CAPACITY BUILDING GRANTS

OSHKI WUPOOWANE | THE BLANKET FUND – APPLICATION GUIDELINES

The Gord Downie & Chanie Wenjack Fund (DWF) is pleased to provide support to Indigenous cultural, artistic, and educational activities through **Oshki Wupoowane | The Blanket Fund** (The Blanket Fund). The Blanket Fund is offered through two different grant streams, and DWF invites applications from Indigenous people, as well as Indigenous-led initiatives and organizations from throughout Canada.

If you have any questions or need any support submitting your application, please contact us at fund@downiewenjack.ca or 1-833-666-2414 ext. 13. Arrangements can be made to submit your application by phone, video, fax, mail (handwritten or printed), or in a different format.

CAPACITY BUILDING GRANT STREAM
Up to $175,000/year (multi-year grants are available)

The Capacity Building Grant stream supports grassroots Indigenous charities, programs, communities, and initiatives (artists and makers) that are ready to take the next step in their growth. This grant stream commits to multi-year relationships that increase the capacity, networks, programs, and profile of the partners selected.

Grants are awarded on a case-by-case 'needs' assessment. There is no minimum dollar amount, but a ceiling of $175,000 per organization annually, for a maximum of four (4) years. Additional pro-bono services will be identified where possible in partnership with the applicant, and DWF will provide recommendations to augment capacity building through the grant with the pro-bono services.

APPLICATION TIMELINES
The 2025 intake period opens on April 1, 2025, and closes at 11:59 PM ET on May 30, 2025. Expressions of Interest must be received by **May 30, 2025,** to be considered for funding.

WHO CAN APPLY
Small Indigenous-led organizations, with a preference for First Nations, Inuit, or Métis community-based initiatives with less than 6 full-time staff and an annual operating budget under $1,000,000. DWF welcomes Indigenous community groups, councils, collectives, Indigenous-led not-for-profit organizations and registered charities, and other organizations directly serving Indigenous people and communities to apply.

Groups, councils, collectives, and other applicants who are not registered charities or not-for-profit organizations will require a trustee to administer the grant. The trustee will be responsible for

distributing the grant funding according to the approved project budget and will be accountable for reporting on the grant funds at the end of the project timeline.

If you have additional questions about your eligibility, please contact fund@downiewenjack.ca.

INELIGIBLE ORGANIZATIONS

- Individuals
- For-profit organizations
- Non-profit business institutions, including business associations, chambers of commerce, etc.
- Provincial/territorial entities for purposes other than the intention of the grant (Indigenous cultural, artistic, and educational activities)
- Municipalities and their entities for purposes other than the intention of the grant (Indigenous cultural, artistic, and educational activities)
- Government of Canada and federal entities
- Groups, collectives, or organizations that are non-Indigenous (for the purposes of this grant, Indigenous groups, collectives, or organizations have at least 50 percent Indigenous Board, executive staff, and/or membership)

ELIGIBLE PROJECTS

DWF is seeking applicants who want to build their core capacity, create new programs, expand to new geographic locations, or grow their team. The applicants should be looking for a partner to work with to help them achieve this growth. DWF will work with successful applicants beyond providing funding – to help create, improve, or update your programming, HR/Finance processes, grant submission requests, networking opportunities, graphic design and branding, or any other gap we can help you close. This stream is meant to be collaborative and flexible, allowing each applicant to identify what they require to reach the next phase.

To ensure the Capacity Building Grants reach programs that are impactful, sustainable, and Indigenous led, the final decision on recipients will be made by the shortlisted applicants themselves. This process will ensure that the recipients of the Capacity Building Grants are selected by hands-on practitioners who have a strong understanding of the needs of Indigenous peoples and communities, and the challenges facing grassroots organizations. Please see Application Process – Phase C | Participatory Review for more information about the participatory review process.

The final decision criteria will be based on;

1. **Leadership** – Is your organization Indigenous-led? Is there direct community involvement or support for your work?
2. **Impact** – Who benefits from your work? Ensuring that the benefits of our partner organizations directly reach Indigenous people and communities is at the core of this funding stream.

3. **Opportunity** – What is the opportunity to support your organization's growth? Will this grant help you expand an already successful program? Will the grant support the development of your internal capacity, and if so, how will this help you grow?
4. **Sustainability** – After the multi-year funding concludes, how sustainable will the growth be?

These criteria were developed based on community engagement and discussions with grassroots organizations, Indigenous charitable organizations, and thought leaders. Through our discussions, we heard the importance of flexibility, ensuring a wide range of projects are eligible for funding. We also heard about the importance of Indigenous leadership and ensuring the outcomes of this funding reach Indigenous people directly. We recognize the tremendous potential Indigenous-led projects have to drive change, a potential that is nearly impossible to achieve through one-year funding cycles and typical government programming streams. We aim to support the sustainable growth of Indigenous-led organizations which ultimately benefit Indigenous Peoples.

This partnership will be active for up to four years. Our goal is to invest in the successful applicants to help them grow sustainably. The most important eligibility criteria are that applicants have a vision of what they would like to achieve and a program or activity that can make this vision a reality.

INELIGIBLE PROJECT

- Projects that do not directly impact Indigenous people and communities
- Projects that do not focus on building core capacity, creating new programs, expanding to new geographic locations, or growing the team
- Projects that do not support Indigenous cultural, artistic, and educational activities
- Projects that are designed for fundraising purposes
- Projects that are fully completed before the application is submitted
- Profit-generating projects or activities

REPORTING

The Blanket Fund grants are administered by DWF. Successful applicants will be required to submit a report to DWF annually, including a financial breakdown of how the grant has been spent to date. A completed report will be required each year in order to release the next installment of funding. DWF will work with the grantees to address any challenges in submitting the annual report to ensure there are no barriers to meeting the requirements of the grant.

APPLICATION PROCESS

As the Capacity Building Grant stream is a major commitment of both time and resources, the process to identify successful applicants has a three-stage approach designed to identify applicants that will benefit most from our support while respecting the time and effort of ineligible groups. Applicants who do not meet the criteria will be notified after the Expression of Interest phase. Subsequent phases will collaboratively design a partnership between successful applicants and The Blanket Fund, then empower the community of applicants to help prioritize and direct funding.

2025 Timeline:

April 1 - May 30, 2025	**Phase A | Expression of Interest** (due by 11:59 PM ET on May 30, 2025)
August 2025	Applicants are notified. Those that met the criteria will proceed to Phase B.
September – October 2025	**Phase B | Scoping of Collaboration**
November – December 2025	**Phase C | Participatory Review**
January 2026	Successful applicants are announced.

Phase A | Expression of Interest
Timeline: Applications will be reviewed and shortlisted by August 2025.

We want to hear about you from you. Please submit a *brief* explanation of your organization, community, group, and/or initiative, your size, mandate, mission, and vision, and an explanation of the capacity-building activities you would like us to support. Also, please identify whether you are an Indigenous organization or your affiliation with a First Nation, Inuit, and/or Métis community.

The Expression of Interest stage is intended to ensure your organization/community/group/initiative fits the criteria and would benefit from the support we have to offer. There is no 'scoring' or ranking of proposals. We hope that this is a short, simple step that also allows you to tell us what you want us to know about your capacity-building goals and aspirations.

The Expression of Interest is meant to ensure that shortlisted applicants meet the below criteria:

- Your organization is **Indigenous-led** and has real, meaningful connections to Indigenous peoples and communities.
- The work you do directly impacts **Indigenous people** and **communities**.
- It is an opportunity to **unlock growth**, either through supporting programs or capacity development for your organization.
- The growth is **sustainable** after the funding ends.

Shortlisted organizations will be asked to submit a more detailed Scope of Collaboration, which builds on the criteria above. The final decisions on grant recipients will be made by the shortlisted organizations themselves to ensure that on-the-ground practitioners who understand the aspirations, opportunities, and challenges faced by grassroots organizations are part of the decision-making process.

This will include a meeting with shortlisted organizations so you can verbally explain your organization and impact before moving on to Phase B.

Phase B | Scoping of Collaboration

Timelines: Phase B will begin in September 2025 and will be completed by the end of October 2025.

The second phase will be an opportunity to work through how we can collaborate. We will work with you to identify the appropriate length, financial requirement, and operational gaps we can help fill. The second phase will also be an opportunity to establish your capacity-building goals, articulate how you intend to achieve them, and discuss what role our partnership will play. The final result will be a Scope of Collaboration document that breaks down your needs by financial and operational requirements.

The Scope of Collaboration document will also clearly outline if your organization is Indigenous-led or how you are connected to Indigenous communities, what impact you will have, what the opportunity for growth is, and how this growth can be sustained. We will provide a suggested template to support your Scope of Collaboration, but if you believe there is a better way to answer these questions, please feel free to prepare the document in any way you believe is appropriate.

What we are looking to understand is:

1. **Indigenous Leadership**
   We recognize that Indigenous identity can be complex and nuanced and that there is no clear definition for what an 'Indigenous' not-for-profit or charitable organization is. As a result, we are open to a number of organizational and leadership structures. The final decision on which organizations meet these criteria will be made by a group of practitioners and peers, but some of the considerations for this discussion include:
   a. Is your organization Indigenous-led?
   b. Are there Indigenous people in executive roles who have final decision-making authority in your organization?
   c. Does your organization have a Board of Directors or other oversight body, and if so, are any or all of these directors Indigenous?
   d. Does your organization involve Elders or youth in your decision-making, or do you work with Elders or youth to guide your work?
   e. Is there direct community involvement or support for your work?
   f. How is your organization held accountable by Indigenous people?
   g. Are there informal ways Indigenous people provide leadership or guidance to your organization?

2. **Impact**
   At the core of The Blanket Fund is a commitment that the funding *directly* reach Indigenous Peoples. Please explain the work you do and how it supports Indigenous people and communities. Some of the information we hope to understand includes:
   a. How will Indigenous people directly benefit from your work?
   b. Do you partner with other organizations to deliver these benefits? (First Nations, Inuit or Métis organizations? Indigenous communities?)

c. How many Indigenous people benefit from this work?
d. Do you deliver programs or activities in a First Nation, Inuit community, or Métis settlement (or with a Métis Local)?
    a. If not, do you work with an urban Indigenous community? Please describe who.
e. Do non-Indigenous people benefit from your work?
f. Are there any indirect benefits your work provides to Indigenous people, communities, or organizations?

3. Opportunity

Please explain how The Blanket Fund can help you expand or improve the work you are doing. We understand the impact you are having today, but how can the Capacity Building Grant help you grow this impact? This can be through expanding programs, improving your processes or access to funding, communications, or any other operational activity you believe will allow you to improve your organization or expand your reach.

a. Is there a specific program you want to create, improve, or expand?
b. What are the specific internal operations you hope to improve? How will these help your organization grow?
c. Are there specific challenges that are blocking your growth? How can this grant address those challenges?
d. Will The Blanket Fund be able to expand your impact?
e. Will The Blanket Fund help you work with more Indigenous people, communities, or organizations?
f. Will The Blanket Fund help you empower Indigenous people, communities, and organizations?

4. Sustainability

The goal of The Blanket Fund is to partner with you to grow your organization. At the end of the multi-year partnership, we want to ensure that the growth we help foster is sustainable and that the positive impacts of the work continue.

a. After the multi-year funding concludes, how sustainable will the growth be?
b. How will the funding help you expand your fundraising or generate other donations or revenue? Engage more donors? Improve your ability to secure government or corporate funding? Build a network of family foundations or other funders?
c. Can you provide budgets or targets to show how you plan on sustaining growth? A plan to build revenue during our collaboration to ensure your organization is positioned to succeed after the funding agreement concludes?
d. Do you have any concerns, or do you see any challenges in meeting these targets?
e. Is there any non-financial support you feel would help you ensure your growth is sustainable?

Phase C | Participatory Review

Timelines: Phase C will take place between November and December 2025.

The final document created in Phase B will be reviewed by other potential grant recipients through a participatory review process. Each component of the document (financial needs, operational components, new programs, etc.) will be commented on by the other potential grant recipients. We want to ensure applicants take leadership roles throughout this process, which includes using their lived experience to reflect on and make final decisions on impacts and resourcing needs amongst applicants.

The group of applicants will decide if a portion or all of your proposed partnership will be supported. DWF will take the direction provided by the review group into consideration as part of its final review and will allocate available resources to best meet these needs and recommendations based on the funds available.

The Blanket Fund will work to provide potential recipients who the review committee does not feel meet the funding criteria with support to continue with a portion of their proposal. This monetary support will not exceed $10,000.

ABOUT OSHKI WUPOOWANE | THE BLANKET FUND

In September 2022, DWF and Hudson's Bay Foundation (HBF) launched Oshki Wupoowane | The Blanket Fund (The Blanket Fund). Since then, 100 percent of the net proceeds from the sale of all HBC Point Blankets has gone to support The Blanket Fund. The Ojibwe "Oshki Wupoowane", "a new blanket" in English, was chosen as the name of The Blanket Fund in collaboration with Chanie Wenjack's family.

The HBC Point Blanket has been called many things throughout its history: an essential trade item, an enduring emblem of Canada, a carrier of disease, and a symbol of colonialism. Acknowledging the many layers of symbolism the blanket embodies in history, art, pop culture, and commerce is an integral part of The Bay's Truth & Reconciliation journey.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

Hudson's Bay Company (HBC), in partnership with First Peoples Group, engaged Indigenous people on a respectful approach to reconciliation. To achieve this, HBC formed an Indigenous Advisory Circle, which reviewed and provided feedback and direction on what should be done with the proceeds from the Point Blankets.

DWF engaged with Indigenous organizations, leaders, and community members throughout Canada to ensure DWF is being respectful and appropriate in discussing the role of the blankets, to solicit feedback on the design of an appropriate selection process and governance system for The Blanket Fund, as well as to ensure the funds raised and distributed through this initiative will have an impact at the community level. The structure of The Blanket Fund, the grant streams, the granting process, and all aspects of The Blanket Fund were informed through consultation with the Indigenous organizations, leaders, and community members.