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# Education and Capacity Building (ECB) Program

Program Guidelines  
Version 9.3  
June 2023

ECB Program resources available at:

[IESO website - ECB](#)

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## 1. Background

Since 2009, the Independent Electricity System Operator (“IESO”) (previously, the Ontario Power Authority) has designed, administered and managed a portfolio of Energy Support Programs (“ESPs”) to promote community energy security and inclusive participation in Ontario’s energy sector. More information about the ESPs can be found at [the IESO website](#).

The IESO regularly conducts reviews of its ESPs, informed by feedback from Ontario Indigenous communities and organizations. In 2022, the IESO sought input from these communities and organizations on the proposed redesign of the ESPs. The IESO subsequently identified the need to make an application intake window available in Q2 2023. In order to facilitate this timing, a limited number of revisions to the ESPs were able to be implemented in advance of the window. The revisions address some of the feedback received, while continuing to demonstrate the IESO’s commitment to support the building of Indigenous capacity and participation in the energy sector. The implementation of a more fulsome redesign of the ESPs is anticipated in 2024.

## 2. Program Objectives

The objective of the ECB Program is to support awareness, education, skills, and capacity building initiatives that help prepare First Nations and Métis Communities, and First Nations and Métis Organizations to fully leverage energy opportunities and contribute to cleaner, more reliable and more affordable energy systems. The ECB Program provides funding to support:

- community energy engagement;
- energy skills building, project training and certifications; and
- innovative knowledge/data sharing models

## 3. Eligibility Criteria

### a. Eligible Applicants

- First Nation or Métis Communities;
- First Nation or Métis Organizations (including Friendship Centres, Indigenous housing providers, and others); and
- Non-Indigenous entities working in partnership with, and for the benefit of, First Nation or Métis Communities, or First Nation or Métis Organizations (Note: Non-Indigenous entities may only apply as joint applicants working with a First Nation or Métis Community or First Nation or Métis Organization as the lead applicant).

Funding is not provided to individuals. Joint applications for a shared single project may be submitted by two or more eligible applicants. Applicant eligibility for the ECB Program is determined in the sole and absolute discretion of the IESO or the Ministry of Energy, as applicable.

Please see section 6 below for definitions of key eligibility terms.

## b. Eligible Projects and Funding

All applications to the ECB Program must fit within one of the following ECB Program categories described below.

Applicants may submit a single application for funding under one or more of these categories, subject to the maximum amount of funding per category as set out below, up to an aggregate maximum funding amount \$125,000 per application.

Category	Maximum Funding Amount per Category	Maximum Funding Term
<p><b>Community energy engagement</b></p> <p>Projects that enhance awareness of, and knowledge about, energy-related issues in First Nation or Métis Communities, or First Nation or Métis Organizations. This may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• community workshops and meetings</li> <li>• youth and Elder specific projects</li> <li>• activities that educate and enhance energy-related capacity to understand and navigate the current energy environment</li> </ul>	Up to \$50,000	Up to two (2) years
<p><b>Energy skills building, project training and certifications</b></p> <p>Energy sector skills training programs and certifications that build job-ready capacity and develop tangible skills within First Nation or Métis Communities, or First Nation or Métis Organizations to prepare these communities or organizations to participate in, develop, manage and own energy projects or initiatives. This may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technical capital project training</li> <li>• Energy efficiency technical training</li> <li>• Energy project management certification</li> <li>• Operation and maintenance</li> <li>• Energy financial modeling</li> <li>• Certified Energy Manager (CEM) training</li> </ul>	Up to \$75,000	Up to two (2) years

Category	Maximum Funding Amount per Category	Maximum Funding Term
<p><b>Innovative knowledge/data sharing models</b></p> <p>Projects that demonstrate and deploy novel initiatives, approaches, and delivery models related to energy issues in First Nation or Métis Communities, or First Nation or Métis Organizations. The application must clearly demonstrate how the project approach or delivery method is unique or innovative within the context of the community or organization, and how the unique or innovative approach will contribute to the success of the project. This may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning or teaching about new and emerging energy topics and projects</li> <li>• New energy skills training and delivery methods</li> <li>• Research and data incorporating Traditional Knowledge</li> <li>• Innovative knowledge sharing among youth and Elders</li> </ul>	Up to \$50,000	Up to two (2) years

**c. Eligible and Ineligible Expenses**

Additional criteria regarding Eligible Expenses and a list of Ineligible Expenses are set out in the Funding Agreement, which must be signed by all successful applicants in order to receive funding.

**Eligible Expenses**

Funding is provided under the ECB Program for Eligible Expenses that are directly related and reasonably necessary to complete the project. Eligible Expenses can include costs associated with activities carried out by:

- duly qualified internal resources, and includes the salary, wages and benefits, contributions, assessments and taxes paid to internal resources, and
- duly qualified external resources (i.e. professional and technical consultants and contractors), provided that the costs incurred for the services of a single external resource shall only qualify as Eligible Expenses up to the Threshold Amount (40 % of the maximum funding amount as defined in the Funding Agreement).

**Ineligible Expenses**

Funding is not provided under the ECB Program for Ineligible Expenses, which include:

- Costs that are not directly related to the project;
- Costs related to the provision of legal advice or the development or distribution of legal templates, precedent agreements, or materials that are considered or could be considered legal or financial advice;

- Costs related to activities for which funding was received in relation to the project from another source;
- Costs that the applicant or joint applicant(s) did not directly incur;
- Costs incurred for the services of a single external resource in excess of the Threshold Amount (40 % of the maximum funding as defined in the Funding Agreement);
- Costs incurred, or relating to any activity, matter or thing carried out before the start of, or after the end of, the Funding Agreement;
- Costs associated with meeting the administrative obligations of the application or Funding Agreement under the ECB Program or any other IESO program, including preparing status and other reports as may be required under the Funding Agreement;
- Costs associated with submitting the application, or applications or proposals under any of the IESO programs, or entering into a funding agreement under any of the IESO programs;
- Costs related to meetings with or the lobbying of any governmental authority or the IESO;
- Costs associated with the use of personal devices (e.g. personal mobile or landline phones, laptops or internet service provider fees, etc.);
- Costs related to administrative operating expenses such as real estate expenses, insurance, utilities, memberships, dues, subscriptions, accounting, or maintenance of equipment;
- Costs incurred that are not evidenced by deliverables, including the supporting documentation required by the Funding Agreement, or other evidence of payment satisfactory to the IESO, in its sole and absolute discretion;
- Costs not approved by the IESO as part of the application and budget, unless otherwise agreed to in writing by the IESO, in its sole and absolute discretion;
- Costs for travel, hospitality or meals that do not comply with the [Ontario Travel, Meal and Hospitality Expenses Directive](#);
- Costs that in the IESO's view, in its sole and absolute discretion, materially deviate from the approved application with respect to the activities, work plan, budget, project team, timelines or project description; and
- Costs in respect of HST.

## 4. Application Process

### a. Background

The ECB Program accepts submissions on an ongoing basis, with application review dates spread throughout the year. The application review dates will be posted online at [the IESO website](#). Before applying to the ECB Program, applicants should review these ECB Program Guidelines and the Funding Agreement carefully, and are encouraged to seek independent legal and other professional advice, as needed.

The ECB Program application development process is supportive. Applicants should contact ECB Program staff with any questions at [ecb@ieso.ca](mailto:ecb@ieso.ca). ECB Program staff will be available to provide feedback and guidance throughout application development, and may ask for additional information or references. As a condition of funding support, the IESO may require changes to your application. Please allow sufficient time for application review and feedback prior to submittal of your final application.

## b. Application Submission

All applications must be in the form provided by the IESO, which can be found on [the IESO website](#). Please submit your application to [ecb@ieso.ca](mailto:ecb@ieso.ca). Please refer to Appendix A for additional details regarding the application process and evaluation timelines. Applicants are encouraged to contact ECB Program staff prior to submitting an application.

## 5. Application Evaluation

Applications that meet the completeness and eligibility requirements of the ECB Program are assessed by a review committee comprised of IESO staff that are not responsible for the delivery and oversight of the ESPs, including the ECB Program. The review committee makes funding recommendations to the IESO. Final funding decisions are made by, and are at the discretion of, the IESO.

Funding decisions are based on the extent to which a proposed project addresses community energy needs and the degree to which it satisfies the ECB Program application review criteria outlined immediately below:

Review Criteria	Description
Strategic fit	Will the project enhance First Nation or Métis energy-related capacity and leadership and support awareness, education, skills, and/or capacity building?
Community benefit, need, and support	How are community members involved in the project? How does the project benefit the community? Is there an identified need for the project? Has a document expressing community support (Band Council Resolution, board resolution, etc.) been included in the application?
Project team and partners	Does the project team have the qualifications and experience required to execute the project? Is there evidence of strong and appropriate partnerships if applicable?
Financial feasibility	Is the budget for the project detailed, reasonable and justified? Have revenue sources for costs outside of those assigned to ECB Program funding been identified and secured?

Review Criteria	Description
Project purpose and outcomes	Are the project’s purpose and intended outcomes clearly articulated? Is the plan to realize and evaluate the project outcomes sufficiently detailed and reasonable? If applying to the Innovation stream, is the project sufficiently innovative? Will it provide a novel solution? Will the project address a gap?

## 6. Key Definitions

Key Term	Description
First Nation or Métis Community	means, for the purposes of the ECB Program: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) a First Nation in Ontario that is a “band” as defined in the Indian Act (Canada);</li> <li>b) the Métis Nation of Ontario or any of its active Chartered Community Councils; or</li> <li>c) a Person, other than a natural person, that has previously been determined by the Government of Ontario to represent the collective interests of a community that is composed of First Nation or Métis individuals.</li> </ul>
First Nation or Métis Organization	means, for the purposes of the ECB Program, an organization that, as determined in the sole and absolute discretion of the IESO, represents the interests of more than one First Nation or Métis Community, or was established to provide key services to one or more First Nation or Métis Communities or members of one or more First Nation or Métis Communities.
Funding Agreement	means the agreement that successful applicants must sign in order to be eligible to receive funding under the ECB Program.

## 7. General

- a. Receipt of an application to the ECB Program does not constitute a commitment by the IESO to support the application, nor does it create a business relationship between the applicant, its partners and the IESO.
- b. The approval of the ECB Program review committee is required prior to the IESO being able to offer a Funding Agreement to the applicant.
- c. Financial support from the IESO to an applicant to the ECB Program will only be provided upon execution of the Funding Agreement between the applicant and the IESO, and only according to the terms and conditions therein.
- d. Any financial support provided to an applicant under the ECB Program does not create a relationship of principal and agent between IESO and the applicant. Further, the applicant has no authority to create any such relationship or related obligation, express or implied, in the name of or on behalf of, the IESO.
- e. The IESO reserves the right to make public the names of applicants, the title and a description of their proposed project, and the amount of funds applied for. All other information submitted by the applicant in its application will also be treated as non-confidential unless clearly labelled as confidential by the applicant.
- f. In the event of any conflict or inconsistency between the ECB Program Guidelines and any Funding Agreement entered into, the provisions of the Funding Agreement govern.
- g. The IESO reserves the right to:
  1. cap the amount of funding provided under the ECB Program in any year; and
  2. revise the ECB Program Guidelines and standard form of Funding Agreement template from time to time.



## Appendix A – Application Process

Steps	Evaluation Criteria and Timeline
Step 1: The Application	<p>The Program Guidelines will help you understand what you need to do. Please thoroughly review it and the application template prior to starting an application. We're here to support you if you have questions. We encourage you to contact us before you begin your application at <a href="mailto:ecb@ieso.ca">ecb@ieso.ca</a></p>
Step 2: Application Submission	<p>Submit your application to <a href="mailto:ecb@ieso.ca">ecb@ieso.ca</a> by July 28, 2023 at 11.59 p.m. EDT.</p> <p>Please be sure to PDF all materials where possible, and ensure you have double checked the submission checklist in the application.</p> <p>Late or incomplete application submissions will not be accepted, unless the IESO has been notified in advance of the intake deadline and agreed to accept an application submission after the intake deadline.</p>
Step 3: Initial Review	<p>Within 30 business days of receiving the application, we will do our best to review it for completeness and eligibility. A clarification and feedback period may be included as part of the initial review to request additional information or amendments to the application.</p> <p>If your application passes the completeness and eligibility review, we will give it a validated time stamp, and communicate to you that it has been accepted for further consideration.</p>
Step 4: Review Committee	<p>Next, the application will be reviewed by an internal review committee based on the criteria outlined in the Program Guidelines. This can include project scope, feasibility, project team and other considerations related to the program.</p>
Step 5: Funding Agreement	<p>If your application is successful, you will be notified by email in Q3 2023 and offered a Funding Agreement with the IESO (see a <a href="#">sample Funding Agreement</a>) in Q4 2023.</p>

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