

Connecting British Columbia Program Phase Two – Intake Two – Connectivity Infrastructure Strategy Application Guide



Introduction

The Connecting British Columbia program is a province-wide program administered by Northern Development Initiative Trust (Northern Development) and is available to all eligible applicants. It is funded by the Province of British Columbia.

Program Purpose

The current objective of the multi-year Connecting British Columbia program is to accelerate the delivery of high-speed internet connectivity at minimum target speeds of 50 megabits per second (Mbps) down and 10 Mbps up to homes and businesses in rural communities in B.C.

The high cost of infrastructure has been identified by local governments, First Nations, and internet service providers as one of the key barriers to expanding internet services. The Connecting British Columbia program helps pay for infrastructure required to deliver high-speed internet connectivity to rural areas of the province.

This stream of the Connecting British Columbia program provides funding to support the development of regional connectivity infrastructure strategies. Strategies should ensure that infrastructure investments are coordinated, scalable, and provide value for money and achieve priority objectives for the region.

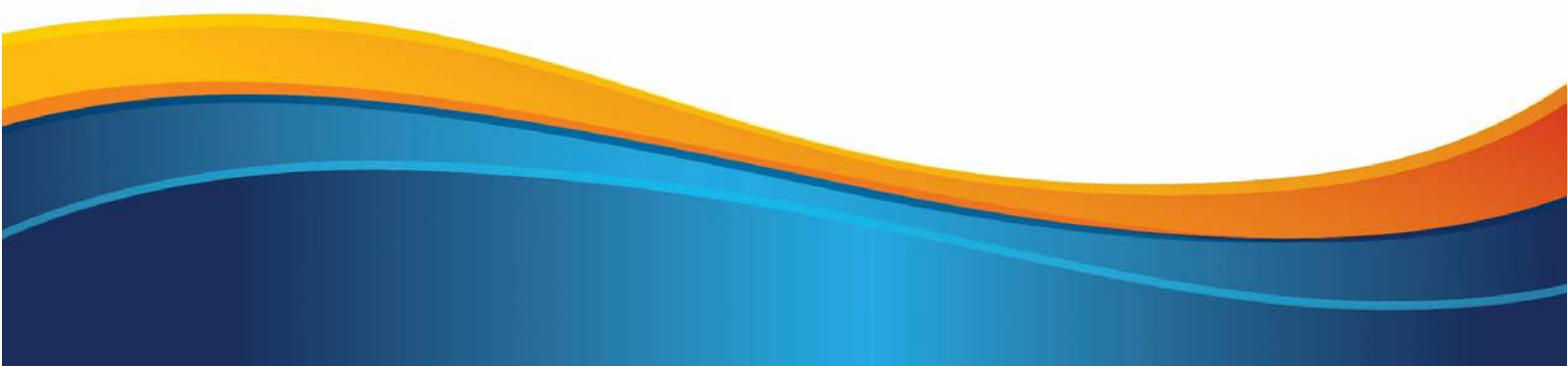
Approved projects must be completed by March 31, 2020.

Eligible Applicants

Examples of eligible applicants include:

- Municipal government or regional district established by BC legislation.
- Not-for-profit government organizations.
- First Nations or First Nations organizations – i.e. band council or a corporation controlled by a First Nation.

Individuals cannot apply to the program.



Eligible Project and Support

This program intake, effective July 1, 2018, is to provide funding support for local municipal governments, regional districts and First Nations with limited capacity to undertake a connectivity infrastructure strategy (e.g., feasibility assessments, business cases, developing applications) to develop sustainable connectivity infrastructure projects.

Applications will be reviewed and assessed on a first come, first serve basis until available funds are committed.

The development of connectivity infrastructure strategies are important to ensure that infrastructure investments are, to the extent possible, coordinated, scalable, provide value for money and achieve priority objectives for the region.

Applicants may contract qualified third-party consultants to provide communities with access to tools and resources to navigate the connectivity landscape, including best practices and shared learning.

Written support from the local government body, is required before an application will be considered for funding.

Eligible project activities are outlined below.

Connectivity Infrastructure Strategy

The program will allow communities to access third party funding to offset the cost of hiring a telecommunications consultant to assist with rural and remote community connectivity planning. The consultants will provide communities with access to tools and resources to navigate the connectivity landscape, including best practices and shared learning. Eligible project types and activities may include

- Community engagement activities that guide the design and implementation of broadband projects.
- Relationship, partnership and coalition development to assist with connectivity expansion initiatives.
- Providing assistance to support applications to federal government connectivity programs.
- Research and reports that inform and support the design, build and operations of networks, including technical specifications, landing stations, and the preparation of engineer-stamped business cases, if required.
- Interpretation of regulatory decisions and advice on implications for community connectivity plans.
- The development of comprehensive business documents for telecommunications services such as business cases, value assessments, stakeholder plans, accountability matrixes, acquisition plans, governance plans and transition plans.
- Benchmarking studies and best practice reviews.
- Development of change management strategies and governance structures.
- Project management, coordination and development.

A [Sample Regional Connectivity Infrastructure Strategy Framework Template](#) is available as a guide for reference. The template is not a required document to be used by applicants to this program.

An approved connectivity infrastructure strategy development grant does not provide a guarantee of funding in subsequent applications submitted to the program.

Note: This funding is NOT for ‘Smart Cities’ projects.

Funding Limit

Eligible applicants can apply for up to 75% of eligible project costs to a maximum of \$15,000 per project.

Third Party Contributions

Applications to the Connecting British Columbia program must also demonstrate leveraged funds from other sources that may include: funds from the applicant, funds from other funding agencies or funds from federal and/or other levels of government. However, any funds that were previously granted by the Province for other connectivity programs may not be used to leverage Connecting British Columbia funds.

Project Timelines

Applications must demonstrate that the project will be completed by March 31, 2020. A high-level project plan, including major milestones is strongly preferred.

Applications for projects with an immediate start date will be more favourably ranked in the assessment and review process. The need for additional steps before a project can start (e.g., securing other funding, completion of other projects) will be taken into consideration in the review and assessment of applications. Such applications may also be deferred for consideration to a future intake round pending availability of funds.

Eligible and Ineligible Costs

Eligible costs under the program are the reasonable and essential expenses required to complete the project. The program will fund consulting services and associated cost related to development of the connectivity infrastructure strategy. The determination of eligible expenses rests with the program.

Eligible Costs

- Consulting services, including:
 - Project management, feasibility studies related directly to the project.
 - Design/engineering costs.
 - Business planning development, and project-related professional fees.
- Consultant travel costs:
 - Cost of travel which is deemed necessary to the performance of the project.
 - Travel expenses, at economy rates, shall be charged at actual costs.
 - To be eligible, travel costs must clearly document the purpose of each trip and be considered reasonable by the program.
- PST.

Ineligible Costs

- Permits and approvals.
- Legal costs.
- Professional fees for memberships or accreditations.
- Academic research that does not deliver concrete actions or tangible benefits.
- In-kind contributions.
- Costs incurred prior to the date of written conditional approval of the application by Northern Development.
- GST or HST.

Applying to the Program

The application form is available for download at www.northerndevlopment.bc.ca/funding-programs/partner-programs/connecting-british-columbia/. Please note that some components of the application (i.e., council/band resolutions) may require additional time and planning to complete.

The program will begin to accept applications on July 1, 2018 until funding is fully committed. All applications received by the program will be treated as confidential.

Applications must contain all completed Required Attachments for the application to be considered. Incomplete applications will not be reviewed.

All program communication will take place with the primary contact using the contact information provided in the application. It is the responsibility of the applicant to notify Northern Development regarding any changes to the contact information provided.

If you need help in completing your application, please refer to section titled ‘Application Support’.

Required Attachments

Attachments to the application are mandatory and must be submitted at the same time as the application. All attachments must be specific to the legal entity applying for funding and may not be from a related organization such as a parent company or subsidiary. If mandatory attachments are not included with the application, the application will not be considered for the funding.

- Consultant proposal including quote(s).
- One of the following:
 - Municipal Council / Regional District resolution of support/approval for the proposed project.
 - Letters must be recently dated and reference the project.
 - Band Council Resolution, Tribal Council Resolution or other equivalent documentation from self-governing First Nations indicating support for the proposed project.
 - Resolutions must be signed and recently dated and reference the project.
- Funding approval letters from other sources.

NOTE: Failure to submit the completed required attachments will result in the ineligibility of the application.

Project Review and Assessment

Eligible applications will be subject to a review and assessment process.

If additional information is determined to be needed to support the review and assessment, eligible applicants will be contacted, and additional information requested.

Funding decisions are final.

Project Approval, Grant Agreement and Reporting

Awarding of funding to successful applicants will be conditional upon finalization of a grant agreement that sets out the terms and conditions of funding. The program reserves the right to award partial contributions of the total funding requested.

Grant agreements will require the applicants to follow the program guidelines and requirements, including submitting progress reports and financial reporting documents. Funding recipients will be required to submit progress reports and a final report that outlines the project's performance and outcomes. Further details on reporting requirements will be provided to successful applicants.

Failure to meet the requirements of the grant agreement could result in the requirement for the repayment of funding to the program and disqualify the funding recipients from further applications to the program.

Events and Communications

The grant agreement may require the following:

- Funding recipients must keep the program contact person(s) informed in advance (with a minimum notice period) of any promotional activities or events related to the project.
- The program funder (the Government of British Columbia and the Ministry of Citizens' Services) be acknowledged in project communications, events and signage.
- Consent of the Province to publish project details in reports and in promotion of the program (i.e., on websites and in public material).

Freedom of Information

Applications submitted under the program are subject to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. The information being collected is for the purpose of administering the program and evaluating eligibility of the proposal.

Reference Material

A new Connectivity Handbook has been developed to promote the importance of access to affordable, reliable and adequate broadband infrastructure to meet the needs of British Columbians. The Handbook is intended to help local governments and community organizations become more engaged, taking on leadership roles in defining key service deficiencies and unserved or under-served areas; and, in developing practical plans that can lead to realistic and affordable broadband solutions to meet those needs.

Sample Regional Connectivity Infrastructure Strategy Framework Template

A [Sample Regional Connectivity Infrastructure Strategy Framework Template](#) is available as a guide for reference. The template is not a required document to be used by applicants to this program.

Application Support / Contact

If you have a question that is not addressed in this program guide, support is available from program staff at:

Northern Development Initiative Trust

301-1268 Fifth Avenue
Prince George, BC V2L 3L2

250-561-2525

info@northerndevelopment.bc.ca

www.northerndevelopment.bc.ca