

Upstream Fund Terms of Reference

Upstream Fund Overview

The Upstream Fund is a council-approved fund to support community-led initiatives in Waterloo Region that align with the [Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan](#) (CSWP). This fund uses a community-based funding model and focuses on upstream initiatives that improve social and economic systems to decrease barriers and improve support that allow people to achieve their full potential. Achieving full potential includes social and economic factors that influence people's health, such as education, income, environment, food security, housing, and employment.

The Upstream fund is allocated alongside the Community Capacity Building fund. The Community Capacity Building Fund is a council approved annual fund to improve the social and economic health and wellbeing of First Nations, Inuit and Métis; African, Caribbean, and Black identifying; racialized and other communities disproportionately affected by systemic inequity.

Upstream approaches allow us to address many priorities and issues simultaneously while potentially requiring fewer resources. For more information about the background and concept of the Upstream Fund, see Appendix A: Background.

Fund Objectives

The Upstream funding process allocates funding to initiatives that align with the CSWP areas of focus. The CSWP is a local community developed framework that also explores and offers a powerful, local interpretation of the concept of upstream or root causes into tangible actions to move forward. The CSWP will be used to further anchor initiatives, actions, and programs with a local context and allocate priorities for funding. The local CSWP Framework is rooted in the upstream concepts and focuses on the local priorities of Truth and Reconciliation, Anti-Hate, Anti Racism, Anti-Oppression and Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI).

CSWP Areas of Focus

1. Truth and Reconciliation
2. Equity, Diversity and Inclusion
3. Self-Determined Communities
4. System Accountability and Action
5. Equitable Access to Basic Needs
6. Circles of Support

In addition to community needs outlined in the CSWP, and community calls for action, the Upstream fund is built upon and guided by the principles outlined in Appendix A.

Last Updated: Jan 10, 2024

The Upstream Fund also aims to prioritize capacity building and collaboration in the community by:

- Prioritizing funding for community organizations that have historically been, excluded from funding opportunities and do not have existing funding sources.
- Funding initiatives that are collaborations across organizations.

Funding Process: The Three Step Model

The three-step model of the Upstream Fund aims to add value at each step for potential funding participants and the broader community regardless of whether an organization receives funding dollars. The intention being that everyone who participates in the process leaves with something useful such as a new relationship, collaborator, resource or platform to champion their work. This funding and investment program goes beyond granting funds and focuses on supporting capacity building.

For more information about the Funding principles and process, see Appendix A.

2024 Funding Cycle

Annually \$1.89 M of funding will be available to eligible organizations.

There is no maximum amount for funding requests, organizations are encouraged to request the funds needed to carry out proposed activities.

Requests may be up to 2 years.

Eligibility of Applicants

The Upstream community funding model is open to all community organizations working on upstream initiatives within Waterloo Region. However, the fund will prioritize grassroots community organizations that have historically been, and continue to be, excluded from funding opportunities. This includes groups and organizations led by and serving:

- First Nations, Inuit and Métis
- African, Caribbean and Black identifying
- Communities and equity deserving* groups facing exclusion based on attitudinal, historic, social and environmental barriers, based on age, ethnicity, disability, economic status, gender, nationality, race, sexual orientation, gender identity, creed etc.

*Equity-deserving refers to groups who experience barriers in access, opportunities and resources due to disadvantage and discrimination. These groups actively seek social justice and reparation.

To receive funding, groups must be one of the following:

Last Updated: Jan 10, 2024

- Organizations with or without charitable status
- Not-for-profit corporation, incorporated under federal or provincial legislation (a “Corporation”)
- Un-incorporated not-for-profit group that designates one individual, or a corporation to sign the funding agreement.

Please note, sponsoring Corporations or individuals will accept responsibility under the funding agreement, including but not limited to reporting on the funds received. We encourage any such submissions to connect with the Upstream Team at the time of submission.

Organizations who do not have charitable status or are not formally incorporated as a not for profit may still apply.

The following groups are not eligible for Upstream Funds:

- Organizations with existing Upstream or CCB financial agreements are not eligible to apply for the same initiative*.
- For profit organizations
- Other levels of government (e.g., municipal, provincial, federal)
- Public Sector Institutions (e.g., Hospitals, School Boards, Post-Secondary Institutions, Children’s Aid Society, Community Care Access Centres)
- Political organizations
- Organizations whose activities may breach the Ontario Human Rights Code or Charter of Rights
- Social Enterprises
- Activities already funded by Region of Waterloo or other funding agencies

*Previous recipients are eligible to submit new initiatives for funding.

Eligible Expenses

Upstream Fund support flexibility to use funding where it is needed the most to effectively deliver programs, services and build organizational capacity and sustainability.

Eligible expenses include, but are not limited to:

- Expansion of existing/ongoing or new projects, programs, and services that align with the fund objectives
- Related equipment and operating costs (e.g., space rental, supplies, events, etc.)
- Related administrative costs (e.g., staffing*, benefits)
- Organizational capacity building or professional development (e.g., board training)

* Organizations requesting staffing costs through funding are encouraged to align wages with current living wage rates. For more information visit the [Living Wage Network](#).

Ineligible expenses include:

- Capital Construction.
- Work beyond the scope of this fund.
- For profit work.
- Programs that other levels of government have legislated responsibility for funding.
 - This includes government mandated programs such as school board educational programs, public health programs, provincially mandated services or social assistance programs and health care services.
- Debt or debt financing (e.g., deficit reduction, depreciation or financing charges, costs incurred before the grant).
- Work that is fully funded.

Requirements of Successful Applicants - Funding Agreements:

Successful applicants will sign a Funding Agreement with the Region of Waterloo.

- Financial reporting requirements will be outlined in the funding agreement and will be proportionate to the amount of funding awarded:
- Applicants requesting \$100,000 or more will be required to submit an annual Audit or Review Engagement to the Region of Waterloo.
- Up to 50% of the cost of the review engagement can be included in proposals for Upstream funding
- Region staff will work with each successful applicant to determine how best to track progress, and report program impacts.

Appendix A – Fund Background

The concept of Upstream is broad, as it can include reforming fundamental social and economic structures and systems that distribute wealth, power, opportunities, and decision-making. This can further include a variety of initiatives focused on achieving optimal health and wellbeing that exist on a continuum. The more upstream the action, the greater the impact on a population level as it is more focused on prevention. Middle and downstream approaches typically focus more on reducing risk or changing the effects of causes. These approaches form a continuum of opportunities where change can be made.

The formation of the funding approach and philosophies have been guided by:

1. Upstream Principles
2. CSWP Areas of Focus
3. Upstream 3-Step Model

Upstream Principles

The following principles approved by Regional Council have guided the structure, engagement, and decision-making processes for the Upstream Fund.

- a) **Respond to the Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan (CSWP) framework**
By anchoring the policy firmly in the CSWP framework, this gives us actionable opportunities that respond to current needs identified by community related to upstream initiatives.
- b) **Support community-led change initiatives**
Community-centered models, led by community organizations and supported by systems, is the best way to move forward for meaningful change. Opportunities from designing the process to making the decisions enable community organizations to self-determine, mobilize, and make meaningful contributions and impacts to the health and well-being of community members.
- c) **Explore and try new models of participatory governance with community**
This principle underlines the opportunity to explore ways community engagement can support the design of the fund and play a key role in decision-making and the allocation of the funds. A community-led, system-supported approach to implementation of the funding program will include community representation at the decision-making table, ensuring equitable access to information about funding opportunities, providing application and system navigation support (as relevant), having transparent and coordinated review processes, and ensuring accountability in monitoring and reporting is based on success measures identified by the community.
- d) **Community Capacity, Collaboration and Knowledge Creation**

This initiative provides a unique opportunity for the Region, alongside system partners and community, to work together to build effective models to tackle complex challenges. Regional staff will work with the community to develop the funding process and create opportunities for collaboration. The process will be continually evaluated and evolve as new learnings are shared.

e) **Building strategic alignment between other funding/investment**

It is important that this new fund strategically align with other grants and funding streams that exist within the Region. Specifically, the administration of this fund will align with the funding investments led by the Immigration Partnership. Initiatives will be coordinated and recommended between the funds as appropriate to ensure funding opportunities are best utilized and maximized.

CSWP Areas of Focus

- Truth and Reconciliation:
 - Acknowledging and restoring Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination
 - Honouring and respecting Indigenous worldviews, knowledge, traditions, customs, and ceremonies
- Equity, Diversity and Inclusion:
 - Recognizing, acknowledging, and confronting the nature of structural and cultural discrimination against First Nations, Inuit and Métis, Black, African, Caribbean, and other equity deserving* groups facing exclusion based on attitudinal, historic, social and environmental barriers, based on age, ethnicity, disability, economic status, gender, nationality, race, sexual orientation, gender identity, creed etc.
- Self-Determined Communities:
 - Supporting communities in defining and pursuing their own future; representing their own; and practice, preserve and promote their own value systems and traditions without being made to lose their sense of identity and worth.
 - Shifting power to community, trusting community to know their needs and how to best meet them.
- System Accountability and Action:
 - Fostering systems that are designed and structured in a manner consistent with the aspirations of the community and centre wellbeing.
- Equitable Access to Basic Needs:
 - Ensuring culturally specific and trauma-informed care and services that influence social determinants of health.

- Social determinants of health include: Education, Employment Health and Mental wellness, Housing, Food Security, Early years, Income/ Employment, Ability.
- Circles of Support:
 - Creating a sense of security, support, acceptance, identity and inclusion
 - Recognizing and honouring the various supports and networks within communities
 - Creating physical and psychological space for communities

Upstream 3-Step Model

STEP 1 - Open Call and Engagement

Open call is an opportunity for outreach and engagement with community groups and organizations interested in the funding opportunity. This part of the process will include Community Collaborative events/spaces (virtual and in-person) that encourage collaboration between organizations, resource sharing, and increase knowledge about the breadth of work happening in the community.

STEP 2- Decision Making

A committee of community members is selected and regionally supported to evaluate applications and make decisions on funding allocations (referred to as the Community Change Committee). The Community Change Committee will use a trust-based approach, Upstream priorities, and community-identified priorities (through CSWP, ongoing consultations, and the Community Collaborative Events) to assess the funding applications to allocate funds for Upstream Fund.

This model acknowledges that the community best understands their strengths, assets, and needs. The Community Change Committee will determine how the funding will be allocated using the program guidelines set out in these terms of reference.

An external community facilitator with granting and community building experience will support and facilitate the process from selection to allocation of funds by the Community Change committee.

Step 3 Sharing stories of Impact and Learning:

Reporting processes can be time consuming and resource intensive for many organizations. Successful submissions will be engage in a community based participatory research approach. Reporting for the Upstream Fund will focus on learning and allow organizations to share their impact through multiple different ways (e.g., written format, interview, focus group). At minimum, individuals/organizations will be asked to provide information about their work including the population groups they supported and how, as well the impact achieved.

External expertise will be engaged to support impact evaluation and reporting around the Upstream Fund process and outcomes. This resource will provide support to fund participants, staff and the community to learn and improve the process for subsequent

Last Updated: Jan 10, 2024

years. This support will be essential in conducting a fulsome community led assessment on the outcomes of the funding and related impacts as well as sharing the findings with Council and the community.