



Active Communities Initiative

2025 Guidelines

Government of Alberta
Ministry of Tourism and Sport
Sport, Physical Activity and Recreation Branch

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Alberta 

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SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Purpose

The Active Communities Initiative (ACI) supports eligible organizations to retrofit, renew, expand, 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 (e.g., safety, accessibility, and usability)
Outcome 3	Improved operational sustainability of community facilities
Outcome 4	Stimulate economic impacts (e.g., jobs and spending during and after construction)
Outcome 5	Enhanced individual and social benefits including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Stronger relationships with family and friends b) Improved academic performance and workplace productivity c) Enhanced community engagement and leadership capacities

1.3. Funding Range and Timelines

	Stream 1 Funding		Stream 2 Funding	
Funding Range:	MIN	MAX	MIN	MAX
	\$50,000	\$500,000	\$500,001	\$1.5 million
Maximum funding from the GOA cannot exceed 50 per cent of the total project cost.				
	Opening of Applications		Submission Deadline	
Timelines	{insert date}, 2025		{insert date}, 2025	

ACI Website: [Alberta.ca/active communities initiative](https://alberta.ca/active-communities-initiative)

1.4. Steps to Complete ACI Application

Question/Action	Reference	Instruction
1. Download the ACI Guidelines	ACI Website	Read thoroughly, then proceed to next step
2. Is our organization eligible?	2.1	If YES, proceed to next step
3. Is our project eligible?	2.2	If YES, proceed to next step
4. Download Application Workbook	ACI Website	Review and proceed to next step
5. Assemble Business Case	3.6	After completed, proceed to next step
6. Is our project viable and ready?	3.1 - 3.5	If YES, proceed to next step
7. Complete Application Workbook		After completed, proceed to next step
8. Submit Application	ACI Website	Upload workbook and business case

SECTION 2: ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

2.1. Applicant Eligibility

2.1.(a) Applicant Corporate Registry

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

Provincial Legislation	Federal Legislation
Agriculture Societies Act	Income Tax Act (Registered Charity, operating in the Province of Alberta)
Companies Act, Part 9 (Non-profit Companies)	Special Act of the Parliament of Canada and operating in Alberta
Part 21 of the Business Corporations Act (Extra-Provincial Corporations)	
Societies Act of Alberta	
Special Act of the Alberta Legislature	

2.1.(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 but must have an executed lease, or sub-lease, with a minimum five-year term in place.

2.1.(c) Ineligible Applicants

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

2.2. Project Eligibility

2.2.(a) Eligible Projects

Eligible projects include construction of new small to medium sized public-use community sport and recreation facilities, and retrofit, renewal or renovations of existing facilities, where the primary goal of the project is increasing sport, physical activity, and recreation in both indoor and outdoor fields of play. Examples include:

Indoor facilities like basketball courts, pools, rinks, and fitness centres	Outdoor facilities like sport fields, rinks, and outdoor courts	Equipment and/or non-fixed assets that are integral to the project. (e.g., net equipment for courts)
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2.2.(b) Ineligible Projects:

Ineligible projects include the following:

Equipment and/or non-fixed assets that are not integral to the project success	Feasibility studies, needs assessments, architectural drawings and planning as a stand-alone project
Parks, trails, and playgrounds	Private sector facilities and facilities with restricted or limited public access
Projects not primarily focused on sport, physical activity, and recreation	Purchase of land and/or facilities as a stand-alone project

2.2.(c) Eligible and Ineligible Project Expenses

All expenses directly related to the project must be included in the application with back-up documentation of 3rd Party cost estimates. Provincial funds can be used for all expenses except the following Ineligible Expenses:

All expenses incurred prior to application submission date	Audio visual material (film, video, narrative script), promotional campaigns, and/or art purchase or commission
Debt reduction for pre-existing debt, loan servicing costs (i.e., interest payments), and/or bank fees	Endowments, fundraising campaigns, donor and/or volunteer recognition, gifts, and promotional materials
Lease costs for land, building, equipment, or other facilities, real estate fees, or other fees associated with land	Licensed vehicles, equipment, and non-fixed assets unless they are ancillary requirements for the project
Organizational expenses including management, maintenance, legal, finance, and insurance expenditures not related to the project	Volunteer expenses and time and labour for activities 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)

SECTION 3: VIABILITY AND READINESS CRITERIA

3.1. Applicant Capacity

3.1.(a) Operational Strengths

Applicant organization demonstrates financial viability and self-sufficiency, including the ability to meet ongoing operational needs during and after the project, as indicated by:

Activity programs and services	Asset management planning
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(e.g., visitation, and program registrations)	(e.g., maintenance & lifecycle plans)
Financial strength and resilience (e.g., Financial Statements)	Operational experience (e.g., years operating this, or another, facility)

3.1.(b) Project Management Strengths

Applicant organization demonstrates:

External project management resources (e.g., municipality, MD, and/or contract)	Related internal knowledge and expertise (e.g., board members and/or staff)
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3.2. Matching Contributions

3.2.(a) Matching Contribution Requirements

Contributions from non-GOA sources must be equal to or exceed the GOA funding request	All contributions must be documented as specifically related to the project
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3.2.(b) Eligible Matching Contributions

Contributions may be in the form of cash, grant funding from other levels of government, and/or Value-In-Kind (VIK) contributions (e.g., donated labour, equipment, or materials). Cash contribution commitments must be supported by a statement from the donor.

Donated labour, equipment, or materials will need to be documented in the project budget and summarized as a project-specific note within the organizations' financial statements. The following hourly rates are acceptable for the calculation of anticipated donations:

	Unskilled Labour	Skilled Labour	Heavy Equipment (incl. Operator)
Eligible Hourly Rate	\$20.00	\$40.00	\$120.00
Donated materials and professional services must be verified at fair market value			

Charitable gaming proceeds generated from licensed gaming events (e.g., bingos, casinos, raffles, and pull tickets) may be used as contributions, assuming disclosure in application.

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 owner that will establish long-term lease with applicant organization for the operations of the facility.

3.3. Community and Market Assessment

Recognizing that successful and sustainable public-use sport, physical activity, and recreation facilities augment existing facilities and/or address a known local and/or regional shortfall, ACI applications will be strengthened if they include:

Comparative Analysis	Examples
Facilities, programs, and services	Facility size, public-use, and program stats
Community consultations	What-We-Hear reports from consultations
Community accessibility analysis	Active Transportation & Public Transit

Municipal/local government priority status	Is the project part of municipal Capital Plan?
Letters of support	Corporate and non-profit community partners

3.4. Facility Assessment

Facility assessment should be conducted for all types of projects, new and old, assuming assessment context is historical for existing facilities and both historical and predictive for new facility projects. The following are the key areas of focus for facility assessments:

Focus Area	Examples
Accessibility analysis	Barrier Free standards
Facility lifecycle	Date built and expected life
Sport event hosting capacity	Standards met for hosting events
Environmental standards	LEEDS Platinum, Gold, or Silver standards
Functional deficiency analysis	Renovations
Health and safety analysis	Known urgent health and safety risks

3.5. Strategic Alignment

Applications will also be assessed in consideration of project alignment with various public priorities, including but not limited to:

Government of Alberta priorities, including those in the Alberta's 20 Year Capital Plan (2021) and the Infrastructure Accountability Act (2021) .	
Emergency and disaster-related responsiveness	Ministry priorities, including the Ministry of Tourism and Sport Business Plan
Municipal capital plan priorities	Regional equity

3.6. Business Case Materials

Applicants are required to assemble a project “Business Case” to upload with a completed ACI Application Workbook when submitting their application. All Business Case content **MUST BE packaged into one PDF document** with sub-sections identified in a Table of Contents. The following is the required and supplemental content for inclusion in the project business case.

Document	Requirements
Board motion approving application to ACI	Required
Current financial statements (including balance sheet & statement of operations)	Required
Land and/or facility owner permission/support (if applicable)	Required
Operational lease agreement (if applicable)	Required
Post-Construction Operational Budget (5-Year)	Required

Project Cost estimates (professional estimate)	Required
Project budget, schedule, and cash flow	Required
Procurement policy	Required
Project Risk and mitigation analysis	Required
Business continuity plan during construction (existing facilities)	Supplemental
Community and Market Assessment – see Guideline 3.3.	Supplemental
Economic impact analysis	Supplemental
Facility Assessment – see Guideline 3.4.	Supplemental
Pre-design (e.g., scope, schematics, and drawings)	Supplemental

SECTION 4: PROJECT ACCOUNTABILITY

4.1. Ministerial Grant Regulations

In addition to the terms set out in these guidelines, the associated application form and grant agreement, the ACI grant is governed by the terms outlined in the Ministerial Grants Regulation.

4.2. Application Process Overview

Step One	Read the guidelines
Step Two	Download and review all sections complete ACI Application Workbook
Step Three	Complete and assemble project Business Case Materials (see 3.6)
Step Four	Complete ACI Application Workbook
Step Five	Submit Application Workbook and Business Case documents (web link)

4.3. Review and Approval

Application and supporting 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.

4.4. Incomplete Materials

If required documentation is not received by the application deadline, the application will be deemed incomplete and the application will be declined for this intake.

4.5. 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.

4.6. Grant Agreement

Following the Minister’s approval of a project, successful applicants must enter into a funding agreement with the Ministry of Tourism and Sport. The resulting grant agreement sets out the approved terms and conditions for the grant funding, including but not limited to start and end dates, project scope, grant payment conditions, reporting requirements, communication considerations, and government recognition protocols.

4.7. Amending the Grant Agreement

If the project scope or period to use grant funds change after project approval, a formal amendment request must be made to consider any changes to the existing agreement. If required, the amendment request must be submitted prior to the project completion date and must provide detailed rationale to support consideration of the amendment request. Project amendments are granted at the discretion of the Minister of Tourism and Sport, based on an assessment of the rationale submitted for the amendment.

4.8. Contacting the Ministry

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

4.9. 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 actions 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.

4.10. Government of Alberta Acknowledgements

Grant recipients will formally acknowledge the Government of Alberta wherever possible and appropriate. The Recipient will consult with representative(s) of the Minister to implement the communication requirements set out in the grant agreement. Recognition can be provided in various ways, including but not limited to:

News release or local/regional media	Social media platform exposure.
Organization’s website or newsletter	Signage, either temporary or permanent

4.11. 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 where 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.

4.12. Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIP)

The personal information that is provided on the grant application form will be used for the purpose of administering ACI and advising the applicant of grant program updates and relevant ministry initiatives. It is collected under the authority of section 33(c) of the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIP Act)* and is protected by the privacy provisions of the *FOIP Act*. The FOIP Act applies to any information provided to Tourism and Sport. This information may be disclosed in response to an access request under the *FOIP Act*, subject to any applicable exceptions to disclosure under the *FOIP Act*.

Once an application has been approved and funding issued to an organization, the community/city, grant recipient, project, amount funded, and fiscal year become a matter of public record.

For questions about the collection and use of this information, please contact SPAR Branch.