

Connecting British Columbia Program Regional Connectivity Plan Funding Application Guide



Program Overview

The Connecting British Columbia program (“Program”) provides province-wide connectivity funding administered by Northern Development Initiative Trust (Northern Development) and funded by the Province of British Columbia.

The current objective of the multi-year Program is to accelerate the access 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 underserved rural and Indigenous communities in B.C.

As part of the Program, the Regional Connectivity Plan Funding (“Funding”) supports the development of regional connectivity infrastructure plans. The Funding is intended to support eligible applicants with the technical infrastructure assessment of current and proposed networks in a regional connectivity plan.

What is the Goal of a Regional Connectivity Plan?

The goal of a Regional Connectivity Plan is to:

- Ensure proposed investments in connectivity support the desired outcomes that the internet services are expected to deliver
- Reduce the investment risk for Internet Service Provider’s (ISP’s) by providing documented support for the required infrastructure prior to costly engineering studies and business case due diligence

What are the Basic Components of a Regional Connectivity Plan?

A Regional Connectivity Plan consists of:

- An inventory of available broadband services in the region with internet service providers identified
- Prioritized regional goals and objectives
- Identified gaps in the current connectivity and how objectives may be affected
- Connectivity solutions that are required to support regional goals and objectives
- A cost estimate of the required connectivity solution to support the regional goals and objectives

Funding Objectives and Conditions

The Funding will offset applicant's cost of hiring a third-party technical consultant to assist with the final stages of developing a regional connectivity plan. The consultant will validate the existing broadband services and infrastructure, the proposed connectivity solution(s) and the estimated costs to help the region achieve their goals and objectives. The applicant is expected to work with local internet service providers to validate existing services including speeds and capacity in the region.

General Conditions:

- Eligible applicants can apply for up to **75% of eligible project costs to a maximum of \$15,000 per Regional Connectivity Plan**
- Pooling of Regional Connectivity Plan Funding applications and funds towards a single plan is not allowed; however, applicants may access additional funding sources to cover the costs of their regional connectivity plan
- Third-party consultants must have related telecommunication experience and a professional designation i.e. PEng or CMC
- Approved Regional Connectivity Plans **must be completed by March 31, 2022**

Eligible Applicants

Examples of eligible applicants include:

- Municipal governments or regional districts established by B.C. legislation
- Not-for-profit government organizations which are registered and active in B.C.
- First Nations or First Nations organizations – i.e. band councils or a corporations controlled by a First Nation

This Funding is designed for regional solutions, however if you are a town or village you may qualify if you can demonstrate that your community is underserved, and your objectives and proposed solutions are complex enough to require third-party validation.

Individuals and non-government organizations cannot apply to the program.

Applicant Requirements

In advance of applying for funding, applicants are required to perform preliminary analysis that can be used to support a Regional Connectivity Plan. Once these are completed, an applicant can apply for funding to hire a third-party contractor to validate proposed solutions and estimated costs. See the [Application Workbook](#) for help with conducting this preliminary analysis.

The following are required to be completed by the applicant in order to be eligible for funding to hire a third-party contractor:

- Outline how connectivity is a priority for your region
 - Identify the priority goals and objectives for the region such as health, education, public safety, economic development that improved internet services will enable
- Identify the gaps in connectivity that are impacting the region's ability to realize their objectives
- Inventory of connectivity in the region
- Find a third-party contractor to validate and provide connectivity solutions

Contractor Requirements

Once the applicant has completed the preliminary analysis for the region, applicants can obtain a quote from a qualified contractor to complete the final analysis of a Regional Connectivity Plan. The quote should include the following items:

- Cost assessment of connectivity investments required to support the regions goals
- Types of connectivity and priority areas to ensure goals are optimized
- Validate current internet infrastructure, proposed solution(s) and estimated costs

Eligible and Ineligible Costs

Eligible costs under the program are the reasonable and essential expenses required to complete the validation process. The determination of eligible expenses rests with the program administrator.

Eligible Costs

- Consulting services, including:
 - 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

- Legal costs
- Staff wages, staff travel
- 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

Applying to the Program

The application form is available for download at www.northerndevelopment.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.

General Conditions:

- Applications will be reviewed and assessed on a first come, first serve basis until available funds are 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
- [ISP Inventory Form\(s\)](#)

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.

General Conditions:

- 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
- Funding recipients will be required to submit a final report including financial reporting documents 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 non-reimbursement of consultant fees and disqualify the funding recipient 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 Province of British Columbia) and Northern Development Initiative Trust 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

The [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.

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

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