

Caribou Conservation Stewardship Program 2023-2024 Guidelines

Contact Information

For questions regarding the Caribou Conservation Stewardship Program (CCSP) please contact:

The Caribou Conservation Stewardship Program Team

Email: borealcaribouconservation@ontario.ca

For questions or technical support with the online Transfer Payment Ontario platform, please contact:

Transfer Payment Ontario Client Care

Telephone: 1-855-216-3090

Email: TPONCC@ontario.ca

1.0 Caribou Conservation Stewardship Program (CCSP)

To conserve the province's rich biodiversity and promote environmental stewardship, the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks ("Ministry") has committed to funding stewardship projects that contribute to the maintenance or recovery of self-sustaining local Boreal Caribou populations.

As part of this commitment, Ontario is launching the Caribou Conservation Stewardship Program (CCSP) to support projects that contribute to the stewardship and recovery of Ontario's caribou populations.

1.1 CCSP 2023-2024 Call for Applications

For the 2023-2024 CCSP, the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks is accepting multi-year applications (spanning 1- 4 years). For the purposes of the CCSP, a "year" is considered April 1st to March 31st.

All project activities must begin after April 1, 2024. Project activities may begin as soon as Transfer Payment Agreements (TPA) are signed and must finish no later than March 1, 2027.

1.2 Deadline

Applications must be submitted electronically through the Transfer Payment Ontario ("TPON") portal by 3 p.m. (ET) on Thursday, September 28. Applications will be reviewed and funding decisions will be made on an ongoing basis with the priority focus being project that result in on-the-ground habitat restoration or protection, until all available funds have been allocated **The Ministry may close the application portal early if all available funds are allocated before September 28, 2023.** If funding remains available after the September 28, 2023 deadline, a second call for proposals may follow in the coming months.

2.0 Applying through Transfer Payment Ontario

All applications must be submitted electronically through [TPON](#).

Applicants must have a TPON account in order to apply. If you do not have a TPON account, you must first create an account. Please sign up early; it may take up to 5 business days to be granted access. Follow the detailed steps outlined at [Ontario.ca/GetFunding](#).

Once you are registered and have access, the next step is to download and complete the application form (and supporting documents) through TPON.

You are welcome to submit multiple project applications; however, please ensure you create a new TPON case number and download a new application form for each project application you plan to submit.

If you have any questions or difficulties during this process, there are resources to assist at [ontario.ca/GetFunding](#) or you may contact the TPON Ontario Customer Service Line at 416-325-6691 or 1-855-216-3090, Monday to Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. (ET), or by email at TPONCC@Ontario.ca.

If you are an individual interested in applying, please contact borealcaribouconservation@ontario.ca

3.0 Program Objectives

The objective of the CCSP is to advance the maintenance, recovery, or adaptive management of self-sustaining local populations of Boreal Caribou, through supporting projects such as on-the-ground habitat restoration and protection and other conservation activities such as monitoring, science and research.

4.0 Funding Guidelines

Applications will be considered complete if they include:

- performance measures and evaluations that are built into the project to assess the effectiveness of the activities. Performance measures must include one or more of the following:
 - » Area of habitat created, restored or enhanced,
 - » Number of threats addressed,
 - » Number of knowledge gaps addressed,
 - » Number of individuals engaged through outreach and consultation efforts (i.e. attendees at a workshop, website hits or social media interactions)
- provide a detailed project budget
- provide a completed threats and knowledge gaps table
- provide a completed supplementary information table (if required)

Complete applications will be screened for eligibility (see section 5.0 for details) and eligible applications will then be evaluated on how well they:

- align with CCSP objectives
- demonstrate that project design and methods that are practical, appropriate, and scientifically sound
- demonstrate that the project is feasible and has a high likelihood of success given the information provided
- demonstrate expertise, strong partnerships, and value for money.

Whether or not to provide funding and who funding is provided to is within the sole discretion of the Ministry.

5.0 Eligibility

5.1 Eligible Applicants

Applicants must be legal entities who are in good standing with tax, labour and environmental laws. For example, applicants may be:

- Academic institutions
- Corporations
- Indigenous communities/organizations
- Individuals
- Municipal and local governments
- Non-government organizations

5.2 Non-Eligible Applicants

- Provincial government ministries
- Federal government departments and agencies
- Unincorporated informal groups or clubs (non-legal entities)
- Conservation Authorities and their foundations

5.3 Eligible Projects:

Projects will be considered eligible if they:

1. Contribute to maintenance, recovery, or adaptive management of self-sustaining local populations of Boreal Caribou and,
2. Include activities that address one or more following categories:
 - » Habitat management/restoration,
 - » Conducting species surveys, inventories or monitoring
 - » Direct threat mitigation,
 - » Research,
 - » Gathering, sharing, or incorporating Local and Traditional Ecological Knowledge.

5.4 Eligible Costs

The following expense categories are eligible for funding

- **Staff:** includes wages and mandatory benefits for staff that will be directly involved in the implementation of the project. This includes wages for project managers directly involved in project implementation; project oversight/supervision and accounting are excluded from eligible staff costs, but may be included under Support Services (see below). If you are a consultant or consulting company applying for CCSP funding it is important that you itemize your project costs by the budget categories provided. Rates that include costs other than wages (for example, oversight, travel) must be broken-out and included in the relevant categories listed below rather than captured under staff. Funding is to cover actual costs incurred by funding recipients, not a "fee" charged for services.
- **Goods:** includes materials and supplies required for the project.
- **Services:** includes third party costs such as a contractor to excavate a wetland or a design company to develop communication materials. Costs for some types of services may include reasonable disbursements in addition to fees if commonly charged for such services.
- **Consultants:** includes third party advice or expertise. Consultant costs may include reasonable disbursements in addition to fees if commonly charged for such consulting services. However, funds may not be used for costs that would otherwise be ineligible or beyond reasonable limits set by the program (for example, travel and hospitality limits). If you are a consultant or consulting company applying for CCSP funding, you must itemize your project costs by the budget categories provided.

This category is only for third party advice or expertise.

- **Transportation:** may include transportation for meetings or events for project staff, contractors, or meeting/ event attendees. Funded amounts must align with the [Ontario Government's Travel, Meal and Hospitality Expense Directive](#). Funds requested for transportation of meeting attendees must be included in the application budget as its own line item. Transportation costs will be by the most practical and economical method.
- **Accommodation:** may include appropriate/ economical accommodations for meetings or events for project staff, contractors, or meeting/event attendees. Funds requested for accommodation of meeting attendees must be included in the application budget as its own line item.
- **Food and beverage:** may include costs for food or beverages for project staff or contractors during project meetings/ events held with the public. Costs must be calculated according to the rates in the [Ontario Government's Travel, Meal and Hospitality Expense Directive](#). Collecting and retaining itemized receipts to verify the expenditure will be required. Funds requested under this budget category may not be used for: non-meal food and beverages; alcohol; meals when the travel period is less than 5 hours; or meals during travel when travel is a part of the regular job duties of the staff or contractor.
- **Hospitality-public meetings/events:** may include costs for food or beverages during project meetings/ events held with the public. Costs must be calculated according to the rates in the [Ontario Government's Travel, Meal and Hospitality Expense Directive](#). If funds are being requested to pay for non-meal food and beverages (for example, coffee, water, snacks) during public project meetings or events, the amount cannot exceed \$5 per day per person for a half-day public meeting/ event or \$10 per day per person for a full day public meeting/event. Collecting and retaining itemized receipts to verify the expenditures will be required. Funds cannot be requested for alcohol.
- **Equipment/Other Capital Items:** the province may approve the purchase instead of the rental of equipment or capital items if: (i) the equipment or capital item is being used on multiple occasions throughout the project; (ii) total rental costs are greater than the one-time purchase cost; and (iii) without the project, it is unlikely that the recipient would purchase the equipment or capital item.
- **Administration expenses:** includes costs that are part of the normal operations of an applicant's organization, but which can be reasonably attributable to the project. Administration expenses are comprised of disbursements such as postage/ courier charges, photocopying charges, office supplies, and financial institution service fees incurred in carrying out the project. Funds may not be used for avoidable financial institution service fees (for example, non-sufficient fund charges). For clarity, administration expenses do not include items such as salary and wages, rent, travel, accommodation and meal expenses, computers, legal fees, audit fees, engineering fees, and other professional fees.
- **Support services:** includes the time spent by staff in human resources, finance, information technology, and communications departments providing administrative support that can be reasonably attributable to the project. Project managers that have a key role in project implementation and key project participants are not included under support

services. However, managers/positions that are solely involved in the oversight and planning of the project (such as principals, executive directors, academic supervisors) should be included under support services. Staffing costs where staff performs both administration and direct project delivery functions should be pro-rated accordingly. Pro-rating should be based on an estimate of staff time devoted to administrative ("support services" category) or project delivery ("staff" category) activity.

Requested funds for administration expenses and support services (combined) cannot exceed 10% of total funds requested from the CCSP.

Note: Funding from the Ministry may be applied to the non-refundable portion of HST only. The Ministry will not cover any expenses beyond the approved funding amount.

6.0 Additional Information for Applicants

- Applicants should consult species experts and partners for advice in developing project applications.
- If proposing to work in a provincial park or conservation reserve, please contact Ontario Parks at PASCIENCE@ontario.ca.
- Project or studies that are required by law are not eligible, including activities that are being undertaken to fulfill legal requirements or conditions identified in an Endangered Species Act, 2007 authorization or regulation.
- While provincial and federal governments may, in certain circumstances, be able to support projects through in-kind and financial contributions, they are not able to receive any direct funding from an approved CCSP project.

- Projects activities must be intended for the protection or recovery of caribou, and not result in the provision of good or services to the Government of Ontario.
- Applicants are responsible for obtaining landowner permission to access private property to undertake proposed activities.
- Successful applicants are strongly encouraged to submit species observation records and habitat information to the Natural Heritage Information Centre (NHIC).
- The Government of Ontario is not bound to act based on any findings that are produced during a project. Any results of a project are for the voluntary use of stewardship organizations only. The methods and results of a project will not necessarily be endorsed by the Ministry nor the Government of Ontario for use in future SAR habitat identification or land use decisions.

7.0 Application Evaluation

All CCSP applications undergo a comprehensive, multi-staged assessment process. Applications are evaluated against the 2023/24 CCSP objective, feasibility, benefit to caribou, application completeness, and value for money.

Whether or not to provide funding and who funding is provided to is within the sole discretion of the Ministry. In its final evaluation, the Ministry may also consider the kinds of projects proposed, the number of projects funded per organization, and types of organizations applying in order to support a variety of projects, and recipients across the province. The Ministry will not consider an application containing misrepresentations or any inaccurate or misleading information.

8.0 Notification

All applicants will be notified in writing of the outcome of their application. Following project approval, all applicants are required to enter into a transfer payment agreement with the Province before any payments will be made. Applicants should not proceed with a project on the expectation that it will be funded under the CCSP without notification of approval from with the Ministry.

9.0 Agreement and Payment

Successful applicants will be required to enter into a transfer payment agreement which includes the terms and conditions of the project, expenditures and reporting requirements.

The terms and conditions of the funding will be set out in detail in the transfer payment agreement. Generally, those terms and conditions will be consistent with the following:

- Payments will be made following the completion of milestones and Ministry approval of required project reporting. An initial payment may be available upon signing of the transfer payment agreement.
- Projects selected for funding will be required to submit reporting and financial documentation in accordance with the scheduled outlined in their transfer payment agreement. Some projects may be required to submit audited segmented financial information.
- Applicants approved for funding will be required to submit certificates of insurance to confirm insurance coverage in accordance with the terms of the transfer payment agreement.

10.0 Legal Authorizations

All applicants must review this section before applying.

Authorizations & Other Requirements

Applicants are responsible for identifying and obtaining any authorizations required for the project. Projects cannot proceed without obtaining the required authorizations.

The following includes information on ESA authorizations and other requirements that may be required for projects being funded. There may be additional authorizations needed depending on your project. These guidelines are designed to help develop your application as completely as possible. Note that authorizations (for example, permits) do not have to be in place in order to submit your application. However, having an authorization, if required, will enable your project to start on time.

Disclaimer: Applicants must note that the following is for illustrative purposes only and does not constitute advice of any kind from the Ministry on how an applicant must comply with any requirements of law. Applicants must not rely on the following information as being a comprehensive list of authorizations or other requirements that may be required for their project and should consult with their own legal counsel or other relevant advisors in this regard.

Applicants should also note that the Ministry will not give preferential treatment for any authorization issued by the Ministry. The Ministry is under no obligation to issue authorizations and retains authority to refuse issuing authorizations if it is reasonable to do so, based on the information provided.

You may wish to contact the Species at Risk Branch of the Ministry at SAOntario@ontario.ca for information on

whether an authorization under the ESA may be required. Early contact with the Species at Risk Branch during your project planning process may enable you to amend your project plan to avoid adverse impacts to species at risk and their habitats and allow you to determine the need for an authorization under the ESA. The Species at Risk Branch may be able to provide information on the following:

- i. What conditional exemptions are available under Ontario Regulation 242/08;
- ii. Whether an ESA 17(2)(b) permit for protection and recovery activities (B permit) may be required and will need to be obtained before undertaking the funded activity; or,
- iii. Whether your proposed activity may not require an authorization under the ESA.

All projects must avoid and/or minimize adverse effects to species at risk and their habitat. An ESA authorization is required for activities that kill, harm or harass a species at risk, damage or destroy their habitat or otherwise contravene section 9 (species protection) or section 10 (habitat protection) of the Act. For greater detail, please refer to section 9 and section 10 of the [ESA](#).

Activities not eligible for a conditional exemption and that impact species at risk could require an ESA permit or agreement. For more details, contact SARontario@ontario.ca.

If your project will be occurring in a provincial park or conservation reserve, you may require additional authorizations. You can apply for a research authorization online at [Ontario Parks research](#), or if you have any questions about working in provincial parks and conservation reserves, please email PAScience@ontario.ca.

11.0 Recognition

If instructed by the Ministry, the successful applicant may be required to acknowledge the receipt of financial assistance from the Government of Ontario.

12.0 Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy

Personal information provided on the 2023-2024 CCSP application form is being collected by the Ministry to be used for the purposes of the proper administration of the CCSP, including to contact you for clarification or further information about your project proposal.

The collection use and disclosure of this information are governed by the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.

13.0 Auditing

To ensure integrity in the use of public funds, the Province of Ontario reserves the right to require independent verification of reported information as required in the terms of the transfer payment agreement. The terms as set out in a transfer payment agreement must be satisfied to receive payments. The successful applicant shall provide, if requested by the Province, any necessary permissions to access the property where the project activities took place and make available any records, documents and/or information that may be required for this purpose.

14.0 Terms of Reference

The following provisions apply to this application process for CCSP:

- i.** this application process is not intended to create a formal legally binding procurement process and shall not give rise to the legal rights or duties applied to a formal legally binding procurement process;
- ii.** the Ministry reserves the right to seek clarification, and supplementary information relating to the clarification, from applicants. The response received by the Ministry from an applicant shall form an integral part of the applicant's submission;
- iii.** at the conclusion of this process, selected applicants will be expected to enter into a transfer payment agreement with the Ministry (please see section 9.0 of the Guidelines for further information);
- iv.** neither party shall have the right to make claims against the other with respect to this application process, the selection of any applicant, the failure to be selected to enter into a transfer payment agreement, or the failure to honour applications prior to the execution of such an agreement;
- v.** the Ministry may make public the names, addresses, telephone numbers, email addresses, website addresses, project description and funding amount, if applicable, of any or all applicants; and
- vi.** the Ministry will not consider an applicant whose application is found to contain misrepresentations.