



**Networking Initiative
Guidelines for Applicants**

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Canada

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About this Guide	3
What is the Networking Initiative?	3
What are the Application Deadlines?	3
Who Can Apply?	3
How do I Apply?	3
What are the Categories within the Networking Initiative?	4
Learning Events	4
Partnerships	4
Networks	4
What Funding is Available?	5
What Expenses are Eligible?	5
When Can I Start my Project? When Must it End?	6
What Criteria Will be Used to Select Projects?	6
What is the Selection Process?	8
Are Funding Partners Required?	8
If my Project is Approved, What's Next?	8
What are the Requirements for Reporting and Evaluation?	9
Additional Information	9
What is Community Capacity Building?	9
What is the Definition of a Community in the context of this Initiative?	9
Why Focus on Community Capacity Building?	10
Can My Project Include Urban Communities?	10
Are Communities of Interest Eligible?	10
Contacts	10
Check List	11
Networking Initiative - General Information At a Glance	12

About this Guide

These Guidelines provide general information for groups considering an application to the Networking Initiative. The Application Form, which is a separate document, is available on our web site or from the Program Officer for your region, by calling our toll-free number: 1-877-295-7160.

What is the Networking Initiative?

The Networking Initiative is a funding program which offers a limited amount of funding (\$1 million / year) for rural community projects in three categories: learning events, partnerships, and networks. The Initiative has an overall objective of encouraging and supporting rural community capacity building and to document the results of various approaches to community capacity building. (See: What are the Categories within the Networking Initiative?)

What are the Application Deadlines?

Proposals will be considered on a first-come, first-served basis. However, proposals are to be submitted at least 90 days prior to the commencement of the work to be undertaken. The final deadline date for applications under this initiative is November 30th, 2007.

Who Can Apply?

Eligible recipients may include individuals, non-profit organizations and associations, universities, colleges, cooperatives, and non-governmental corporations and municipal or regional governments. Organizations must be incorporated under Canadian law and capable of entering into binding contracts. Specifically excluded are federal departments, agencies and Crown corporations, and provincial and territorial governments. Where assessment indicates any of the following conditions, the applicant may not be eligible:

- the organization does not meet the definition of eligible recipients;
- the objectives of the organization are not compatible with those of the Government of Canada;
- the project is not primarily a rural project.

How do I Apply?

You can obtain an application form from the Program Officer for your region, by calling our Canada-wide Toll-free number: 1-877-295-7160. Your completed application will be processed upon receipt. Please ensure that you have the application form which corresponds to the appropriate category for your proposal. (See: What are the "Categories" within the Networking Initiative?) You should attach any substantiating documents to the Application Form as required.

What are the “Categories” within the Networking Initiative?

A proposal may be considered for funding under one of the following categories:

- **Learning Events**

Eligible learning events are short-term in nature and can be stand-alone or part of a larger event such as a conference series. The expected result of learning events are that benefits are accrued at an individual or community level. The time frame and target audience allows impacts to be measured upon completion of each event. Examples of learning events could include:

- conferences, workshops or seminars aimed at knowledge or skill development
- identifying solutions to challenges facing rural and remote communities;
- training and skills development for community stakeholders;
- needs/assets identification for rural and remote communities;
- citizen engagement (roles of citizens in community development);
- consensus building and conflict resolution processes.

- **Partnerships**

A partnership is defined as two or more groups with compatible goals who form an agreement to share the work, the risk and the results of the project. The expected result is the creation of new opportunities to share investment risks and create/develop funding strategies in order to meet rural community challenges. Partnerships are medium-term in nature, with impacts assessed on a continuous basis. Examples of work undertaken by partnerships could include :

- the development of action plans for community development and community capacity building;
- identifying new socio-economic activities contributing to the sustainability of rural communities;
- developing effective tools and mechanisms;
- carrying out socio-economic research on the issues faced by rural communities.

- **Networks**

A network is an umbrella organization whose membership is comprised of multi-community or multi-sectoral groups and individual members. The purpose is to fund activities which increase the capacity of coordinating agencies to advise all levels of government on rural development policies within their respective province. Networks are long-term in nature, with impacts and benefits that can be evaluated throughout and upon completion of the process. Funding is for activities incremental to the organization’s core activities. For start-up networks, limited funding is available to help the organization get established. Normally the

Networking Initiative - Application Guidelines

Networking Initiative would consider only one network per province. Examples of networks include:

- provincial/territorial rural networks whose mandate includes enhancing the capacity of community and community organizations to develop responses to rural and remote community issues

What Funding is Available?

The Networking Initiative is a fund of up to \$1 million per year in total. All project submissions will be reviewed on a first-come-first-served basis pursuant to the availability of funds and compatibility with program objectives. The maximum amount per project in each category is as follows:

- **Learning Events:** up to one third of total project costs, to a maximum of \$15,000
- **Partnerships:** up to one third of total project costs, to a maximum of \$40,000
- **Networks:** up to one half of total project costs, to a maximum of \$80,000 per year for regional networks. For National Networks, please contact the Manager, Networking Initiative, Rural Secretariat at (613) 759-1933.

What Expenses are Eligible?

Eligible costs incurred in carrying out approved activities include:

- Incremental costs for consultants and/or other contracted goods and services;
- Direct costs for incremental materials and supplies;
- Federal and provincial taxes, including the non-refundable portion of the Goods and Services Tax (GST), if any, paid by the recipient;
- Costs for incremental labour, incremental salaried services, and related employment costs;
- Incremental costs of rental or lease of facilities, equipment or machinery (the purchase of specialized items necessary for the execution of the project may be eligible with the prior written authorization of the Minister or his designate);
- Administrative and other costs directly related to the conduct of the project, such as planning and consultation, performance reporting, accounting, auditing and evaluation, domestic travel and hospitality related to the activities identified in the project budget, (not to exceed Treasury Board guidelines), and maintenance expenses. (Administration costs may be expressed as a percentage of other direct costs incurred by the recipient, provided the percentage is set out in the project budget and approved by the Minister);
- Any other costs having the prior written approval of the Minister, or his designate.

These costs are not eligible for reimbursement:

- The refundable portion of the GST, HST, or other items for which a refund or rebate is received;
- Travel, hospitality and/or gifts exceeding Treasury Board guidelines;

Networking Initiative - Application Guidelines

- Expenditures for the purchase of capital items with the exception of items approved
- Capital expenditures related to the acquisition or development of land or buildings, the construction or renovation of structures and/or buildings, including the purchase of furniture and furnishings;
- Regular ongoing operational activities of the institution or organization;
- Costs related to international travel unless clearly identified as a separate expense category in the project budget and approved by the Minister;
- Costs related to the development and testing of commercial products for private benefit, or the normal costs of establishing a commercial operation;
- Costs being reimbursed or eligible for reimbursement and payable from any other source;
- Legal fees associated with the incorporation of an organization; and,
- Travel and accommodation expenses of federal, provincial and territorial government employees.

When Can I Start my Project? When Must it End?

If your project is approved, the Rural Secretariat will negotiate the effective date for the start of your eligible period for activities. Activities undertaken prior to the start date will not be compensated. The Networking Initiative can provide funding for eligible activities which take place prior to March 31, 2008.

What Criteria Will be Used to Select Projects?

Step 1. The Networking Initiative has basic eligibility requirements which must be met. The basic eligibility requirements are:

- Applicants must fall within the definition of eligible recipients.
- Activities eligible for funding must meet the overall objectives of the Networking Initiative.
- Eligible activities must be completed prior to March 31, 2008, or earlier if specified by the Rural Secretariat.
- Activity costs eligible for funding must relate directly to one or more of the three program categories. (See: What are the “Categories” within the Networking Initiative?)
- Applicants must provide evidence of appropriate community support/community engagement. Priority will be given to projects where the proposal demonstrates partnerships/alliances with others.
- Applicants must provide evidence of financial and/or in-kind partnerships.
- Total assistance from all levels of government must not exceed 80% of total project costs and funding from all AAFC sources must not exceed 50% of total project costs.

Networking Initiative - Application Guidelines

- Activities must be incremental to ongoing business. In other words, funding will not be provided for activities which are part of the regular business of the organization.
- Proponents applying under the “Networks” category for start-up activities must include a plan for sustainability (funding of core activities once the network is established).

Step 2. Proposals that meet these basic eligibility requirements will be rated by a Review Committee, whose recommendations will be presented for approval.

Support for these projects will be provided based on the degree to which the applicant represents rural communities within a province or region, the capability of the organization to implement the proposed project and the reach of the project.

Rated requirements:

- Proposals may be rated on a first-come-first-served basis.
- Proposals may be rated according to need (i.e. priority may be given to communities which have a greater need).
- Preference may be given to proposals with a multi-partner approach.
- Proposals will be rated on evidence that there is broad support in the community for carrying out the project.
 - **Community Involvement:** What is the rural community and does this proposal meet the need(s) of the community? What will be achieved for the community – what are the benefits (short-term and/or long-term)? How is the community involved? What is the community contributing?
 - **Community Diversity:** Who is the target group; is it a broad segment of the community or a narrow but under-serviced group? Who will benefit from the project?
- Proposals will be rated on evidence that the proponent has the **ability to carry out the project**, and that eligible activities will be completed by March 31, 2008.
 - **Organization:** Is the proposal well organized? Are the resources (human and financial) in place? Has the organization demonstrated in the past that it has the capability to implement such a project?
 - **Evaluation:** Does the proposed evaluation plan clearly indicate measures that will monitor the progress and ultimate project success against Networking Initiative objectives? (See “What are the Requirements of Reporting and Evaluation?”)
 - **Work Plan:** Does the work plan contain realistic activities designed to meet the project objectives? Is there a realistic timetable for activities, which ensures that project objectives, activities and results can be completed or achieved in the time frames specified? Are the anticipated results and outcomes realistic and linked to objectives?
 - **Community Support:** Is there any evidence of support from community stakeholders?

Networking Initiative - Application Guidelines

- **Project Budget:** Does the proposed budget reflect incremental costs for the project?
- What **risks** are associated with implementing the project? (i.e. risks with regard to partners, funding, capacity, duplication) Is the methodology realistic; will the proponent be able to report on the success and lessons learned in a manner which allows the Rural Secretariat to collect, compare and disseminate data?
- Does the proposal meet the **community capacity building (CCB) requirement** and how?
 - **Increasing knowledge:** How will knowledge be created? How will information be disseminated? How will partnerships be created/improved?
 - **Developing skills in CCB:** What skills are being developed? How does the proposal contribute to the development of these skills? How will the proposal create increased engagement at the community level?
 - **Creating tools and mechanisms for CCB:** What tools or mechanisms will be created? Accessibility/usefulness: will other communities/organizations be allowed to use the tools or mechanisms?
- Priority may also be determined by considering whether the content or approach has already been documented under the Networking Initiative.

What is the Selection Process?

Applications will be screened for basic eligibility by a Rural Secretariat Regional Program Officer, and rated by the “Review Committee” on a first-come-first-served basis according to:

- fit with the program selection criteria,
- compatibility with program objectives, and
- availability of funds.

Recommendations will be forwarded to senior management of the Rural Secretariat for approval. Applicants will be notified in writing of the results.

Are Funding Partners Required?

This initiative provides funding on a cost-shared basis. In order to apply, applicants must ensure that other funding partners are committed to the project and are prepared to cover direct expenses incurred. Priority will be given to projects where the proposal demonstrates that there are partnerships/alliances with others - in addition to funding partners.

If my Project is Approved, What's Next?

If your project is approved, you will be contacted by the Program Officer in your region. Financial assistance to applicants will normally be provided by means of a contribution agreement with the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food. Agreements will identify the specific terms and conditions of the contribution and the obligations and responsibilities of the recipient and the federal government.

What are the Requirements for Reporting and Evaluation?

All proposals must include a plan for evaluating the success of the project against pre-determined outcomes and expected results. The Evaluation framework should include a clear definition of activities, expected outcomes from those activities, and indicators of success that will be tracked, recorded and reported upon. Projects funded will be evaluated for effectiveness and degree of contribution to community capacity building efforts, as well as their effectiveness as a tool, mechanism or network to develop and/or transfer knowledge and information.

It is understood that the evaluation frameworks will differ between projects depending on the nature of activities undertaken. **A Rural Secretariat Program Officer will assist you in developing your evaluation framework.**

Evaluation Plan Criteria:

- Learning Events: The applicant must include an evaluation of how the event's content and/or process adds value to knowledge, understanding & tools for rural CCB.
- Partnerships: The applicant must include an evaluation of the impact of the project on the field of study, skills and knowledge and/or directs impact on a specific community with regard to CCB.
- Networks: The applicant must include an evaluation of how the project contributes to CCB in rural communities.

Additional Information:

What is Community Capacity Building?

Community capacity building (CCB) is an on-going process that develops skills and knowledge in a community and encourages citizens to develop a shared vision for their community. It enables a community or region to identify its strengths and weaknesses, to mobilize internal and external resources to meet local challenges, to develop strategies for effective action and to increase its individual capacity to take advantage of opportunities.

What is the Definition of a Community in the context of this Initiative?

A community is a place-based group that takes into account and is representative of the interests of all the socio-economic makeup of that place. It can be clearly described and various types of data can be gathered for it. This program is accessible to communities in rural, remote and northern Canada where citizens have a vested interest in their long term sustainability and viability.

Why Focus on Community Capacity Building?

Networking Initiative - Application Guidelines

People living in rural communities have repeatedly told us that they need to build community capacity in order to develop local solutions to local challenges. Through activities resulting in community mobilization, consensus building, skills development, and the building of partnerships and networks, communities will be better equipped to achieve sustainable economic, social, cultural and environmental viability.

Can My Project Include Urban Communities?

The Networking Initiative focuses on rural community capacity building, therefore the project must target rural communities. Given the limited amount of funding available through this program, priority will be given to those projects which will have the greatest impact and/or will address an issue of significant importance in rural communities (as opposed to those projects which focus on any community, and not specifically or exclusively rural communities).

Are Communities of Interest Eligible?

Communities of interest are communities which are defined by their relationship to a common special interest or need (eg: persons with disabilities; minority language groups; seniors; youth). Communities of interest are eligible for funding, however they must demonstrate how their project is particular to addressing challenges facing rural communities.

Contacts

Regional Program Officers, who are able to answer any questions you may have concerning this Initiative, may be contacted on our Canada-wide Toll-free number: 1-877-295-7160.

Check List

A check list is provided to help you with a quickly check the completeness of your application.

Have you clearly identified:

- how you plan to meet the eligibility requirements?
- how and to what extent the project addresses issues in the community, as well as the involvement of the community in the project?
- the link between your project and community capacity building?
- that the project activities are incremental to your organization's operations?
- all project expenditures in your budget, and how the Networking Initiative funds are to be used?
- all funding sources (both cash and in-kind), including federal and provincial departments and agencies, municipal governments and private sector sources for your project?
- how you expect to measure the project's outcomes?
- how you are going to share the information and results of the project with target audiences (i.e. community members / stakeholders or other organizations)?

Also, have you ensured that:

- your proposal includes an evaluation framework?
- your partnerships are confirmed and that other funding partners' support has been confirmed?

Networking Initiative - General Information At a Glance

Category	Funding	Who Can Apply	Activities	Results	Eligible Funding Period
Learning Events	up to one third of total project costs, to a maximum of \$15,000	Eligible recipients may include individuals, non-profit organizations and associations, universities, colleges, cooperatives, and non-governmental corporations and municipal or regional governments. Organizations must be incorporated under Canadian law.	Eligible learning events are short-term in nature and can be stand-alone or part of a larger event such as a conference series. Examples of learning events could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - conferences, workshops or seminars aimed at knowledge or skill development - identifying solutions to challenges facing rural and remote communities; - training and skills development for community stakeholders; - needs/assets identification for rural and remote communities; - citizen engagement (roles of citizens in community development); - consensus building and conflict resolution processes. 	CCB at the individual and community level, in terms of knowledge and skills development	Proposals will be considered on an as-received basis. However, proposals must be submitted at least 90 days prior to the commencement of the work to be undertaken. The final deadline date for applications under this initiative is November 30th, 2007.
Partnerships	up to one third of total project costs, to a maximum of \$40,000		Partnerships are medium-term in nature, with impacts assessed on a continuous basis. Examples of work undertaken by partnerships could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the development of action plans for community development and community capacity building; - identifying new socio-economic activities contributing to the sustainability of rural communities; - developing effective tools and mechanisms; - carrying out socio-economic research on the issues faced by rural communities. 	CCB through the development of partnerships which can come together for future collaborations as needed	
Networks	up to one half of total project costs, to a maximum of \$80,000 per year for regional networks		A network is an umbrella organization whose membership is comprised of multi-community or multi-sectoral groups and individual members. The purpose is to fund activities which increase the capacity of coordinating agencies to advise all levels of government on rural development policies within their respective province. Networks are long-term in nature, with impacts and benefits that can be evaluated throughout and upon completion of the process. Funding is for activities incremental to the organization's core activities. For start-up networks, limited funding is available to help the organization get established. Normally the Networking Initiative would consider only one network per province.	CCB through coordination of activities of community based organizations	

NOTE: Community capacity building (CCB) is an on-going process that develops skills and knowledge in a community and encourages citizens to develop a shared vision for their community. It enables a community or region to identify its strengths and weaknesses, to mobilize internal and external resources to meet local challenges, to develop strategies for effective action and to increase its individual capacity to take advantage of opportunities.