

Partner Program

2023 Application Guidelines

Contact Information

For questions regarding the Wetlands Conservation Partner Program (WCPP), please contact:

The WCPP Team

Telephone: 437-225-1354 or 416-309-0841

Email: glo@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 Wetlands Conservation Partner Program

Wetlands purify our water and air, protect biodiversity and natural heritage, provide recreational opportunities, provide carbon sink capacity, help with climate change adaptation and resiliency, and support Indigenous traditional practices.

The WCPP is a \$30 million capital funding program over 5 years which provides support to conserve, restore and improve the resilience of wetlands in Ontario.

1.1 WCPP 2023 Call for Applications

The Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks is accepting applications for the 2023 round of the WCPP. \$9 million is available for this round of funding.

All project activities including the final project report must be complete by December 31, 2024. Applicants may apply for a minimum of \$100,000 in funding for a capital project, or a collection of capital sub-projects, to conserve, restore or enhance wetlands in Ontario.

WCPP 2023 funding is available for three types of projects: wetland restoration, wetland enhancement, and wetland conservation. For the purposes of the WCPP 2023:

- **Wetland restoration** means re-establishing a wetland where one existed previously
- **Wetland enhancement** means improving the features or functionality of an existing wetland where needed, or expanding a wetland(s)
- **Wetland conservation** means securing land through purchase, for the purpose of conserving wetland(s) on that land

1.2 Deadline

Applications must be submitted electronically through the Transfer Payment Ontario (“TPON”) portal by 3:00pm (ET) on Thursday, October 12, 2023. Applications not fully completed by the deadline, or submitted after the deadline, will not be accepted.

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 a My Ontario account and then register for TPON. 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.

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 5:00 p.m. (ET), or by email at TPONCC@Ontario.ca.

3.0 Program Objectives

The objectives of the WCPP are to:

1. Improve functionality of wetlands (e.g., through improving connectivity, removing invasive species, planting native species, improving wildlife habitat, flooding attenuation)
2. Conserve, restore or enhance existing wetlands, including their features and functions (e.g., land purchase for the purpose of conservation, re-establishing wetlands where they once existed, increasing the size of existing wetlands)
3. Mitigate urban stormwater impacts exacerbated by impervious surfaces and more frequent and intense weather events associated with climate change (e.g., excess urban water runoff, greater urban flooding risks)
4. Improve shoreline resiliency to climate change impacts such as high-water levels and intense storms (e.g., wave action)

4.0 Eligibility

4.1 Eligible Applicants

To be eligible for funding, applicants must be legal entities that are in good standing with tax, labour and environmental laws.

Only the following types of organizations are eligible for 2023 WCPP funding:

- Municipal governments
- Conservation authorities and their foundations
- Conservation organizations (i.e., non-governmental, not-for-profit, charitable corporations whose work focuses on environmental protection, conservation, and/or restoration)
- Indigenous communities

Further, to be eligible, applicants must have implemented at least two other similar types of projects in the last 5 years (i.e., in the last 5 years, applicants for restoration projects must have completed at least two other restoration projects; applicants for wetland enhancement projects must have completed at least two other enhancement projects; and applicants for land securement projects must have completed at least two other purchases for the purposes of conservation).

Eligible organizations may collaborate with other organizations (e.g., agricultural organizations / associations, community groups, etc.) on WCPP projects. The organization that would oversee and take responsibility for implementing the project is the organization that must apply, and that organization must meet the eligibility criteria above. For land securement projects, the applicant must be the organization that will own the land after the purchase.

4.2 Eligible Projects

To be eligible for consideration for WCPP funding, projects must:

- Be a capital project (or a collection of capital sub-projects)
- Aim to meet at least one of the four objectives of the WCPP (described in 3.0 above)

Incomplete applications will not be considered eligible for funding. Please see Section 6.0 below for detailed information about what must be included in a complete application package.

4.3 Ineligible Projects

The following types of projects are not eligible for WCPP funding:

- Creation of, or changes to, stormwater ponds without wetland features/functions
- Creation of new wetlands in places where wetlands have not previously existed
- Projects to offset destruction of any wetland
- Feasibility studies or other types of exploratory work to determine a path forward on a potential project
- Projects that are required by law
- Projects that take place in a provincial park or conservation reserve, or on other provincial Crown land
- Projects that are not planned to be complete by December 31, 2024

The list of types of ineligible projects above is not comprehensive. If you are unsure about the eligibility of your project and activities, please contact us by email at glo@ontario.ca, or by phone at 437-225-1354 or 416-309-0841.

4.4 Eligible Costs

WCPP funds may only be used for eligible expenses incurred in carrying out capital projects.

The following expense categories are eligible for funding:

- **Goods:** Includes materials and supplies required for the project
- **Services:** Includes third party costs such as a contractor to excavate a wetland or, for land securement projects, legal costs. Costs for some types of services may include reasonable disbursements in addition to fees if commonly charged for such services. However, funds may not be used for costs that would otherwise be ineligible for the program (for example, hospitality).
- **Staff:** Includes wages and mandatory benefits for staff assigned to the project, such as project managers, and that will be directly involved in implementing the project
- **Consultants:** Includes third party expertise for services such as detailed engineering or landscape design plans. 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 for the program (for example, hospitality).
- **Equipment/other capital items:** Usually this covers rental costs. A purchase may be approved, by request, under certain circumstances.
- **Land purchase:** For projects involving land securement, the purchase price of the land is eligible

Applicants are responsible for ensuring and showing that no project expenses which are being requested from WCPP are also covered by other funding sources (i.e., no “double-dipping”).

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

5.0 Application Evaluation

All WCPP applications are initially screened for completeness and eligibility and then evaluated against the following criteria:

Alignment with WCPP objectives, as described in Section 3.0 above

- The more strongly a project is aligned with WCPP objectives, the more likely it is to be favourably evaluated.
- Projects will be evaluated more favourably if they aim to achieve multiple program objectives.

Environmental benefits

- How well the project would contribute to addressing an identified environmental need(s). For land securement: the ecological value of the land to be purchased (e.g., as identified in a strategic conservation plan).
- The extent to which the project is expected to result in specific and measurable environmental benefits.
- The strength of the plan to maintain the long-term benefits of the project (e.g., after the project has been completed).

Project design and workplan

- Workplan will be evaluated on how clearly and appropriately it provides details about the steps that will be implemented to complete the proposed work.
- Project budget will be evaluated on how clearly it reflects the workplan, outlining the associated expenditures, and whether costs are reasonable.
- How likely the project is to be completed in the timeframe described, being ready to begin upon signing of a WCPP transfer payment agreement, and complete, with final reporting, by December 31, 2024. Implementation risks have been considered and mitigation proposed. For proposals with multiple sub-projects, this may include the submission of a list of contingency sub-projects.
- Relevance of the performance measures built into the project to assess the effectiveness of project activities. Outcomes and outputs will be reported upon project completion¹.

Expertise, leverage, and value for money

- How well the application demonstrates that the project has the necessary and qualified contributors and resources to achieve its intended purposes.
- Project leverages support (cash and/or in-kind) from other contributors. Higher levels of support improve the evaluation of a project.
- How well the application demonstrates why the funding is needed for the project to take place.
- Evaluation of projects will consider purchasing procedures to ensure value for money. It is recommended that three quotes be obtained for materials and services over \$5,000.

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, geographic distribution, 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.

¹ Every project must report on the number of wetlands restored, enhanced and/or conserved, as well as number of wetland hectares restored, enhanced and/or conserved.

6.0 What to include in the application package

Incomplete applications will not be considered eligible for funding. A completed application package must include:

- A completed application form through TPON, including a fully completed work plan that outlines how all project activities will be finished and final reporting submitted by **December 31, 2024**
- A detailed project budget, using the WCPP Budget Calculator template provided
- Signed letters of support from key organizations or individuals, other than your organization and its members, if they are critical to project delivery. These letters should describe the role of these other project participants.
- Signed letters from other funding sources, if applicable, to confirm their contributions

For land purchase projects, the following items must also be included in the application package:

- A signed Agreement of Purchase and Sale, conditional only upon receipt of requested funding from WCPP 2023
- A map that clearly shows all the boundaries of the property to be purchased
- A copy of the appraisal summary letter (completed by an appraiser designated by the Appraisal Institute of Canada-Ontario)
- Evidence of an established stewardship endowment fund to support the long-term management of the property being purchased; or the plan in place to fund the long-term management of secured properties.

The following items are also suggested for inclusion in the application package, to strengthen the application:

- Copies of permits, approvals, or permit applications needed for your project, if applicable and available. These may be submitted at a later date if needed.
- Your organization's purchasing policy, if available.
- For wetland restoration and/or enhancement projects: a map of the site(s) should be included if it helps to explain the project(s).
- For land securement projects: evidence of the ecological value of the wetland(s) to be purchased, e.g., wetland identified in a strategic conservation plan.

7.0 Additional Information for Applicants

- Applicants are responsible for obtaining all permits to implement the proposed activities.
- Applicants are responsible for obtaining landowner permission to access private property to undertake the proposed activities.

8.0 Notification

All applicants will be notified by e-mail of the outcome of their application. Following provisional approval of successful projects, recipients will be required to enter into a transfer payment agreement with the province of Ontario before any payments will be made. Applicants should not proceed with a project on the expectation that it will be funded under the WCPP without an executed agreement 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 and in alignment with cash flow needs. An initial payment is generally made upon signing of the transfer payment agreement
- The final date to submit all final reporting and financial documentation is **December 31, 2024**
- Applicants approved for funding will be required to submit certificates of insurance to confirm coverage in accordance with the terms of the transfer payment agreement
- Applicants approved for funding will need to attest that they are in good standing with tax, labour, and environmental laws
- WCPP 2023 recipients being funded for \$750,000 or more will be required to submit audited segmented financial information on completion of their project. WCPP 2023 funds may not be used to produce this information.
- Recipients may be required to prepare a property management plan.

Until the transfer payment agreement is finalized and signed, the ministry cannot guarantee funds for any project. Successful applicants are asked not to announce nor disclose information about the funding or the agreement until they are advised by the ministry.

If you would like to see an example of the detailed transfer payment agreement before applying, please contact us at glo@ontario.ca.

10.0 Recognition

Successful applicants are required to acknowledge the receipt of financial assistance from the Government of Ontario, possibly in the form of a signage or other media.

11.0 Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy

All applications submitted to the ministry may be subject to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA). FIPPA provides a right of access to information in the custody or under the control of the ministry, subject to a limited set of exemptions, such as section 17(1) of the Act. This exemption applies to information that reveals a trade secret or scientific, technical, commercial, financial or labour relations information supplied in confidence, where the disclosure could reasonably be expected to result in certain harms.

If an applicant believes that any of the information contained in its application or submitted to the ministry under TPON falls under this exemption, and the applicant (or another party to whom the information relates) wishes to indicate to the ministry that submitted material is confidential, it should be clearly marked as confidential. If the ministry receives a request for access to this information, the ministry may notify the applicant so the applicant may make representations concerning its disclosure.

Applicants are advised that the names of funding recipients, the amount of funding, and the purpose for which funding is awarded is information the ministry routinely makes available to the public.

12.0 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.

13.0 Terms of Reference

The following provisions apply to this application process for WCPP:

- (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 will not consider an applicant whose application is found to contain misrepresentations