

Upstream Fund Terms of Reference

Upstream Fund Overview

The Upstream Fund is a Waterloo Regional Council approved fund to support community-led initiatives in Waterloo Region that are aligned with the [Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan \(CSWP\)](#) framework. The Upstream Fund recognizes the value that community-led organizations and groups have in making Waterloo Region a safe and well community for all. Investing in community-led change was a key call to action from community as part of the CSWP process. Systemic policies that encourage and support community-led change are considered a critical part of a holistic upstream approach. The model was designed around core principles to focus on resources and support beyond just funding allocation. Core goals included; relationship building, peer engagement and collaboration, and learning together with a participatory research and evaluation model.

For more information about the background and concept of the Upstream Fund, see the [Application Guide](#).

Fund Objectives

The Upstream funding process allocates funding to initiatives that align with the CSWP **emerging framework**, which was created through a collaborative process. During this process, the Region worked to listen to the voices of many across our community, and to use those voices to create a framework for action and change. Building on the good work already underway in our community, this framework supports the goal of enabling every person who calls Waterloo Region home to feel safe, to feel like they are cared for, and to have the opportunity to thrive.

The CSWP framework is rooted in advancing:

- Truth and Reconciliation
- Equity, Diversity and Inclusion
- Self-Determined Communities
- System Accountability and Action
- Equitable Access to Basic Needs
- Circles of Support
- Building capacity within community organizations that have been historically excluded from funding opportunities

For more information about CSWP priorities, see the [Application Guide](#).

Funding Process: The Three-Step Model

The three-step model of the Upstream Fund is a central element of this funding approach and aims to add value at each step by going beyond granting funds and focusing on supporting capacity and community building.

1. Open Call and Engagement
2. Decision Making
3. Sharing Stories of Impact and Learning

2024 Funding Cycle

- \$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 fund prioritizes grassroots organizations and community groups that have historically been, and continue to be, excluded from funding opportunities. This includes initiatives 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, applicants must be:

- Initiatives operating within Waterloo Region
- Not-for-profit groups* with or without charitable status

*Incorporation under federal or provincial legislation (a “Corporation”) is not an eligibility requirement. Organizations that do not have charitable status or are not formally incorporated as a not-for-profit may still apply.

Please note: non-incorporated not-for-profit groups must designate a Financial Sponsor. Financial Sponsor will sign the funding agreement and is responsible under the agreement for, but not limited to reporting on the funds received. We encourage any such submissions to connect with the Upstream Team ahead of submission to discuss options.

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

The Upstream Fund supports flexibility to use funding where it most effectively enables the delivery of programs and services, and builds 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.