

What is the Ecosystem Enhancement Program?

The Ecosystem Enhancement Program (Program) aims to support Basin communities, including Indigenous Peoples, to steward and lead ecosystem enhancement and restoration projects that maintain and improve ecological health and resilience in a variety of ecosystems across the Basin. Projects funded via the Program will have a meaningful, measurable, and lasting landscape-scale impact in supporting and strengthening health and resilience of the Basin's natural environment in a changing climate, which is a focus area in the [Columbia Basin Management Plan 2024-2034](#).

Who can apply?

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

Applicants operating outside the Columbia [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?

May 22, 2026 at 2:00 p.m. PT / 3:00 p.m. MT.

What is the application process?

Ecosystem Enhancement Program is a two-stage application process. First, an online Expression of Interest (EOI) must be submitted. Second, if the project is selected to move forward, a full application must be developed for submission. Support and guidance from Trust staff or a program advisor will be provided to develop the full application.

The EOI deadline is May 22, 2026 at 2:00 p.m. PT / 3:00 p.m. MT.

If selected to move forward, the applicant will receive confirmation from the Trust by July 9, 2026. Then, the Trust will request the applicant to submit a full application, due on or before October 22, 2026.

What types of projects are eligible?

The Program supports landscape-scale projects that restore and/or enhance a variety of ecotypes, including terrestrial, aquatic and wetlands.

The Program focuses on projects that:

- implement on-the-ground actions (rather than strictly research, education or planning) to support ecological health and resilience at a landscape level that yield meaningful, measurable, and lasting benefits;
- take place on Crown land, conservation land, First Nations land, local government land or within community forests;
- reflect input received from Indigenous Peoples, community/non-profit groups and technical experts;
- are ready or almost ready to implement;
- help address regional ecological priorities and issues;

Program Guide

- incorporate the perspectives of Indigenous Peoples in the Basin;
- incorporate climate change mitigation and/or adaptation; and
- have or are seeking other sources of funding secured.

What are examples of eligible projects?

- Grassland restoration
- Wetland enhancement
- Riparian habitat improvement
- Aquatic habitat restoration
- Ecosystem enhancements that support pollinators
- A combination of the above

What types of projects are not eligible?

Projects are not eligible if they:

- primarily focus on community wildfire risk reduction or are solely focused on prescribed fire for ecological benefit;
- 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 or deactivation, 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 in Provincial/Federal Parks;
- are primarily focused on environmental education or research;
- take place outside the Columbia Basin [Region](#); or undertake activities of political parties, advocacy or lobby groups, or organizations that are exclusive or discriminative in nature.

What options are available if my project idea needs more development?

Projects that are invited to the Expression of Interest phase may be eligible for project development funding for those activities necessary to get the project ready for implementation.

Are job experience and skills training opportunities eligible?

The Trust hopes to support the creation of new job experience opportunities through successful ecosystem enhancement and restoration projects. These are 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.

1. What job title(s) can I apply for?
Project technicians who are not project coordinators or in project management roles.
2. How much will the Trust fund?
The Trust is prepared to support:
 - 50% of the employee's wage (total wage must be a minimum of \$17.85 plus MERCS per hour);
 - the employee can work up to 40 hours per week for a maximum of one year; and

Program Guide

- \$100/week to provide valuable work-integrated learning and training opportunities beyond entry-level skills.
3. Who is not eligible to be hired through this program?
Full-time students are ineligible for support.
 4. Does the program help me find the job experience employee(s)?
No, you must recruit and hire the employee(s).

How much will the Trust fund?

Up to 75% per cent of total project costs can be requested from the Trust. The maximum amount of Trust funding for any one project is \$750,000 with a maximum duration of five years for multi-year projects.

The application must clearly demonstrate that at least 25% percent of total project costs will be received from sources other than the Trust.

Ongoing core or operating expenses are not eligible for funding.

How does the Trust select projects for funding?

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

- demonstrates it meets the program eligibility listed above;
- demonstrates landscape-scale ecological benefits;
- improves or restores natural ecosystem processes or functions;
- addresses regional ecological priorities and aligns with community and technical input;
- aligns with and incorporates the perspectives of Indigenous Peoples;
- incorporates climate change mitigation and/or adaptation;
- is self-sustaining in the long term;
- 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;
- creates local employment opportunities and economic benefits;
- demonstrates broad community support, indicated by activities like fundraising, financial commitments and partnerships;
- is ready to move forward in the stated timelines; and
- the project and the organizations coordinating the project demonstrate an understanding of the need to maintain the results long-term; this can be shown by a long-term budget or an asset management plan for ongoing and scheduled maintenance or repairs.

The Trust will prioritize projects that are Indigenous led or have Indigenous partnerships and demonstrate outcomes that directly address climate change.

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

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 is available. The Trust retains the right to determine project eligibility and the amount of funding allocated to each project.

It is a requirement for projects to perform effectiveness monitoring and maintenance to ensure stated goals and objectives are achieved. Program funding from the Trust can be used for monitoring and maintenance within the lifespan of the project up to a maximum of five years (i.e. the maximum project duration).

Ready to apply?

1. Reach out to Krista Watts at kwatts@ourtrust.org if you have questions about the program and/or would like to discuss an ecosystem enhancement or restoration project idea.
2. If your project is eligible, a link will be provided for the downloadable Application Guide/Worksheet.
3. Review the Application Guide/Worksheet for directions on how to complete the application form.
4. Use the Application Guide/Worksheet to develop your application offline if you so choose.
5. Complete and submit the online application form.