

Building Safer Communities

Building Safer Communities Grant Application Guidelines

Building Safer Communities Overview

The [Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan](#) consultations showed that alternate crisis response models are needed in our community. The Building Safer Communities (BSC) project aims to meet this need by supporting African, Caribbean and Black-identifying (ACBi) and First Nations, Inuit and Métis (Indigenous) youth at risk of experiencing mental health and addiction crises. The main goal of the BSC project is to develop safer, alternative crisis response models for ACBi and Indigenous youth.

Building Safer Communities (BSC) Grant

\$700,000 is available for the 2025 Funding Cycle. Organizations can request a maximum of \$70,000. Funding decisions will be made by a local [Youth Decision Making Team](#). Partial funding may be allocated based on the amount of applications received. The BSC project is made possible by a federal government grant.

2025 Funding Priorities

The previous BSC granting cycle funded upstream mental health and addiction prevention activities to prevent crisis. For the final year of the grant, we are funding projects, supports or interventions that help ACBi and Indigenous youth experiencing mental health or addiction crises. **Projects applying for BSC funding should aim to help youth feel safe and stable, de-escalate their feelings, and identify their underlying concerns. Eligible projects should fall within the following categories:**

- A. Projects that provide direct mental health or addictions support to youth at risk of experiencing crisis, or youth in post-crisis situations
- B. Projects that pilot new ways of supporting youth experiencing mental health or addiction crises that are community-based and culturally appropriate
- C. Projects that build organizational capacity to better support youth experiencing crisis through staff training, developing crisis support strategies with other community groups, or building bridges with relevant service providers

Examples of eligible projects include

- Develop a network of trained youth and young adults who can provide peer-to-peer support for youth experiencing mental health or addiction challenges.
- Hire mental health systems navigators who provide flexible, responsive support for youth in crisis, including assessing youth needs, responding to basic needs, and/or providing referrals for ongoing support.
- Run life skills and wellness workshops that help youth in post-crisis recovery gain tools for resilience, self-care, and building a sense of control over their lives.
- Provide culturally anchored/traditional healing support or counselling for youth currently struggling with mental health and addiction challenges (e.g., land or arts-based healing activities, events, courses, and workshops).
- Form a network of organizations that collaborate to share knowledge, best

Building Safer Communities

practices, and jointly support ACBi and Indigenous youth mental health and addiction crises.

- Provide staff and interested community members with de-escalation, Mental Health First Aid, or cultural sensitivity training to support youth struggling with mental health or addiction challenges.

Eligibility Criteria

- **The applying organization must be incorporated as a non-profit organization or registered charity or have a sponsor who is incorporated.**
- **Priority will be given to ACBi-led and/or Indigenous led organizations, meaning at least 50% of the organization's leadership team identify as ACB and/or Indigenous.**

To be considered for funding, projects must demonstrate an ability to support ACBi and Indigenous youth experiencing mental health and addiction challenges or crises. In addition, projects must:

- Primarily support African, Caribbean or Black identifying (ACBi), First Nations, Inuit and Métis (Indigenous) youth between the ages of 12 – 25
- Support new programs or improvements to existing programs (funding cannot support ongoing core operations of current programming)
- Not be fully funded by another grant
- Provide all services at no cost to the program participants
- Occur within Waterloo Region
- Spend all BSC grant funds and complete all BSC grant activities by March 31, 2026

Eligible Expenses

Salaries, wages and benefits

- Salaries, wages, and benefits for compensating youth and young leaders, as well as professional, clerical, technical and administrative roles and services, and stipends (including expenses for international staff)

Recruitment and training costs

- Recruitment and training costs (e.g. courses, workshops, etc.)

Office equipment, supplies and materials

- Office equipment, supplies and materials, including computers, printers/scanners, and communications equipment and associated costs

Conference and rental costs

- Costs associated to conferences, including conference room, virtual conferences, and associated equipment rental

Culturally appropriate expenditures

- Culturally appropriate expenditures including gifts (for a maximum of \$100), community feasts, ceremonies and ceremonial meals, gatherings, and circles in accordance with [National Joint Council guidelines](#)

Building Safer Communities

Honoraria

- Honoraria, defined as time-limited remuneration for a volunteer service or participation in project delivery that is consistent with and essential to the attainment of the project's objectives. Honoraria cannot be provided for individuals whose participation in a project is already being compensated (e.g., by their employer) or is being accrued as part of an in-kind contribution

Meals and refreshments for participants

- Meals and refreshments for participants in activities and workshops related to the project, not to exceed the maximum [National Joint Council guideline](#) amount for meal and refreshment rates

Travel, accommodations and related expenses

- Reasonable travel, accommodations, and related expenses in accordance with [National Joint Council Guidelines](#) (Kilometric rates) as well as bus tickets, tokens, and other reasonable participant related transportation reimbursements

Ineligible Expenses

- Project, activities or work beyond the scope of this fund
- For-profit work
- Debt or debt financing (e.g., deficit reduction, depreciation or financing charges, costs incurred before the grant)
- Project, activities, or work that is fully funded by another grant
- Capital expenses

Decision Making Process

To ensure the BSC project is community driven, a team of ACBi and Indigenous youth will be selected to evaluate grant applications and make funding decisions. This group is called the Youth Decision Making (YDM) Team, which is modelled after the [Upstream Fund's Community Change Committee](#).

The YDM Team is a group of local youth, ages 16 – 29, who are committed to building a safer community for ACBi and Indigenous youth. These youth are chosen because they represent a variety of skills and lived experiences. In early 2024, the YDM Team model was used to successfully make funding decisions on a previous round of BSC grants. In November 2024, Waterloo Region youth were invited to apply to join the 2025 YDM Team through an open call. The YDM Team will receive thorough training and support from experienced community facilitators during their decision-making process.

Requirements of Successful Applicants

Successful applicants will be expected to:

- Meet and sign a Funding Agreement with the Region of Waterloo
- Attend an orientation meeting to learn about financial and reporting requirements
- Complete a mid-term and final report

