
Active Communities Initiative

2026 Guidelines
Government of Alberta
Tourism and Sport



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Section 1: Introduction

1.1 Purpose

The Active Communities Initiative (ACI) supports eligible organizations to renew, retrofit and/or build new small to medium sized public-use community sport and recreation facilities.

1.2 Outcomes

Outcome 1	Increased sport and recreation activity
Outcome 2	Improved function of community facilities (safety, accessibility, usability)
Outcome 3	Improved operational sustainability
Outcome 4	Stimulated economic impacts (jobs, construction related spending)
Outcome 5	Enhanced individual and social benefits <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stronger relationships • Improved academic/work performance • Enhanced community engagement and leadership capacities

1.3 Funding Range and Timelines

	Minimum Grant	Maximum Grant	Opening Date	Closing Date
Stream One	\$50,000	\$500,000	April 1, 2026	June 1, 2026
Stream Two	\$500,001	\$1.5 Million		
Maximum funding from the Government of Alberta cannot exceed 50 per cent of the total project cost				

1.4 Steps to Complete ACI Application

Question/Action	Reference	Instruction
1. Download the ACI Guidelines	ACI Website	Read carefully, then proceed
2. Self-Assess Applicant Eligibility	2.1	If eligible, proceed
3. Self-Assess Project Eligibility	2.2	If eligible, proceed
4. Download Workbook	ACI Website	Review, then proceed
5. Complete Workbook	All Guidelines	Once completed, proceed to submit
6. Submit Application	ACI Website	Upload all required documentation

Section 2: Eligibility Requirements

2.1 Applicant Eligibility

a) Applicant Corporate Registry

Eligible applicants must either be First Nations or Metis Settlements or registered, and in good standing for more than two years under one of the following Acts:

Provincial Legislation	Federal Legislation
<i>Agriculture Societies Act</i>	<i>Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act</i> (operating in Alberta)
<i>Business Corporations Act</i> , Part 21	<i>Income Tax Act</i> (operating in Alberta)
<i>Companies Act</i> , Part 9	<i>Special Act of the Parliament of Canada</i> (operating in Alberta)
<i>Special Act of the Alberta Legislature Societies Act</i>	

b) Operational Eligibility

Eligible applicants, as per 2.1(a) above, must currently operate, or plan to operate, the public-use community sport and recreation facility being proposed for funding. An applicant that operates, but does not own, the community facility must have an executed lease, or sub-lease, with a minimum five-year term in place.

c) Ineligible Applicants

Organizations not registered under one of the above-mentioned Acts, (see 2.1.(a))	Non-profit organizations that primarily support private sector interest or do not primarily provide public access to sport facilities, programs, and services
Individuals	Post-secondary Institutions, as defined under Alberta's Post-Secondary Learning Act
Municipalities	Public or private schools (i.e., grades K-12 and post-secondary)
For-profit organizations	Organizations that have overdue or incomplete reporting for any Government of Alberta (GOA) grant funding previously received

2.2 Project Eligibility

a) Eligible Projects

ACI supports projects that retrofit, renew, expand and/or build new small to medium sized public-use community sport and recreation facilities, where the primary goal of the project is increasing sport, physical activity and recreation in both indoor and outdoor fields of play.

The following provides definitions and examples of the types of projects that are eligible through ACI:

Type	ACI Definition	Examples
New Build	Creation of a completely new sport and recreation facility or a major addition, where no structure previously existed	Construction of a new arena (indoor/outdoor), multi-purpose recreation centre, outdoor courts (tennis, basketball), etc.
Retrofit	Modify an existing facility that will increase sport and recreation visitation and program registrations, thereby enhancing operational sustainability	Convert an existing weight room into a gymnasium, where local demand for court sports is growing more than weight training Conversion of non-activity space into an activity purposed space
Renewal	Upgrade and/or replacement of the core structural, mechanical and/or utility infrastructure of the facility to address functional deficiencies, code compliance issues, and/or imminent health and safety issues	Roof repair/replacement Ice refrigeration repair/ replacement Water piping repair/replacement

b) Ineligible Projects and Facilities

Ineligible projects and facilities include the following:

Ineligible Projects	Ineligible Facilities
Purchase of land and/or buildings, even if only an ancillary element of the project	Facilities not primarily focused on sport, physical activity and recreation
Feasibility studies, needs assessments, and architectural drawings	Facilities that are privately owned and/or operated
Portable or movable equipment that is not essential to the capital project	Facilities that have limited or restricted public access (e.g., member-only facilities)
Parks, trails and playgrounds	

c) Eligible and Ineligible Project Expenses

ACI grant funds can be used for all expenses directly related to the approved project scope. Proposed expense estimates must be included in the workbook with back-up documentation to support cost estimates.

Ineligible project expenses include, but are not limited to, the following:

Debt reduction, loan servicing costs (i.e., interest payments), and/or bank fees	Film, video, social media productions, promotional campaigns, and/or art purchase
Lease costs for land, building, equipment, or other facilities	Endowments, fundraising, donor/volunteer recognition, and gifts
Real estate fees	Licensed vehicles, equipment, and non-fixed assets unless ancillary to the project
Organizational management costs (i.e., payroll, legal, finance, and insurance)	Volunteer expenses, time and labour not directly related to the physical construction of the project (e.g., preparation of funding applications, planning meetings, fundraising, groundbreaking, opening and other ceremonial events)

2.3 Required Documentation

The following lists the required documentation that **MUST** be included when submitting the grant application via the online application portal:

Required Documentation	Description
Board Motion	A motion approved by the Board of Directors that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affirms all information and documentation provided in the application is accurate as presented • Approves the submission of ACI application for the project
ACI Business Case Workbook	A Microsoft Excel Workbook that must be downloaded from the ACI webpage, completed by the applicant, and uploaded with other required documentation when submitting application.
Financial Statements	All eligible organizations are governed under legislation that requires financial statements to be completed and approved by the organization's membership. Bank statements are NOT applicable proxies for Financial Statements.
Operational Lease	Where the applicant/operator is not the facility owner, they must submit a copy of their operational lease agreement, with term and conditions included.
Professional Third-Party Facility Assessment <i>Renewal Projects Only</i>	ACI assumes that all Renewal projects are addressing key cyclical renewal needs as identified through a professional Third-Party Facility Assessment. A Facility Assessment normally identifies functional deficiencies, code or regulatory compliance issues, and any predictable, or imminent, health and safety risks.
Professional Third-Party Cost Estimates <i>All Projects</i>	<u>For Renewal projects:</u> An official Vendor Quote that addresses the deficiencies identified in the Facility Assessment. <u>For Retrofit and New Build projects:</u> A professional Third-Party Cost Estimate must be completed to accurately estimate the project costs and recommended budget contingency.
Cash Contribution Agreements	Institutional documentation that confirms cash contribution commitments claimed/secured from all sources, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipal Government • Federal Government • Private/Corporate • Foundation/Donor

Vendor Value-In-Kind Quotes Discount	Vendor quote(s) secured by the applicant that validates Value-In-Kind contributions claimed that offsets projects expenses for equipment, materials and professional services.
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Section 3: ACI Criteria

3.1 Applicant Capacity

Organizations that have a strong financial position and effective operational experience improve their organizational capacity to effectively support:

- Business continuity during construction
- Project deliverables and unanticipated project challenges
- Sustainable facility operations after project is completed.

Considerations for ACI assessment of operational strengths are as follows:

Focus Area	Sources	Examples
Financial Position	Financial statements Balance Sheet Statement of Operations	Total Current Assets Total Current Liabilities Total Unrestricted Assets
Operational Experience	Operational records	Years of operational experience Operational surplus/deficit history Asset management plan (maintenance & lifecycle)
Project Management	Project management resources: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipal • Contracted • Internal 	Municipal HR commitments Contract commitments (and budget) Internal HR profile(s) demonstrating project management expertise

3.2 Project Budget

ACI applications should present a complete and accurate project budget that clearly aligns project costs with the stated scope of work, demonstrates reasonable pricing for materials and services, and identifies any additional funding sources that strengthen overall financial feasibility. Assessment of the project budget will consider whether it reflects appropriate financial stewardship, includes sufficient detail to validate cost assumptions, and shows that the project can be delivered within available resources while maximizing community benefit.

a) Eligible Matching Contributions

Contributions may include cash, funding from other levels of government, and/or documented Value-In-Kind (VIK) contributions such as donated labour, equipment, materials, or services.

To ensure shared investment and strengthen project feasibility, applicants must demonstrate confirmed funding from non-provincial sources. Contributions from non-provincial sources must cover at least 50% of total project costs.

To ensure compliance with this requirement, applicants must identify all other secured or pending financial contributions with institutional documentation that confirms cash contribution commitments claimed/secured from all non-provincial sources, including (if applicable):

- Municipal Government
- Federal Government
- Private/Corporate
- Foundation/Donor

The following table outlines how VIK contributions may be counted toward an applicant's matching share:

	Unskilled Labour	Skilled Labour	Equipment, Materials or Services
Eligible Hourly Rate	\$20.00	\$40.00	Documented at Market Value
Notes on VIK:			
All VIK contributions for donated equipment, materials, and services must be documented with official vendor commitment documentation submitted with all application materials.			
Charitable gaming proceeds generated from licensed gaming events (e.g., bingos, casinos, raffles, and pull tickets) may be used as contributions.			
Land donations can be used as a matching contribution with confirmation of fair market value and related transfer of land title to the applicant; or transfer of title to the owner that establishes a long-term lease with the applicant organization for the operations of the facility.			

3.3 Community and Market Assessment

ACI Community and Market Assessment requirements are proportional to the scope and complexity of the project. The following table provides the key elements of a Community and Market Assessment for each of the eligible project types:

Type	Community and Market Assessment Details
New Build	Market Assessment (New Build): evidence of local market supply/demand including analysis of similar facilities, programs, and services within the catchment area. Cost Estimates (Professional third Party) Municipal priority status: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capital Plan priority • Financial commitment • Project management support • Community consultations (what-we-heard report, barriers analysis, etc.)
Retrofit	Market Assessment (Retrofit): evidence of <u>internal utilization/participation trends</u> and local market supply/demand, including analysis of similar facilities, programs, and services within the catchment area. Cost Estimates (Professional Third Party).
Renewal	Facility Assessment (Professional 3 rd Party): Identifies functional deficiencies, code/regulatory compliance issues (including Barrier Free standards*), and/or imminent, health and safety risks. * <u>Barrier Free standards</u> address accessibility issues for people of all abilities, including accessible designs for entrances, circulation, washrooms, fields of play, and spectator areas. Professional 3 rd Party Cost Estimates. Municipal priority (project support and/or financial commitment).

3.4 Strategic Alignment

All ACI applications will be assessed in consideration of “the extent to which the project or program aligns with the government’s strategic objectives, as identified in the government’s strategic and business plans, and other government priorities.” (Source: clause 4 of the Infrastructure Accountability Act, 2021)

The following documents are key references to understand the current priorities of the Government of Alberta and the Ministry of Tourism and Sport:

Document	Strategic Scope
Alberta’s 20-Year Strategic Capital Plan (2025)	Government-Wide
Ministry of Tourism and Sport Business Plan (2026-29)	Ministry of Tourism and Sport
Higher Ground: A Tourism Sector Strategy	Tourism
Survey of Albertans on Sport and Recreation	Sport, Physical Activity and Recreation

The strategic alignment assessment of ACI grant applications will consider government and Ministry strategic priorities, and all aspects of the application submission, with a particular focus on the following sport and recreation strategic priorities:

Focus Area	Question(s) to ask	ACI Outcome References
Reduce Barriers to Participation	How will this project meet or exceed accessibility standards in the Alberta Accessibility Design Guide 2024, that will identify, remove, and/or prevent barriers so people of all abilities can fully participate in the sport or recreation activities offered?	<u>Outcome 1</u> : Increase sport and recreation activity <u>Outcome 2</u> : Improved function of community facilities (safety, accessibility, usability)
Increase Program Activity Levels	How will this project enhance the facility's capacity, functionality, and long-term sustainability in ways that will increase sport and recreation activity levels and generate broader community and economic benefits?	<u>Outcome 3</u> : Improved operational sustainability <u>Outcome 4</u> : Stimulated economic impacts (jobs, construction-related spending)
Enhance Sport Event Hosting Capacity	Will the project achieve national or international venue standards that will enable it to be a host venue for hosting provincial, national or international level sport events? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Venue standards may be available on an organization's website. See Appendix 1 for a listing of international sport federations, national sport organizations and provincial sport organizations. 	<u>Outcome 5</u> : Enhanced individual and social benefits

Section 4: Project Accountability

4.1 Ministerial Grant Regulations

The ACI grant is also subject to the Ministerial Grant Regulations, in addition to the application, grant agreement, and these guidelines.

4.2 Review and Approval

Applications and documentation provided are fully reviewed in consideration of the eligibility, viability, and readiness requirements described in these guidelines. Organizations may be contacted if further information or clarification is required. Applicants will receive written notification of the decision regarding their application. All decisions on grant applications are final, and no appeals will be considered. Final grant decisions can take up to four months.

4.3 Incomplete Materials

If required documentation is not received by the application deadline, the application will be deemed incomplete and the application will not be assessed or considered for funding.

4.4 Unsuccessful Applications

If there are more well-developed project proposals received than the program budget can support, it is possible that strong proposals may not be approved. Unsuccessful applicants may re-submit their proposal in subsequent years if the project continues to be eligible.

4.5 Grant Agreement

Once the Minister approves a project, successful applicants must sign a funding agreement with the Ministry of Tourism and Sport. This agreement outlines the approved terms and conditions, including timelines, project scope, payment requirements, reporting obligations, communication protocols, and government recognition requirements.

4.6 Amending Agreement

If the project scope or grant-use period changes after approval, a formal amendment request is required. This request must be submitted before the project's completion date and includes a clear rationale. Amendments are granted at the discretion of the Minister of Tourism and Sport, based on the rationale provided.

4.7 Contacting Ministry

Only authorized representatives identified in the grant application may request specific information about applications from the Sport, Physical Activity and Recreation (SPAR) Branch.

4.8 Lobbying Policy

Once an application is submitted, applicants, their team members, advisors, and/or other parties involved in the application process or project are prohibited from engaging in any form of political action or lobbying in relation to the assessment of the ACI application or attempting to influence the outcome of the ACI review process. Failure to comply with this provision is considered grounds for rejection of the application.

4.9 Government of Alberta Acknowledgements

Grant recipients will formally acknowledge the Government of Alberta wherever possible and appropriately. The Recipient will consult with representative(s) of the Minister to implement the communication requirements set out in the grant agreement.

Recognition of funding can be provided in various ways, including but not limited to:

- News release or submitted article to local/regional media
- Organization's website or newsletter
- Social media platforms such as X, Facebook, Instagram, Flickr, and blogs
- Signage, either temporary or permanent

4.10 Conflict of Interest Policy

In addition to complying with the ACI guidelines and the Ministerial Grant Regulation, an individual affiliated with a grant recipient should not place themselves in a perceived or actual conflict of interest when using the grant funds. A conflict of interest arises when a conflict between an individual's personal interests (what they could gain financially or otherwise) and their duty to administer the grant funds in an accountable and transparent manner are in question. A conflict of interest may be actual or perceived.

Actual conflict exists when an individual's personal interests could improperly influence the recipient's duty to utilize the grant funds in a responsible and accountable manner. For example, an individual employed by the recipient wants to use the grant funds to rent space from a private company owned by the individual. An actual conflict of interest exists because the individual personally benefits from this decision.

Perceived conflict of interest exists when there is the appearance that an individual has a private interest that could improperly influence the individual's duty to act in the best interests of the grant recipient.

Whether a conflict of interest is categorized as actual or perceived, the individual affiliated with the grant recipient should avoid placing themselves in a situation where their personal interest could interfere with their duty to be transparent and accountable with the use of the grant funds. For example, the individual should ensure that their family members or the businesses they have an interest in are not involved with the project and in no way personally benefit from the Government of Alberta funding that was provided.

As soon as reasonably possible, after becoming aware of a personal interest causing or is likely to cause a conflict of interest in relation to the use of the grant, the grant recipient must give notice of the conflict to the Minister. After giving notice of a conflict, the grant recipient may not commence nor continue the project until instructed to do so by program staff. If, in the opinion of the Minister, a conflict of interest warrants such action, the recipient may be given notice of termination of the agreement and be required to return the grant funds.

4.11 Protection of Privacy Act

The personal information collected through the Ministry of Tourism and Sport – Active Communities Initiative (ACI) grant application relates directly to and is necessary for administering ACI and advising the applicant of grant program updates and relevant ministry initiatives. This collection is authorized by section 4(c) of the Protection of Privacy Act. For questions about the collection of personal information, contact the ACI Team by email at ACI@gov.ab.ca.

Appendix 1: International, National and Provincial Organizations

International Sport Federations

International Federations include federations recognized by the [International Olympic](#) and [Paralympic](#) Committee and or [Pan American Sport Organization](#). Additional federations including the following:

01	World Air Sports Federation	09	Federation of International Bandy
02	International Federations of Basque	10	World Confederation of Boules Sports
03	International Climbing and Mountaineering Federation	11	International Floorball Federation
04	World Flying Disc Federation	12	International Federation of Icestocksport
05	International Korfball Federation	13	International Netball Federation
06	Federation of International Polo	14	International Sambo Federation
07	International Ski Mountaineering Federation	15	International Sumo Federation
08	Tug of War International Federation	16	World Underwater Federation

National Sport Organizations

The following disciplines are [Sport Canada](#) recognized National Sport Organizations.

01	Alpine Skiing	23	Field Hockey	45	Ski Jumping
02	Archery	24	Figure Skating	46	Snowboard
03	Athletics	25	Football	47	Soccer
04	Badminton	26	Freestyle Skiing	48	Softball
05	Baseball	27	Goalball	49	Speed skating
06	Basketball	28	Golf	50	Squash
07	Biathlon	29	Gymnastics	51	Surfing
08	Bobsleigh	30	Ice Hockey	52	Swimming
09	Boccia	31	Judo	53	Swimming - Artistic
10	Boxing	32	Karate	54	Table Tennis
11	Bowling – 5 and 10 Pin	33	Lacrosse	55	Taekwondo
12	Broomball	34	Lawn Bowls	56	Tennis
13	Canoe and Kayak	35	Luge	57	Triathlon
14	Climbing	36	Pentathlon	58	Volleyball
15	Cricket	37	Racquetball	59	Water Polo
16	Cross Country Skiing	38	Ringette	60	Water Ski and Wakeboard
17	Curling	39	Rowing	61	Weightlifting
18	Cycling	40	Rugby	62	Wheelchair Basketball
19	DanceSport (Breaking)	41	Sailing	63	Wheelchair Rugby
20	Diving	42	Shooting	64	Wrestling
21	Equestrian	43	Skateboard		
22	Fencing	44	Skeleton		

Provincial Sport Organizations

Provincial Sport Organizations include the following organizations funded by the Government of Alberta:

01	Alberta Alpine	36	Rugby Alberta
02	Athletics Alberta	37	Alberta Sailing Association
03	Badminton Alberta	38	Alberta Federation of Shooting Sports
04	Alberta Amateur Baseball Council	39	Alberta Ski Jumping and Nordic Combined Association
05	Alberta Basketball	40	Alberta Snowboarding
06	Alberta Baton Twirling Association	41	Alberta Soccer
07	Biathlon Alberta	42	Softball Alberta
08	Alberta Bicycle Association	43	Alberta Speed Skating
09	Alberta Bobsleigh	44	Alberta Sprint Racing Canoe Association
10	Bowling Federation of Alberta	45	Squash Alberta
11	Boxing Alberta	46	Swim Alberta
12	Alberta Cheerleading Association	47	Alberta Artistic Swimming
13	Nordiq Alberta	48	Alberta Taekwondo Association
14	Alberta Curling Federation	49	Archery Alberta
15	Darts Alberta	50	Alberta Team Handball Federation
16	Alberta Diving	51	Tennis Alberta
17	Alberta Equestrian	52	Triathlon Alberta
18	Alberta Fencing Association	53	Volleyball Alberta
19	Field Hockey Alberta	54	Alberta Water Polo
20	Skate Canada: Alberta-NWT/Nunavut	55	Water Ski & Wake Association of Alberta
21	Football Alberta	56	Alberta Whitewater Association
22	Freestyle Alberta	57	Alberta Amateur Wrestling Association
23	Alberta Golf	58	Alberta Sports and Recreation Association for the Blind
24	Alberta Gymnastics Federation	59	Alberta Cerebral Palsy Sports Association
25	Hockey Alberta	60	Alberta Deaf Sports Association
26	Judo Alberta	61	CADS Alberta
27	Karate Alberta	62	Special Olympics Alberta
28	Alberta Lacrosse	63	Wheelchair Sports Alberta
29	Bowls Alberta	64	Alberta Colleges Athletic Conference
30	Alberta Luge Association	65	School Sport Alberta
31	Alberta Orienteering Association	66	Alberta 55 plus
32	Alberta Racquetball	67	Indigenous Sports Council Alberta
33	Rhythmic Gymnastics Alberta	68	Fédération du sport francophone de l'Alberta
34	Ringette Alberta	69	Alpine Club of Canada
35	Alberta Rowing Association		