Ontario

**Support for Indian Residential School Burials Investigations**
**Indian Residential School Community Engagement Fund**

# 2026-27 Application Guidelines

**Effective July 2026**

## Table of Contents


Program Details ..... 2
- Purpose of the Guide ..... 2
- Overview ..... 2
- Funding Objectives ..... 3
- Funding Amounts ..... 4

Application Details ..... 4
- Deadline ..... 4
- Joint Applicants ..... 5
- Submitting an Application ..... 6
- Eligible Activities ..... 7
- Eligible Expenditures ..... 8
- Ineligible Activities ..... 9
- Performance Measures and Outputs ..... 10

Funding Request Process: ..... 11
- How to Request Funding ..... 11
- Evaluation Criteria ..... 12

Recipient Obligations ..... 12
- Agreement Execution ..... 12
- Reporting Requirements ..... 13

Disclaimer ..... 13

Transfer Payment Request Form ..... 13

# Program Details

## Purpose of the Guide

This guide provides information for applicants to the Indian Residential School Community Engagement Fund (IRSCEF), a funding stream from the Support for Indian Residential School Burials Investigation Funding program of the Ministry of Indigenous Affairs and First Nations Economic Reconciliation (IAFNER).

IRSCEF supports a broader network of First Nation, Métis and Inuit communities and Indigenous organizations undertaking IRS-related community engagement, staffing supports, research activities, public education and awareness, mental health and addictions supports, and/or commemoration initiatives. *This funding stream is not intended to support IRS-related field work, ground searches, or archaeological work.*

This application guide has been updated as of July 2026. Updates may be released periodically and will be made available on: [https://www.ontario.ca/page/available-funding-opportunities-ontario-government](https://www.ontario.ca/page/available-funding-opportunities-ontario-government)

Any updates to funding guidelines will be communicated in writing within five (5) business days to funding recipients.

The guide outlines the program details, information on eligibility criteria and activities, and describes the application process.

All applications will be reviewed and recommended for funding, if applicable, based on requirements outlined in this application guide.

## Overview

The Support for Indian Residential Schools Burials Investigations Funding program was developed to support work related to the identification, investigation, protection and commemoration of burials at the sites of the 18 former Indian Residential Schools (IRS) in the province recognized in the federal *Indian Residential School Settlement Act* (IRSSA), 2007.

Ontario recognizes that many Survivors of Residential Schools live outside of the communities where investigations are taking place. Indigenous partners have identified the need for community-based funding that directly supports Survivors and families who wish to take part in planned or ongoing engagement related to burial investigations, oral history gathering, and/or IRS-related commemoration and legacy initiatives. This funding is designed to be Indigenous-led, Survivor-centred and culturally sensitive, and to be as flexible as possible in responding to and supporting community-led initiatives.

The IRSCEF funding stream supports IRS-related activities and initiatives undertaken by non-lead investigating communities and organizations who are impacted by IRS burial investigations, including:

- Commemoration and legacy initiatives, such as monument design, purchase and installation

- Survivor engagement, and gatherings
- Public education and awareness, including initiatives that combat denialism
- Culturally appropriate mental health and wellness supports
- Research activities including connecting community members to ongoing investigations

Ontario is committed to engaging in ongoing discussions with Indigenous communities about funding needs, particularly as IRS investigations, community engagement and ongoing healing work progresses, to better understand ongoing and emerging community needs.

**Note**:

- This funding stream is separate to the dedicated funding being provided to First Nation communities or Indigenous organizations leading burial investigations at former Indian Residential Schools.
- All activities related to other schools or institutions outside of those identified in the IRSSA are not eligible under this funding stream.
- Any activities related to IRS field work such as ground searches or archaeological work are not eligible under this funding stream.
- Please reach out to the Residential Schools Unit at RSU@ontario.ca for further information.

## Funding Objectives

All initiatives under the IRS Community Engagement Fund must seek to advance one or more objectives of the broader Support for Indian Residential School Burials Investigations funding program:

- Investigate deaths of Indigenous children who attended Indian Residential Schools.
- Commemorate or memorialize the lives lost and the children's final resting places.
- Repatriate remains (where/if appropriate and agreed upon by communities/families of the deceased).
- Increase public awareness and education of the legacy of Indian Residential Schools
- Provide culturally appropriate, trauma-informed mental health and wellness supports for Indigenous Survivors, intergenerational Survivors, communities, and families.

Additionally, the IRS Community Engagement Fund may be used to provide supports to IRS Survivors and their families who live outside of communities leading burial investigations but may wish to:

- Participate in Indian Residential School investigation processes, including oral history gathering, research, and/or protocol development.
- Engage or coordinate with other Survivors, either as part of their own community-based initiatives or joining other initiatives that seek to support the wellbeing and

healing journeys of IRS Survivors and their families.

New for 2026-27: Ontario is responding to requests for greater funding flexibility that honours community-specific priorities that include investments in memorial and commemorative initiatives.

Planning and implementing IRS-specific commemoration and memorialization initiatives, including monument design, purchase and installation, along with other types of legacy initiatives, have no capital limits for eligible planned expenditures. *Please reach out to staff in the Residential Schools Unit for more information*.

### Funding Amounts

- Eligible applicants may receive **up to $250,000 for the 2026-27 fiscal year** (April 1, 2026 to March 31, 2027), to fund eligible activities outlined in this application guide.
- Joint applications are welcome, however are eligible for a total of up to $250,000.
- Funding will be provided to recipients via a Transfer Payment Agreement (TPA).
- Funding amounts are subject to availability. It is highly recommended that initiatives proposing commemorative activities submit applications early to ensure the availability of funds.
- The Ministry will work with successful applicants to confirm funding amounts for eligible activities prior to finalizing the Transfer Payment Agreement (TPA). Ontario also encourages applicants to work with Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada (CIRNAC) - through their Residential schools missing children - community support funding program, to seek additional funding, as required.

## Application Details

### Deadline

**The 2026-27 application proposal period will run from August 5 – September 16, 2026 and will be accepted and assessed as they are received. Acceptance does not guarantee funding, and amounts are subject to availability.**

#### Applicant Eligibility

You may apply to the IRSCEF if you are a:

- Political Territorial Organization (PTO) in Ontario;
- Tribal Council in Ontario;
- First Nation community in Ontario;
- Métis community in Ontario;
- A regional or provincial organization representing First Nation, Métis, Inuit or urban Indigenous peoples or an Indigenous service provider in Ontario; or,
- An Indigenous organization undertaking IRS-related initiatives in Ontario.

In addition to the above, to be eligible to receive funding, an applicant **must** meet all of the following criteria:

- Be a legal entity (e.g., established by or under legislation; federally or provincially incorporated; First Nation in the province of Ontario).
- Hold governance structures and accountability processes to properly administer and manage public funds and to provide the services for which transfer payments are made. The following should be considered as part of the eligibility criteria:
    - Expertise and experience necessary to conduct/carry out its responsibilities in compliance with ministry requirements
    - Appropriate governance and control structure in place (e.g., Board of Directors, Chief and Council, membership processes, annual reports, etc.)
    - Reliable and up-to-date financial reporting
    - Have a Canadian bank account
    - Use of funds for activities taking place in Ontario and benefiting Indigenous peoples
- Not in default of the terms and conditions of any grant or loan agreement (i.e., reports due or surplus owed) with any ministry or agency of the Government of Ontario.

### Ineligible Applicants

You are **not** eligible for funding under IRSCEF if you are a:

- Individual applicant
- For-profit business
- Non-indigenous organization
- Receiving funding through *Support for Indian Residential School Burials Investigations* funding (i.e. the main funding program).

## Joint Applicants

- Joint applications are welcome, especially where they link two or more First Nation, Inuit, and Métis communities or Indigenous organizations to promote collaborative and regional initiatives that may support a number of Survivors and communities.
- All parties to a joint application must meet the eligibility criteria.
- Joint applications or applications made on behalf of a First Nation community or Indigenous organization will be accepted but must include proof of support from the community they are representing, as appropriate.
- Applications from non-Indigenous organizations may be eligible if they are accompanied by a letter confirming partnership with an Indigenous community or organization.

- **Disclaimer**: An applicant's total requested funds may not be guaranteed.

## Submitting an Application

### General Information

Transfer Payment Ontario is the Province of Ontario's online application system for grant funding. It is important that you understand the steps for registering with Transfer Payment Ontario prior to submitting your application.

Please visit Transfer Payment Ontario at [https://www.ontario.ca/page/get-funding-ontario-government](https://www.ontario.ca/page/get-funding-ontario-government) for information on how to set up an account. Please be advised that it may take up to 5 business day to activate an account.

Since applicants must register with Transfer Payment Ontario to access application forms, most of the information requested in the first few sections of the application form (such as address, contact information, etc.) should be automatically filled in using data from the registration process.

Once an application has been started it may be saved or downloaded at any point and returned to later. Please refer to the Transfer Payment Ontario System Reference Guide for Applicants for instructions on how to save and submit the application.

**If you have any technical questions about Transfer Payment Ontario, please contact TPON Client Care, available Monday to Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time:**

- **Phone: (416) 325-6691 or 1-855-216-3090**
- **TTY/Teletypewriter (for the hearing impaired): (416) 325-3408 / Toll-free: 1-800-268-7095**
- **Email:** TPONCC@ontario.ca

All applications will be assessed, evaluated, and approved using requirements outlined in this Application Guide.

### Creating an Account

Applicants using Transfer Payment Ontario for the first time must create a "ONe-key" account and be enrolled in the Transfer Payment Common Registration system. If an applicant has previously applied for funding from other programs through Transfer Payment Ontario, a new ONe-key account is not required, but you may still be required to enroll in the Transfer Payment Common Registration system.

Please visit Transfer Payment Ontario at [https://www.ontario.ca/page/get-funding-ontario-government](https://www.ontario.ca/page/get-funding-ontario-government) for information on how to set up an account.

Please note that the ONe-key account is registered at the individual level and not at the organization level. If someone in your organization has an account that is used for a different grant application, a new individual account is required if you are the one submitting the application for this program.

**Tips on Submitting Your Application**

Please take a look at this short video to assist with successfully uploading your application: [How to submit for funding](How to submit for funding).

**Quick Reference Guides and steps on submitting for funding are posted here:**
https://www.ontario.ca/page/get-funding-ontario-government

## Eligible Activities

The 2026-27 funding includes an enhanced focus on commemoration and legacy related work. Subject to available funding, Ontario will continue to support activities funded in previous years, with priority given to applications detailing commemorative and legacy-focused initiatives. Eligible activities may include:

- **Commemoration Initiatives**, including planning and implementing commemorative community or Survivor-based initiatives, conducting ceremonies, and/or undertaking other traditional protocols as required.
- **Community Engagement**, including planning, coordinating and implementing ongoing engagement with Survivors and their families and other community members, Survivors or Survivor networks, and other First Nations and Indigenous organizations connected to IRS burial investigations, as well as participating in IRS protocol development (e.g., ceremonial; research; archaeological; repatriation; or protocols between communities involved in burial investigations).
- **Mental Health and Addictions Supports,** to ensure trauma-informed mental health, addictions and/or wellness supports are available for Survivors, their families, and communities as burial investigations and related initiatives proceed.
- **Staffing Supports,** including hiring staff to address challenges in response to planned or ongoing IRS burial investigations and to assist with capacity to communicate and coordinate Survivor supports, and/or address the mental health and addictions (MHA) and trauma impacts arising from planned or ongoing investigations.
- **Research Activities,** such as undertaking historical and archival research and/or community-based oral history gathering and documenting traditional knowledge related to IRS experiences and the ongoing IRS investigations.
- **Public Education and Awareness,** including communications, implementing public education/ awareness programming and/or campaigns related to planned or ongoing burial investigations and/or to the broader legacy and ongoing impacts of the IRS system.

Please note: Ontario recognizes that communities will have individual approaches and priorities specific to each community. This list is not exhaustive or intended to be representative of the needs of all communities. This funding is intended to be as flexible as possible and if you are unsure of eligibility, please reach out to the Residential Schools

Unit.

## Eligible Expenditures

The following is a list of expenditures that are eligible under this funding in connection with eligible activities:

- **Salaries and wages** of staff hired to support of IRS burial investigations, including:
    - Project managers, coordinators and administrative staff;
    - Community engagement coordinators and traditional knowledge holders; and,
    - MHA and trauma service providers, such as social workers, counsellors, therapists and psychologists. MHA salaries may also include traditional healers and non-western services.
- **Mandatory Employee Related Costs (MERCs)** – capped at 17.5% of salaries and wages.
- **Community and Other Related Expenses** for initiative planning, training sessions and program implementation, including:
    - Rental of facilities for initiative implementation;
    - Basic supplies, e.g., food and drinks for meetings, print materials and related items as required; and,
    - Preparations and supplies for ceremonies, traditional healing activities, and/or IRS commemoration initiatives.
- **Professional Fees[1] and Other Fees** in support of planned or ongoing IRS burial investigations, including:
    - Hiring project consultants to support initiative planning, research, engagement and communications;
    - Honoraria for Elders or Community Knowledge Holders[2];
    - Contracts for MHA and trauma consultants/service providers, including social workers, counsellors, therapists and psychologists.
- **Travel Expenses,** including:
    - Cost of flights and/or reimbursement of kilometres driven for transporting staff, project consultants and community members to initiative meetings, ceremonies, or IRS locations in the course of burial investigations and related activities; and,
    - Accommodations for consultants hired to support initiative implementation and community members travelling to participate in engagement activities.

---

[1] Costs for Professional Fees must be relevant to work plan activities and can include fees for consultants, translators, interpreters, note takers, etc.

[2] Honoraria’ are defined as payments to Elders or Community Knowledge Holders for their attendance and participation at a meeting or event. Honoraria are not intended to be payments in lieu of travel and meal expenses, legal fees and/or other professional fees.

    - Travel and meal expenses will be paid in accordance with Ontario's Travel, Meal and Hospitality Directive and will only be paid for actual expenses incurred. If an applicant has adopted a travel and meal policy that exceeds the amounts outlined in the Ontario policy, they will be responsible for any additional costs incurred.
- **Commemoration, Memorialization, and Legacy Activities,** including:
    - Ceremonies,
    - Memorial events,
    - Commemorative initiatives,
    - Creation of memorials and commemorative materials (including eligible capital expenses),
    - Storytelling and documentation projects, educational activities, and other efforts that honour, preserve, share, and strengthen the histories, experiences, and legacies of Survivors, children, families, and communities.
- **Administration costs** including utilities; telephone/fax charges; network charges; postage/courier charges; photocopying charges; office supplies, etc.
    - Where administration is appropriate for a transfer payment, a maximum of 10% of the transfer payment's sub-total budget (pre-administration) will be applied.
    - Administration costs incurred in excess of the approved administration budget will not be funded.

## Ineligible Activities

This funding is designed to be as flexible as possible. Applicants are encouraged to contact the Residential Schools Unit with any questions about activity and expenditure eligibility.

At this time, this funding stream is unable to support work at other institutions not directly tied to the 18 federally recognized former Indian Residential Schools.

This funding stream is not intended to fund any IRS activities which are already funded. In some instances, funding may be used to expand existing activities or service delivery (e.g., funding to expand engagement activities), but the rationale, existing funding received and new funding being sought should be clearly identified.

The following identified activities and expenditures are not eligible under this funding:

- Fieldwork or ground searches related to planned or ongoing burial investigations;
- Costs associated with activities related to school locations and other institutions not identified in the IRSSA;
- Purchase of automobiles, land, or buildings;
- Stipends for project participants;
- International travel;
- Contingency/miscellaneous fees;

- Compensation for an individual's administration of, or participation in, an initiative where they are already receiving compensation (salary, honoraria or per diem) for the same period of time; and,
- Deficit recovery.

New for 2026-27: Planning and implementing IRS-specific commemoration and memorialization initiatives, including monument design, purchase and installation, has no capital limits for planned expenditures. Please reach out to staff in the Residential Schools Unit for more information.

## Performance Measures and Outputs

Applicants will be required to identify how proposed activities align with the overall program objectives of the Support for Indian Residential Schools Burials Investigation funding program.

Funding recipients will be required to track and report on two (2) quantitative *Key Performance Indicators* (KPIs) as part of the end of year activity and expenditure reporting process.

1. Program Coverage – Number of people reached through IRSCEF activities.

The recipient will engage and support participants through eligible activities in the following categories:

- Survivor Engagement/Gatherings (Number of participants in funded gatherings, meetings, truth-telling and One-to-one support activities).
- Public Education activities including NDTR events, targeted ad campaigns, focus groups, IRS awareness events (Number of participants in public education funded activities) (viewership/listenership).
- IRS-related Mental Health and Addictions Supports/Land Based education and healing activities (Number of participants in funded activities).
- IRS research including connecting community members to on-going IRS investigations or families to IRS research or records finding activities (Number of participants in funded activities).

2. Program Administrative Cost – Total dollars spent on administration.

Must be directly related to the workplan. Eligible costs include utilities, telephone, fax charges, network charges, postage/courier charges, photocopying charges, financial institution service fees, office supplies. Maximum is 10% of the overall subtotal.

Given the highly sensitive nature of this Indigenous-led work, funding recipients will be asked to identify their own (minimum of two) qualitative performance measures and outcomes in order to integrate culturally responsive measurements of success.

Applicants can identify a broad range of qualitative Key Performance Indicators, such as:

- The extent to which lead communities have been able to access IRS-related records to inform historical archival/research.

- The level and nature of Survivor, intergenerational survivor, family and community input into the burial investigations process.
- The extent to which traditional languages has been incorporated into the initiative.
- Successful sharing of research and knowledge regarding Indian Residential Schools, impacts, survivors, history, locations, resources, intergenerational trauma, and healing.

Additionally, recipients are encouraged to share achievements and obstacles encountered during the implementation of initiatives. This information will help the Ministry improve future IRS-related funding supports.

# Funding Application Process:

## How to Request Funding

Please submit an overview of your proposed activities and budget within the application form through the Transfer Payment Ontario Network portal.

### Required Documentation

The application must include the following information:

1. Description of the initiative.
2. Initiative work plan. Please provide clear activities, statements of objectives and project timelines which support the activities and expected outcomes or benefits for interest of the Survivors and/or communities represented.
3. Initiative budget, including funding required to support the initiative and activities and expenditures the funding will cover.
4. Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) Business Number, if applicable
5. Note: For joint applications, please provide proof of support from the community/communities being represented by the applicant, as appropriate.

### Please note the following

- Recipients must not be in default of the terms and conditions of any grant or loan agreement (e.g., reports due or surplus) with any ministry or agency of the Government of Ontario.
- Per the terms of the Transfer Payment Agreement (TPA), successful recipients will be required to obtain at least $2 million commercial general liability insurance coverage by providing a valid Certificate of Insurance (COI). The COI must be consistent with section A10.0 of the TPA.
    - The COI should specify "**His Majesty the King in right of Ontario as represented by the Minister of Indigenous Affairs and First Nations Economic Reconciliation, His ministers, agents, appointees and employees**" as the indemnified party and list the **"Support for Indian**

**Residential Schools Burials Investigations Funding**” as the indemnified project.

- As set out in the Transfer Payment Operational Policy | ontario.ca, all transfer payment recipients external to government are required to be registered in the Transfer Payment Common Registration (TPCR) system. This process in mandatory in order for funds to be released to the recipient. For more information on Transfer Payment Ontario, refer to Get funding from the Ontario government | ontario.ca.

## Evaluation Criteria

After the application form has been submitted and all required documents have been uploaded through the Transfer Payment Ontario Network, the Ministry will review the application. Applications will be evaluated as they are received and are subject to available funding. The evaluation process for IRSCEF funding has two stages.

### Preliminary Assessment

A preliminary assessment will be undertaken by the Ministry to ensure each application is complete. The Ministry may request additional information if an application is deemed to be incomplete.

### Final Assessment

During the second stage of the evaluation process, all eligible applications will be reviewed with the following considerations:

- Alignment with the objectives of the broader Support for Indian Residential School Burials funding program
- The strength and clarity of project rationale and the community-identified need
- Initiative details should be clearly identified with key activities, a detailed budget and timeline with focused outcomes that are achievable during the funding period and with costs that are reasonable and in accordance with program objectives).

# Recipient Obligations

## Agreement Execution

- Once the terms of the TPA have been finalized, an electronic copy of the TPA will be sent to Recipients.
- The Ministry will determine the payment schedule based on the nature of activities and need for funding outlined in the initiative work plan.
- The first payment will be released upon execution of the TPA and submission of required documents. Subsequent payment/s will be processed upon reconciliation of work completion.
- The TPA must be signed by the recipient’s signing authority and dated.
- Recipients must email a scanned copy of the signed TPA to the Ministry for signing and execution.

- A fully executed TPA will be emailed to recipients for their records.

### Reporting Requirements

- Recipients must submit project end and/or final activity and expenditure reports as per the agreed upon timelines outlined in Schedule F of recipients' transfer payment agreements. Reports will provide an overview of the use of the funds, actual expenditures and achieved outcomes and challenges encountered during the implementation of the initiatives.
- Activity and expenditure check ins (through phone calls and emails) will be arranged between the Ministry and the recipient at an agreed upon frequency to track progress of the initiative and tailor Ministry supports to recipients, moving forward.

## Disclaimer

**Please Note:**

- Consideration of an application by the Ministry does not guarantee funding. Funding is dependent on the availability of funds, the Ministry's review of the application, and on the recipient's entering into a Transfer Payment Agreement.
- Approved funding is contingent upon meeting the eligibility criteria. However, meeting eligibility criteria does not guarantee funding. Approved funding and entering into a Transfer Payment Agreement is at the discretion of the Government of Ontario.
- All projects must comply with relevant Canadian and Ontario laws, regulations, standards, and policies.
- All funding requests submitted to the Ministry are subject to the access to information provisions of the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (the "Act"). The Act provides all persons with a legal right of access to information in the custody and/or control of the Ministry, subject to a limited set of exemptions. If an applicant believes that certain information it submits in connection with its funding request or reporting is confidential and wishes to maintain the confidentiality of such information, the applicant should clearly mark the information "confidential." Marking the information "confidential" does not mean that the information will not be released if and as required under the Act.

---

**INQUIRIES**

**ontario.ca/Indigenous**
*Disponible en français*

Inquiries about this funding and the application process can be directed to:

**Residential Schools Unit (RSU)**
Strategic Policy and Planning Division
Ministry of Indigenous Affairs and First Nations
Economic Reconciliation
160 Bloor Street East, 4th Floor
ON, M7A 2E6

RSU@ontario.ca