



Canada
Water Agency

Agence de l'eau
du Canada



Fraser River Freshwater Ecosystem Initiative

Applicant Guide 2026/2027

NOTE TO APPLICANTS

This Call for Applications reflects changes to program priorities and requirements. Please read this guide carefully, with particular attention to Section 1: Eligible Projects and Section 9: Evaluation Criteria.

About the Applicant Guide

The Applicant Guide is designed to assist eligible applicants in applying to the Fraser River Freshwater Ecosystem Initiative. You are welcome to contact the Canada Water Agency (CWA) Office if you require clarification on the information contained in this guide. If you require assistance with the Grants and Contributions Enterprise Management System (GCEMS), please contact GCEMS directly.

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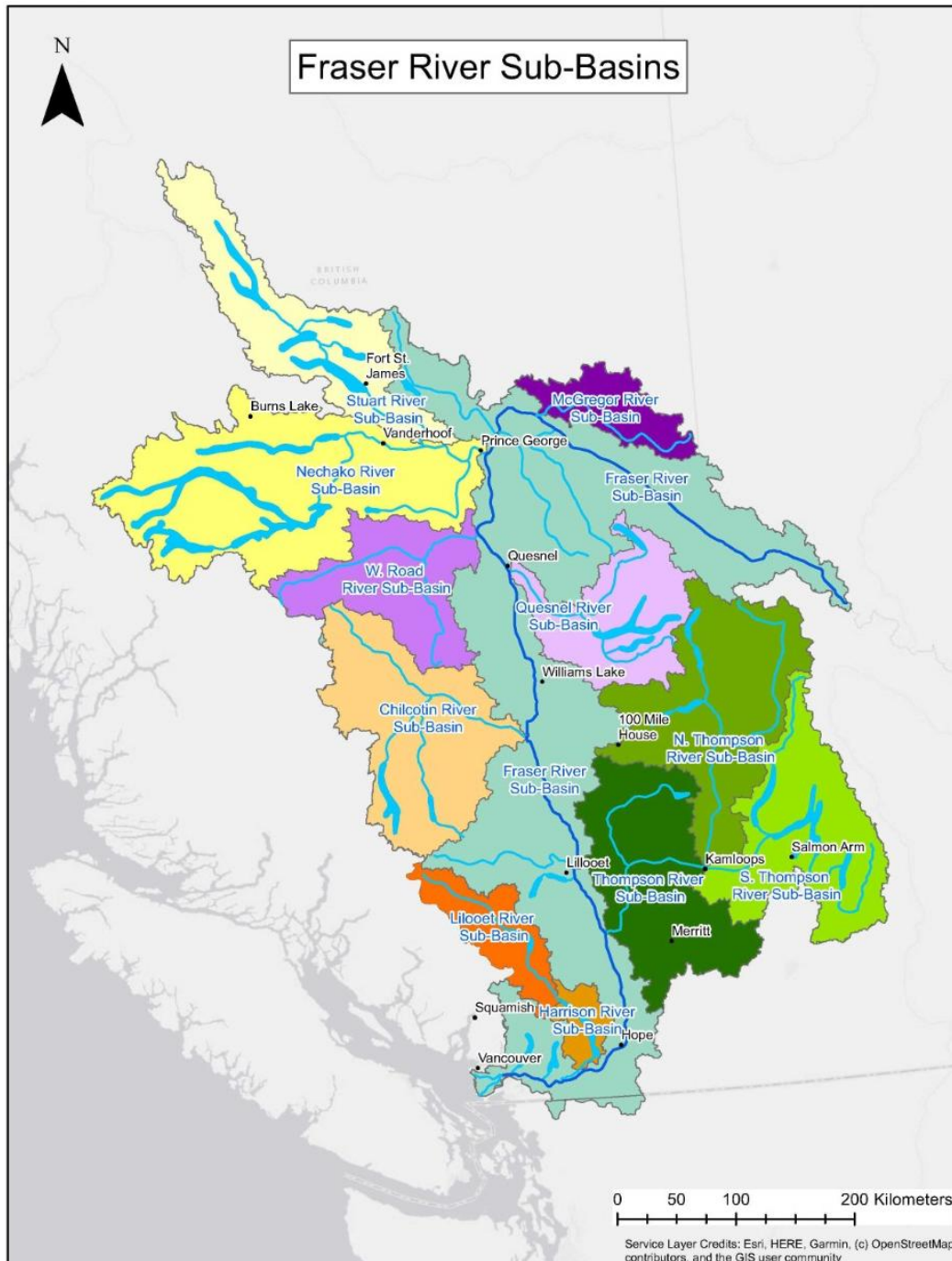
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The Fraser River Freshwater Ecosystem Initiative

As part of the federal Freshwater Action Plan, the Government of Canada is taking action to restore and protect freshwater ecosystems of national significance through Freshwater Ecosystem Initiatives (FEIs) that support partner-led actions addressing regional freshwater challenges and priorities to improve the **water quality** and **aquatic ecosystem health** of the Fraser River Basin.

Figure 1: Fraser River Basin



1. Eligible Projects

Under the broad objective to improve water quality and aquatic ecosystem health, the Fraser River FEI will fund projects implemented within the Canadian portion of the Fraser River Basin (see reference map on the previous page) that focus on nutrients, contaminants, and/or sediments through at least one of the following key strategies:

- Advancing Science and Knowledge
- Collaboration and Engagement
- Taking Action to reduce Nutrients, Contaminants, and/or Sediments

1.1. Advancing Science and Knowledge:

Projects that collect, analyze, share and/or use information to increase knowledge of stressors threatening water quality and aquatic ecosystem health, including nutrients, contaminants, and/or sediments.

Types of projects that may be funded include:

- Measuring, monitoring (including community-based monitoring), and/or analysis of indicators of aquatic ecosystem changes or health that inform trends over time and/or identification of priorities through an integrated planning process;
 - Examples of an “integrated planning process” could include a watershed sustainability plan, watershed strategy, water management policy, or other similar collaboratively-developed mechanism;
- Addressing knowledge, data, or research gaps on either:
 - The impacts of wildfires or other stressors related to nutrient, contaminant, sediment transport, or;
 - Cumulative impacts of land use changes or disturbance;
- Indigenous-led efforts that enable knowledge sharing and foster a more holistic understanding, including through:
 - storytelling, youth engagement, and intergenerational knowledge transfer to inform stewardship including actions and decision making;
 - opportunities for Indigenous and non-Indigenous partners to bring together diverse knowledge systems and perspectives to inform actions and decision making.

1.2. Collaboration and Engagement:

Projects that encourage engagement and strengthen collaborative opportunities to identify priorities, inform decision making and develop strategies focused on improving water quality and aquatic ecosystem health.

Types of projects that may be funded include:

- Opportunities for Indigenous peoples and non-Indigenous communities, and/or organizations to build relationships and work collaboratively to identify common priorities; and
- Facilitating or enabling knowledge sharing and multi-partner collaborative processes that identify priorities and develop strategies at various scales (e.g. assessments of stressors, state of ecosystem reporting, action plans, etc.), particularly involving both Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities and/or organizations.

1.3. Taking Action to Reduce Nutrients, Contaminants, and/or Sediments:

Projects that protect water quality and improve aquatic ecosystem health by implementing on-the-ground actions that reduce nutrients, contaminants, and/or sediments.

Types of projects that may be funded include:

- Implementation of beneficial management practices that reduce the negative impacts of nutrients, contaminants, and/or sediments in aquatic ecosystems;
- Implementing actions identified through a water sustainability plan, watershed strategy, water management policy, or other similar collaboratively-developed mechanism.

2. Projects Not Eligible for Funding

The following types of projects are not eligible for funding under the Fraser River FEI (not exhaustive):

- Monitoring and data collection as stand-alone projects. These projects must be part of an overall trend analysis or integrated planning process as further described in Section 1: Eligible Projects;
- Projects that have a single-issue 'action' focus such as stream clean-ups, attending conferences, training, workshops and meetings;
- Projects that are focused primarily on:
 - water quantity, groundwater, or marine/estuary environments;

- fish and/or fish habitat, including water temperature and sediment transport;
- barriers to navigation
- invasive species
- Projects designed only to beautify an area;
- The purchase of land;
- Projects required by law and/or mandated by a level of government; and
- Capital or operating costs of infrastructure projects (e.g. dikes, sewers, sewage treatment plants, storm water ponds).

3. Eligible Applicants

Canadian-based organizations are eligible to apply and include:

- Not-for-profit organizations such as charitable and volunteer organizations, professional associations, and non-governmental organizations.
- Indigenous governments, organizations, boards, communities, and associations.
- Research, academic and educational institutions.
- Regional, municipal and local governments.
- Local organizations such as community associations and groups, seniors' and youth groups, and service clubs.
- For-profit organizations with fewer than 100 employees.

Federal, and provincial/territorial governments are not eligible applicants. Ineligible applicants are encouraged to partner with eligible applicants on projects.

4. Eligible Project Costs

The following project costs are eligible:

- Human resource costs, including salaries and benefits.
- Management and professional service costs such as accounting, monitoring, communications, official language translation, audit, and legal fees.
- Hospitality, travel and venues/conference expenses that are attributed directly to carrying out the project (in accordance with the [Treasury Board Secretariat's Directives on Travel, Hospitality, Conference and Event Expenditures](#)).

- Hospitality expenditures can include costs related to Indigenous ceremonial offerings to be utilized or consumed during meetings or ceremonies such as traditional medicines, cultural foods, tea, and sacred plants.
- Costs associated with an Indigenous participation or ceremony.
- Honoraria offered to Indigenous Elders and/or Knowledge Keepers related to specific participation activities which may include but are not limited to translation and interpretative costs, leading a traditional opening/closing ceremony and/or prayer, the sharing of Traditional Knowledge and protocols, (including spiritual advice to individuals), and demonstrating traditional art and other practices.
- Materials and supplies costs.
- Printing, production, and distribution costs.
- Equipment and Capital Assets purchase or rental.
- Vehicle rental and operation costs.
- Contractors required to perform activities related to the project.
- A reasonable share (20% or less) of overhead and/or administrative costs directly attributed to project delivery.
- Any GST/HST not reimbursable by the Canada Revenue Agency and any PST not reimbursable by the provinces.

The following project costs are ineligible:

- Expenditures related to lobbyist fees;
- For for-profit recipients: Equipment and Capital Assets purchase or rental; and
- Costs associated with land securement.

5. Funding Details

Projects are eligible for funding up to **a maximum of \$200,000** per project. Projects can be single or multi-year in nature but must begin on or after April 1, 2026 and be completed by March 31, 2028. Eligible projects that are not funded may be re-submitted in a future call for applications.

Please note that unsuccessful applications are not retained for future use.

6. Matching Requirements

At least **60% of the total support for the project** must come from sources other than the Canada Water Agency.

Other sources of support may be in the form of cash or in-kind contributions, or a combination of both as defined in Section 4: Eligible Project Costs.

Applicants should declare all prospective sources of support (cash and in-kind) for the project including federal, provincial, territorial, municipal and other sources of funding in their application.

Example

Contributor Name	Contributor Type	Cash	In-kind	Total
Fraser River Freshwater Ecosystem Initiative	Canada Water Agency	\$120,000	\$0	\$120,000
Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO)	Federal Government	\$10,000	\$0	\$10,000
Water Project Foundation	Other	\$50,000	\$35,000	\$85,000
Fresh Water Society	Other	\$50,000	\$35,000	\$85,000
Total Contributions		\$230,000	\$70,000	\$300,000
\$230,000 Cash + \$70,000 In-kind = \$300,000 total project support				
\$120,000 is requested from CWA. \$180,000 is from other sources.				
\$120,000 request from CWA is 40% of \$300,000 (total project support). \$180,000 from other sources is 60% of \$300,000 (total project support).				
The funding request from CWA is eligible as the matching requirement is met.				

7. Performance Indicators

Project proponents are required to report on at least one and all relevant key performance indicators from the list below. It is recommended that groups identify all indicators that apply to the project and explain how the target numbers were calculated.

- Number of activities supporting collaborative priority-setting and decision-making (# of actions)
- Number of events supporting knowledge transfer and sharing (# of events)
- Number of partner organizations engaged in project activities (# of organizations)
- Number of youth engaged in project activities (# of youth)
- Number of sites with enhanced monitoring (# of sites)
- Area of land restored or conserved (# of hectares)
- Number of activities reducing nutrients or contaminants in water (# of activities)
- Amount of phosphorus reduced or diverted (kg/year)
- Number of activities reducing sediment in water? (# of activities)
- Number of Indigenous-led activities that enable freshwater stewardship and/or the intergenerational transfer of knowledge (# of activities)
- Number of mitigation measures and/or management practices implemented (# of mitigation measures and/or management practices)
- Number of partner organizations contributing financial and/or in-kind resources (# of partners/organizations)
- Number of decision-support tools developed and/or implemented (# of tools)
- Number of reports/papers compiled and published (# of reports/papers)
- Number of jobs created (# jobs)

8. Permits and Federal Lands

Applicants are responsible for conducting the necessary research to determine if laws or mandates apply to any of the activities listed in the application. It is recommended that applicants verify relevant federal, provincial/territorial, and municipal legislation and regulations relating to the project's activities and/or location(s).

Permits

If permits or authorizations are required for the project, these must be identified in the application. If not yet obtained, ensure the timeline for obtaining these approvals is included in the project's work plan.

Federal lands

Applicants must review their project locations and activities and determine if any activities will occur on federal lands. Projects occurring on federal lands may be required to complete an Impact Assessment.

According to the [Impact Assessment Act](#), **federal lands** are defined as:

- a) lands that belong to His Majesty in right of Canada, or that His 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;
 - 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.

9. Evaluation Criteria

Eligible applications will be evaluated on their strength of support of program priorities including through the key criteria outlined below.

Demonstrates strong linkages to the Fraser River Freshwater Ecosystem Initiative priorities.

The application must clearly demonstrate how the project will improve water quality and aquatic ecosystem health through at least one of the three program priorities described in Section 1: Eligible Projects.

Builds partnerships through collaboration with other organizations.

Contributions of the various partners and project collaborators need to be clearly described in the application including the benefits derived from these collaborations such as increased capacity and/or expertise and/or resources that are leveraged through these partnerships.

Leveraging financial and in-kind resources.

In accordance with Section 6: Matching Requirements, a minimum 60% of the financial and in-kind support for a proposed project must come from sources other than the Canada Water Agency. Applicants are encouraged to demonstrate more

than this minimum ratio, as well as support from a diverse range of partners and/or funders.

Is scientifically and/or technically sound.

(For projects that include scientific, research, and/or nutrient reduction components.) The application must provide detailed information on methodology and techniques used to evaluate the merit of the project. It must demonstrate the project will be based on knowledge including sound scientific principles and techniques and/or the use of diverse knowledge systems that inform the techniques and approaches being applied.

Project management capacity and financial management capacity

The application should demonstrate that the project team has the expertise and capacity to manage project and financial resources to ensure the successful completion of the project on-scope, on-budget and on-time. The application should demonstrate that risks to successful completion of the project have been considered and describe how those risks will be mitigated. This should include how progress towards results is monitored during project implementation and how the approach to the project can adapt to changing circumstances.

Indigenous-led efforts and/or Knowledge Systems.

For these types of projects, applications should describe how Indigenous governments, communities, and/or partners are actively included and promoted in the development and implementation of the project. Where applicable, details related to how the project enables capacity, knowledge sharing and the desired outcomes resulting from the project should be included.

Builds on/integrates existing research and Knowledge/Indigenous Knowledge.

Project activities are expected to build on existing research and knowledge wherever possible. The Canada Water Agency recognizes the value of both Indigenous Knowledge and scientific knowledge and encourages the use of both in any project. A strong application should build on a vast knowledge base from public and private sources in order to undertake activities that achieve greater environmental results.

Communication of results and knowledge.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to seek opportunities for knowledge transfer to partners and/or external stakeholders or user groups to extend the reach of project outcomes. A competitive application will demonstrate a commitment to publicly share any monitoring or data analysis results and findings to enable benefits to be shared with a wide array of partners and stakeholders, to enable future work and achieve broad impacts throughout the watershed.

10. Application Process

Applicants must submit their project proposal using the [Grants and Contributions Enterprise Management System](#) (GCEMS), Environment and Climate Change Canada's (ECCC) online application system.

Note: The online application system (GCEMS) is shared between CWA and ECCC. References to ECCC in the system apply to both organizations.

It is strongly recommended that applicants complete the budget in GCEMS 24 hours prior to the deadline to allow sufficient time to resolve any errors. If an application is not submitted by the deadline, it will not be considered.

GCEMS Applicant User Guide: The [GCEMS Applicant User Guide](#) contains step-by-step instructions on how to apply for funding, including information on how to create, edit and submit project proposals.

For technical assistance when using GCEMS, please contact the GCEMS team directly at: sgesc-gcems@ec.gc.ca.

11. Selection Process

The Fraser River FEI funding decisions will follow a merit-based competitive process. Applications will undergo a three-stage review process:

1. Administrative review by program staff to confirm completeness and eligibility. Incomplete or ineligible applications will not be considered further.
2. Highly technical projects will be sent for technical review by subject-matter experts to evaluate scientific and technical feasibility including methodology.
3. An Application Review Committee will evaluate the strength of each application's support of the program priorities identified in Section 1, the Performance Indicators identified in Section 7, and the Evaluation Criteria identified in Section 9.

Eligibility decisions of the Evaluation Committee pursuant to this process are final. Applications will not be retained for further consideration during this call for applications.

The CWA may share applications with other funding programs for which applications may be eligible; applicants will be able to opt out of this during the submission process.

12. Notification and Reporting Requirements

All applicants (both successful and unsuccessful) will be notified in writing via email. If your application is approved, you will be contacted to negotiate a Contribution Agreement, which outlines the terms and conditions of funding. Federal Members of Parliament and/or their team may be advised about the approval of a project and may be provided with information in the project application including applicant's name, project title, project description, project location, funding amounts and contact information.

Funding is conditional on the successful negotiation of a Contribution Agreement between the applicants and the CWA. Each Contribution Agreement must include written confirmation of all funding sources, a summary of project design, delivery, progress evaluations and anticipated results, as well as a budget forecast. All components must be accurately completed before the agreement can be signed.

Approved recipients are required to submit reports to the CWA throughout the duration of the project as outlined in the Contribution Agreement. Payments are based on reporting and cannot be made until a report has been submitted, reviewed, and approved by CWA program staff.

Once a project has finished, a final report is required. The final payment will not be provided (minimum 10% holdback) until a final report has been submitted and approved by the CWA.