to distribute program funds across communities, organizations and project types and will consider this as part of the adjudication process.

What is the application process and timeline?

Reach out to us at ecosystems@ourtrust.org to discuss your project idea. If the project is selected to move forward, a full application will be invited for submission. Once invited to apply, support and guidance from Trust staff or a program advisor is available to develop the full application.

The review process for submitted applications usually takes up to eight weeks. Trust staff may request additional information during the review phase.

If the project application has been approved for funding, organizations will be contacted by email at the address provided on the application form. To finalize funding, both parties will sign a Contribution Agreement. Funds will be received after both parties sign the Agreement.

When can a project begin?

Funds can only be used for approved project expenses that occur after Trust approval of funding has been received and the Contribution Agreement has been signed by both parties.

What else to keep in mind?

Even if a project meets eligibility criteria, it may not be selected for funding as the Trust often receives requests for more funding than what is available. The Trust retains the right to determine project eligibility and the amount of funding allocated to each project; this may be all or part of what was requested.