

United Way (Ontario and Nunavut) School Food Infrastructure Fund Grant Guidebook

Contents

Introduction 3

Purpose 3

Eligibility 4

Ineligible Organizations 4

Equity-deserving groups 5

Eligible and Ineligible costs 5

How to apply 8

 Organizational Documents 8

 Letter of Support 8

 Quotes for Equipment Costs 8

Application 8

What Next..... 9

 Distribution of funding 9

 Reporting..... 9

Timeline 9

FAQ 10

Appendix A: Assessment Criteria 13

Appendix B: Letter of Support 18

Introduction

The United Way (Ontario and Nunavut) School Food Infrastructure Fund (SFIF) supports not-for-profit organizations to improve infrastructure and equipment for school food programming across Canada.

As announced by the Government of Canada in [Budget 2024](#), the SFIF is delivered as a complement to the [National School Food Program](#), and the guidance provided under the [National School Food Policy](#). Funding for this project has been provided by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada through the School Food Infrastructure Fund (SFIF).

United Way East Ontario (UWEO) has been selected as one of several organizations (known as initial recipients) from across Canada to manage the application process, disbursement of funds and oversight of SFIF. UWEO is working with five partner United Ways to make sure much needed infrastructure projects are in place to support our communities. The United Ways involved in our SFIF funding are:

- [United Way Simcoe-Muskoka](#)
- [United Way Northumberland](#)
- [United Way Elgin Middlesex](#)
- [United Way Stormont, Dundas, & Glengarry](#)
- [United Way Windsor-Essex-Chatham-Kent](#)

The SFIF provides contributions to eligible initial recipients who will further distribute funds to one or more applicants (also known as ultimate recipients). To receive funding, ultimate recipients must submit an application to United Way for infrastructure or equipment projects covered by the eligible costs ([see below](#)). Successful applicants will receive payments from UWEO, on behalf of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC).

Purpose

The SFIF will:

- support the purchase and installation of infrastructure and equipment that increases the capacity of community organizations to produce, process, store, and distribute food for school food programs

The SFIF aims to, ultimately:

- strengthen wider community and local food systems through investments in infrastructure that expand the reach and impact of school food programming
- help ensure that children have the nutritious meals they need to learn, grow, and reach their full potential

PRIORITIES FOR SFIF

- SFIF supports the purchase and installation of infrastructure and equipment that increases the capacity of community organizations to produce, process, store, and distribute food for school food programs (immediate)
- Expand reach and impact of school food programming to ultimately strengthen wider community and local food systems
- Expand reach and impact to ensure that children have the nutritious meals they need to learn, grow and reach their full potential (intermediate)
- Priority to be given to those already serving schools attended by children and youth from lower-income families as well as visible minority and Indigenous communities

Eligibility

Eligible ultimate recipients include:

- Community based organizations engaged with school food programs; and
- Nonprofit organizations

Eligibility criteria:

- Applicant must maintain a volunteer board that meets regularly
- Applicant must host an Annual General Meeting.
- The applicant must carry sufficient liability insurance (at least \$2 million) to cover the program/project seeking United Way funding.
- Applicant must provide financial statements that have been audited by a licensed public accountant.*

Other Criteria:

- Each application must include a [letter of support](#) from the partnering school or schoolboard.
- The activities proposed by the applicant must benefit residents within the catchment areas of the partnering United Ways or Nunavut.
- The applicant (or partnering sponsor organization, in the case of sponsored applicants) must be financially solvent.
- Late or incomplete submissions will not be accepted.

* NOTE: *Agencies with revenues under \$250,000 may submit reviewed statements in lieu of audited statements. Reviewed statements should also come from a licensed public accountant.*

Ineligible Organizations

- Municipal or school bodies
- Local governments
- Health authorities
- School boards or schools

- Governmental and quasi-governmental organizations
- Academic and educational institutions
- For-profit entities

Equity-deserving groups

United Way East Ontario supports local partners to use an equity lens to address issues, to make the greatest need, greatest impact. This includes:

- collaboration with Indigenous people. This includes First Nations, Inuit, and Métis
- 2SLGBTQIA+
- Francophones
- Minority Language populations
- New Canadians, Immigrants and Refugees
- People Living in Poverty
- People with Disabilities
- Racialized Groups
- Rural Communities
- Vulnerable Seniors and Caregivers
- Women and Girls

Eligible and Ineligible costs

Following are the eligible and ineligible costs as well as limitations under this program.

- All the infrastructure/equipment must have a useful life for at least 2 years after the project completion date.
- No administration costs can be attributed to this fund for the project.

While the list is not exhaustive, it is meant to provide guidance on the costs for ultimate recipients that are considered eligible and ineligible under the program.

Note that all infrastructure/equipment must be used by ultimate recipients to support the delivery of school food programs.

ELIGIBLE COSTS	INELIGIBLE COSTS AND LIMITATIONS
<p>Food Production</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gardens • Food forests • Garden boxes/beds/tools • Greenhouses or domes • Vertical and/or hydroponic gardens • Seeds, soil, compost 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aquaponics and Aquaculture Equipment • Livestock • Safety equipment • Storage shed • Water hook-up (from the city/municipal water source)

<p>Transformation, Processing, Preparation of Food</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Essential cooking equipment, such as combination (combi) ovens, steamers, large and small kitchen appliances • Food preparation equipment, such as large capacity food processors, prep tables, mixers, slicers • Washing equipment, such as a commercial dishwasher, or equipment necessary to maintain hygiene standards with respect to food preparation • Receiving bay, loading dock • Kitchen tools (e.g. knives, cutting boards) and cookware 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food (perishable and non-perishable) • Speciality coffee equipment • Donut makers • Deep fryers • Hand sinks • Cleaning supplies (e.g. mops, brooms, cloths) • Consumable supplies (such as dish soap, hair nets, jars, lids, vacuum seal bags, takeaway containers, personal protective equipment)
<p>Refrigeration and Storage of Food</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Industrial refrigerators, freezers, walk-in cooler/freezer • Blast-chill or cook-chill equipment • Root cellar • Refrigerated or insulated shipping containers • Packaging equipment, such as vacuum sealers • Food storage racks • Shelving for food storage areas • Bulk storage containers for food/bins 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any equipment pertaining to the storage of non-food items
<p>Transportation and Distribution of Food</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vehicles including cargo van, refrigerated vehicle (eligible vehicles can be electric and can include related infrastructure) specifically to support school food programming involving multiple schools (e.g., including distribution to schools) • Trailers, refrigerated or non-refrigerated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food trucks • Passenger vehicles (for example, pick-up trucks/minivans) • Lease of vehicles • Transportation expenses (gas, maintenance)

Other Costs

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Contracted installation (only eligible for SFIF-funded equipment)• Freight and duty charges• One-time initial training for operation of a specialized piece of equipment funded under the project• Shipping• Site preparation, including removal and disposal of an old piece of equipment• Minor renovations, including updating electrical wiring, plumbing or ventilation, specifically in order to install commercial grade equipment and meet safety standards; equipment must also be funded under the project.• Minor renovations to a kitchen/food preparation area to facilitate the installation of equipment that is funded under the project.• Other materials and supplies related to the installation of funded equipment. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Administrative costs• Computer and software equipment• Costs associated with ongoing operations (for example, labour, staff, rent, insurance, utilities)• Costs related to marketing activities or business promotion• Furniture• Generators• Salaries, honorariums, consultant fees, gift cards• HVAC systems• Lease of equipment• Major renovations to substantially adapt or refurbish an existing space• Major construction, including additions or new buildings• Purchase or lease of land or buildings• Signage• Training/technical assistance (e.g., to develop skills and expertise in nutrition, meal planning or food preparation)• Taxes (federal and provincial)• Warranty fees (for extended warranty, vehicles) |
|---|---|

How to apply

Organizational Documents

Ultimate recipients must submit organizational documents that show your organization is in good standing and has a relationship with the schools in your area.

- Most recent audited financial statements or reviewed financial statements
- Current list of Board members
- Two most recent Annual General Meeting minutes (latest minutes must show approval of previous minutes)
- Current fiscal year organizational budget (unaudited)
- Proof of sufficient liability insurance
- **Letter of support from a school or schoolboard**
- **Quotes for equipment costing over \$20,000 (if applicable)**

Letter of Support

All applicants must have a letter of support from a school or schoolboard that confirms the relationship between the ultimate recipient and the school nutrition program.

A template of a [letter of support can be found here](#).

Quotes for Equipment Costs

Projects that include a piece of equipment costing over \$20,000 are required to get two (2) quotes estimating the cost of the piece of equipment. Quotes will be required for every piece of equipment over \$20,000.

The Ultimate recipient will need to keep the quotes for the duration of the project, in case of an audit.

Application

All applications must be submitted through the [Agency Portal](#)*

**Note: If your organization has an existing account, an account administrator must add you to their team using the “Manage Organization” button.*

A technical guidebook has been developed to help you set up your account in the Agency Portal. Please check the website.

What Next

The application period is open from **February 12, 2025**, and will close on **March 19, 2025, at 5:00 PM EST**.

UWEO staff will assess eligibility and financial risk. An Investment Committee is to review and assess proposals and make recommendations for investment to Corporate Oversight Committee. Proposals are scored, discussed and ranked based on the **Evaluation Rubric** found in [Appendix A](#).

Once decisions have been confirmed, all applicants will receive a letter of notification about the final decision for their application. Applicants who are successful will become the ultimate recipients of the SFIF, and they will also receive a funding agreement to be signed and returned to United Way East Ontario before funding is distributed.

Distribution of funding

UWEO will distribute funding in three payments: 70% of the allocated funds will be distributed at the start of the project, after receipt of the signed funding agreement; 20% after the first progress report; and 10% will be distributed at the end of the project, or upon negotiation with UWEO.

Reporting

The successful applicants will be expected to complete an interim report on a quarterly basis and a final report on completion of their project, before **March 31st 2026**.

Applicants will need to set targets for indicators in the application.

Timeline

ACTIVITY	DATE/TIMELINE
CFP Launch and Deadline	February 12 – March 19 2025
Assessment Review	March 19 – April 4 2025
Notification to Agencies	April 28 2025
Projects begin	June 1 st 2025
Project completion and report back	March 31 st 2026

FAQ

Who is eligible?

Community based organizations engaged with school food programs and nonprofit organizations whose project will serve students in the United Way catchment area of Ontario, or Nunavut.

Can my project serve students anywhere in Canada?

There are six (6) participating United Ways, and applications will only be accepted for projects that serve students in the collective catchment areas or Nunavut. The United Ways include:

- United Way East Ontario
- United Way Simcoe-Muskoka
- United Way Northumberland
- United Way Elgin Middlesex
- United Way Stormont, Dundas, & Glengarry
- United Way Windsor-Essex-Chatham-Kent

The SFIF can serve students in any part of the territory of Nunavut. Preference will be given to applicants based in Nunavut.

What documents do I need to have for my application?

Applicants need to submit organizational documentation to show whether the organization is in good standing, as well as a [letter of support](#) from the school or schoolboard their project will serve. Applications submitted without the organizational documentation will not be considered.

Please review the necessary [organization documents](#) section.

Is there a limit to how many applications I can submit?

We recommend only submitting one application. Organizations can submit more than one application but only one application will be funded. Applicants can include multiple pieces of equipment or infrastructure in an application.

Can I apply to more than one initial recipient of the Student Food Infrastructure Fund funded by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada?

Organizations can submit applications to other initial recipients of the SFIF, but each project can only be approved by [one initial recipient](#). Applicants are asked to indicate if they have applied for other SFIF funding through other initial recipients.

UWEO will accept applications for projects that have been submitted to other initial recipients. UWEO cannot guarantee whether other initial recipients will follow the same guidelines, and we recommend applicants contact other initial recipients.

Is there a limit on how much I can request?

There is no limitation on the amount that can be requested. Applications will be evaluated on cost efficiency and feasibility, and we recommend submitting a budget that is realistic to the actual costs and reach of the project.

Will the Fund cover human resource costs, such as on-going service costs or administration?

The SFIF is specific to equipment and infrastructure projects, and it will not cover ongoing costs such as salary. Additionally, the fund will not cover administrative costs for the organization.

The SFIF can cover the cost of labour to plan or implement an infrastructure project, such as designing a garden or building a shed, but not for operating and maintenance. Please review the [eligible costs](#) for more information.

What type of reporting is required?

Ultimate recipients will be expected to complete an interim report on a quarterly basis, and a final report on the completion of their project before **March 31st 2026**.

Appendix A: Assessment Criteria

CRITERIA		Considerations in Scoring	RANKING WEIGHT	SCORING RANGE	MAXIMUM POINTS POSSIBLE
Q	Criteria				
1.2	6 Program/ project and Activities Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the goal of the program/project clearly stated? • Is there a clear link between the stated activities and the ultimate goal of improved accessibility of student nutrition? • Is the 'what, who, when, where and how' explained? • Will the activities presented result in the achievement of the stated results? • Are the activities reasonable? Are there unrealistic expectations? 	2	4	8
1.3	Supports the food supply chain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has the agency identified the stage in the food supply chain their project will support student nutrition program? 	N/A	Flag	Flag
1.4	4 Greatest Need, Greatest Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the description go beyond the application description to explain the specific need being addressed? 	1	4	4

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there a clear description of who the specific target population is and how they would be impacted by the program? • Is there a causal link between the described impact and the need? • Is the impact realistic considering the scope of the project? 			
1.4		Activities and results relationship is backed by evidence-based/evidence-informed research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the relationship between the proposed activities and the anticipated results evidence-informed? • Are the targets set for the indicators realistic? Do the set targets match the type of program activities • Evidence can take the form of <u>internal research</u> or <u>external research</u>. • Is the evidence presented relevant? 	2	4	8
1.5	5	Vulnerable populations (includes considerations for geographic, priority communities, equity deserving groups, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the program/project serve vulnerable children and youth? Priority given to children and youth from low-income populations, visible minority communities, Indigenous communities and rural residents. • Is the program/ project targeting a geographic area/neighbourhood in a rural community? • Are vulnerable populations a primary focus of the program/project? • Does the program/project serve equity seeking/equity deserving groups? 	2	4	8

1.6 & 1.7	1	Program/ project is in partnership (formal or informal) with school nutrition program partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partnerships can be either informal (i.e. in-kind support, sharing of information, assistance with the evaluation process, etc.) or formal (i.e. signed partnership agreements, formal collaboration, etc.). Is the applicant agency working in partnership with a school, schoolboard, or alternative partner connected to the school nutrition program? Is there a letter of support? Have partner names been provided and roles defined? Is there a clear connection and relationship with the school-based or school food program partner? Has the nature of the partnership been defined? 	1	4	4
2.1		Program/project aligns with core mission of the applicant agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the program/project consistent with the core mission of the applicant agency? Is there evidence of mission-drift? 	Flag	Aligned / Not Aligned	Flag
2.2	7	Track record in successfully delivering programs/services supported by specific results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How successful is the agency at delivering other programs/projects that it runs? Does the agency have a history of successful/unsuccessful programs? Are the programs similar (e.g. scope, scale, method, issue being addressed) to what is being proposed? Are the results provided specific and demonstrative of real/significant impact? Examples of specificity would include: providing the actual percentage change in program outcomes, citing the number and extent that 	3	4	12

			people were impacted, citing specific policy or systemic changes that are attributable to the program etc...			
2.3		Ability/ capacity to deliver proposed program /project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the nonprofit, including management and staff, have the ability and capacity (i.e. experience implementing/managing similar program/projects, etc) to deliver the proposed program? • Does the nonprofit currently serve a rural community or has served rural residents in the past? 	2	4	8
2.4		Agency led initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the agency led by members of an equity deserving communities? 	N/A	Flag	Flag
3.1		Expenses are comprehensive and realistic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the proposal include all expenses related to the program/project? • Are there any major expenditures that <i>should</i> be listed, but are not? • Are the expenses realistic? <i>i.e.</i> Are they true reflections of the cost associated with each line item? • Are in-kind costs included? • Do they have two quotes for equipment and infrastructure (if applicable)? 	2	4	8
3.1		Cost Efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are the costs reasonable given the individuals being assisted? • Are costs reasonable given the depth and resources needed for the intervention? • Please keep in mind that geographic area, types of clients, types of services provided can all have an impact on cost efficiency (i.e. similar programs offered 	1	4	4

			in different geographic areas can have widely different costs depending on volunteer engagement, availability of other neighbourhood supports, etc)			
3.2		Funding limitations	• Can they receive less funding and still complete aspects of the project?	N/A	Flag	Flag
Total						64 points

Scoring Rubric

0 (No Evidence Presented)	1 (Poor Evidence Presented)	2 (Fair Evidence Presented)	3 (Strong Evidence Presented)	4 (Excellent Evidence Presented)
Question is not answered, or no information provided in the response addresses the question.	The content lacks meaningful detail and/or demonstrates a lack of preparation. The content reflects a lack of understanding of the elements needed for the program/project to achieve results that will contribute to achieving the priority goal.	The content lacks some meaningful detail and requires important additional information in order to be reasonably comprehensive OR the response suggests the criteria was not fully understood. The content reflects a partial understanding of the elements needed for the program/project to achieve results that will contribute to achieving the priority goal.	The content addresses the criteria in a reasonably comprehensive manner, with significantly detailed and mostly accurate information. The content reflects a solid understanding of the elements needed for the program/project to achieve results that will contribute to achieving the priority goal but may require additional specificity, support or elaboration.	The content addresses the criteria with specific, appropriately detailed and accurate information. The content reflects a thorough understanding of the elements needed for the program/project to achieve results that will contribute to achieving the priority goal.

Appendix B: Letter of Support

SAMPLE LETTER OF SUPPORT

United Way (Ontario and Nunavut) School Food Infrastructure Fund
Selection Committee
United Way East Ontario
363 Coventry Road
Ottawa ON K1K 2C5

Dear Selection Committee,

I am writing this letter to support **[Insert Non-profit Organization's Name]**'s application to the School Food Infrastructure Fund. Their **[Inset Name of Project]** will greatly benefit the students participating in the student nutrition program at **[Insert Name of School/School Board]**.

We will be working with **[Insert Non-profit Organization's Name]** to ensure that the **[Inset Name of Project]** is in alignment with the needs of our [school/school board's] student nutrition program(s).

Healthy food is so important to child and youth development. Far too many students don't always have access to healthy food. This is why this type of project is important. By providing healthy nutritious breakfast, lunch and snacks in schools, we are collectively:

- Provide children with a positive start to the day
- Improve the learning abilities of children and youth
- Decrease disruptive behaviour in the classroom
- Provide a chance for children to improve social skills
- Help children to learn healthy eating habits that will last them a lifetime

[Inset Name of Project] will have a have a significant impact on our student nutrition program. It will *please refer to how this project will help your school's/board's nutrition program(s).*

Thank you for considering **[Insert Non-profit Organization's Name]**'s application to the School Food Infrastructure Fund.

Regards,