



Applicant Guide

Community-University Engagement Support (CUES) Fund

2025/2026 Program Intake

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Program Overview

Community-University Engagement Support (CUES) is a funding program that supports eligible community organizations in British Columbia to build partnerships and pursue shared projects with faculty, staff and students at

The University of British Columbia (UBC). We support partners undertaking collaborative, community-engaged research, knowledge exchange, and teaching and learning projects that benefit communities across the province.

A total of \$700,000 is available for the 2025/26 cohort, paid directly to community partners, if applicable.

Community-university partnerships can enrich UBC research and education, support the non-profit sector, and help communities thrive. The CUES fund prioritizes reciprocal, inclusive engagement, and seeks to remove or reduce financial barriers to relationship development and partnership activities so all communities, **especially those that are historically**, persistently, or systemically marginalized, can benefit.

Administered by the UBC Community Engagement with guidance from the Office of the Vice-President, Research and Innovation, CUES supports UBC’s commitment to “engage ethically through the exchange of knowledge and resources for everyone’s benefit” as stated in UBC’s [Strategic Plan](#).

This guide is created in the spirit of transparency. By sharing this document, we hope to offer applicants more information about our priorities and our funding process. We also acknowledge that our work as a funder continues to evolve. We aim to learn from our partners and take steps to improve our practices, and create clear communications for partners and potential partners as they navigate the application process.

CUES Overview	
Purpose	To explore and build foundations for new community-university relationships; to grow and strengthen existing community-university relationships through shared action.
Type of partnerships supported	<p>CUES funding supports both new and established partnerships.</p> <p>For new partnerships, CUES funding can help get ideas and projects off the ground, and enable the time needed to build trust, identify knowledge gaps, and design collaborative projects that will benefit a community-identified need or priority.</p> <p>For established partnerships that have already been working together and want to do more, CUES can help you scale or implement the findings of a previous or ongoing collaboration that will benefit a community identified need or priority.</p>
Funding amount	\$10,000- \$25,000 per project
Project length	Up to 2 years
Example activities <i>(This is not an exhaustive list)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationship-building activities or networking events • Needs assessments or programmatic evaluations • Piloting community-level programs or services • Developing or delivering community-level training • Co-producing guides or decision-making tools

Principles of Engagement

CUES-funded projects embody the following principles of engagement:

Principles of Engagement

<i>Reciprocity</i>	Exchanging resources and knowledge in a manner that benefits everyone involved.
<i>Flexibility and Openness to Learn</i>	Listening to and learning from each other, admitting to and addressing mistakes, and adapting approaches to changing contexts, needs, or priorities.
<i>Transparency</i>	Having clear, honest, and ongoing dialogue about process, ownership, access and motivation.
<i>Diversity and Inclusion</i>	Listening to and learning from communities that have been historically, persistently, or systemically marginalized. Recognizing, respecting, and valuing diverse knowledge, experiences, and contexts.

Eligibility

Who can apply?

CUES funding supports relationship building and shared projects that are co-led by at least one eligible **principal community applicant** (external to UBC), and one eligible **UBC principal applicant** (faculty, staff or student). Before you start planning your CUES application, please check to ensure all partners meet these minimum eligibility criteria:

The principal community applicant organization is:

- a registered charity;
- a registered non-profit organization, or
- other qualified donee* listed by the Canadian Revenue Agency ([click here to search your organization's charitable status](#)).

*First Nation band councils without qualified donee status are welcome to contact us at cues.fund@ubc.ca to explore eligibility options.

If you are unsure of your eligibility, please email cues.fund@ubc.ca with the full name of your organization, along with its GST, BN or Tax Exemption Number.

Note: In cases where a community partner is unable to accept a grant, funds may be dispersed to the partnering UBC department or unit.

The UBC principal applicant:

- Is a current faculty member, staff member, post-doctoral fellow, or student. **Please note that adjunct, clinical, emeritus faculty or lecturers, post-doctoral fellows, graduate and undergraduate students must have a faculty sponsor who is willing to co-sign their application.**
- Is associated with a UBC campus (Vancouver or Okanagan) or associated site, such as a UBC-affiliated hospital.
- Is responsible for ensuring the proposal complies with ethics review board requirements, if it is research-based and involves human participants. Please use the following links to find out more information from the Office of Research Ethics at [UBC Vancouver](#) and [UBC Okanagan](#).

Both partners:

- Must ensure that the majority of their project activities are based in British Columbia. Activities outside of Canada are not eligible.
- Can commence CUES-funded work together in Spring 2026 (within ~60-90 days of receiving funds) and co-lead the proposed activities throughout the entire funding period (up to 24 months).
- Are not submitting as principal applicants on other CUES grants concurrently. Community and UBC applicants may be involved in more than one active CUES project at a time, but not as principal applicants.
- Have not received consecutive funding for more than three years.

Have questions about eligibility? Send us an email at cues.fund@ubc.ca.

Expense Guidelines & Budget Reciprocity

CUES funding is intentionally flexible to support the different costs associated with community engagement activities. Below are general expense guidelines and some examples of eligible and ineligible expenses.

Eligible Expenses

CUES funds are intended to serve as an alternative source of funding for expenses not typically eligible under tri-agency research grants (such as CIHR, NSERC, or SSHRC).

Expenses must be related to proposed relationship- and/or partnership-building activities and outcomes, or activities that help support community-engaged research, knowledge exchange, civic/public engagement and/or engaged teaching and learning projects. Examples of eligible expenses include:

- Salary/wages for project team members supporting relationship building and/or partnership-development activities.
 - **Important note:** CUES funds can be used by a community partner to hire a UBC student if they find the student to be the most suitable candidate for the position. However, CUES is not intended to support student placements that are part of mandatory or elective degree programs (e.g., when a student is hired to fulfill program requirements). CUES should not be relied upon to meet structural or ongoing needs for student placements. If hiring a UBC student, no more than 50% of the CUES budget may go to this line item.
- Honoraria and/or equitable compensation for community members, elders, leaders, and knowledge keepers.
- Training or education fees necessary for project team members to fully participate or contribute.
- Program or organizational evaluations or assessments.
- Engagement, hospitality, and catering costs for events and meetings, including travel, accommodation, and facilities/space rental fees.
- Equipment and supplies that directly support relationship and/or partnership-building activities.
- Administrative costs related to running the project or working with a financial intermediary (if necessary); please consult with CUES program staff before including this line item in your budget.

Please note this list is not exhaustive; these are only common examples we have seen over the years. A good rule of thumb to determine if a cost is eligible or not is: **would the community organization be taking on this cost as a result of working with UBC?** If the answer is yes, the expense is likely eligible.

Ineligible Expenses

- Direct costs of academic research, such as those already covered by tri-agency funding bodies (CIHR, NSERC, or SSHRC).
- UBC faculty or staff salaries
- Core costs/expenses for community partner organizations, such as salaries associated with the organization's daily operations, programming, or office equipment that are not directly related to the project
- Retroactive expenses
- Costs of alcohol/liquor licenses.

Reciprocity in the Budget

Strong applications will apply the principle of **reciprocity** in their budget and show alignment with community practices on salaries, stipends, and honoraria. As you prepare your budget, consider if your proposed salaries, stipends, and honoraria are appropriate and fair. Consult or confirm what the community best practice is and what wage expectations are for the type of work being undertaken. Applicants are encouraged to refer to UBC's [Indigenous Financial Guidelines](#) for payments to Indigenous partners and community members (page 20).

How to Apply

Applying for CUES is a two-step process:

Step 1: Develop and submit your Notice of Intent (NOI)

Deadline: September 25, 2025

All CUES co-applicants are required to submit a Notice of Intent (NOI) to verify their eligibility and provide a brief overview of who they are, what their proposed project is about, and who it will serve. The NOI is for administrative purposes and will only be reviewed by the Community Engagement Office. Everyone who submits an NOI and meets the eligibility requirements will be invited to submit a full application. Email invitations will go out by October 1, 2025.

Before drafting the NOI, co-applicants are encouraged to review this guide and the [CUES website](#), confirm their eligibility and outline their shared project. **Please do not submit an NOI without first consulting with and gaining approval from your co-applicant.** Responses to questions in the NOI can be prepared in advance ([questions are available here](#)), then copied and pasted into the webform before the submission deadline of September 25, 2025.

After submitting an NOI, both co-applicants (and any faculty co-signers) will receive a confirmation email with the information provided. If there are issues with eligibility, CUES program staff will reach out within 5 business days.

Step 2: Develop and submit your full application

Deadline: November 21, 2025

All eligible applicants who submitted an NOI by September 25th will receive an **email invitation** to submit a full CUES application. This email will contain a link to the CUES application webform, the CUES application questions, budget template, and instructions for submitting the complete application. (These items are also linked below).

Applicants are encouraged to download and review the CUES application questions early. This will help them familiarize themselves with the questions, prepare their responses, and gather any additional information that is necessary. Before submitting, the Principal Community Applicant, the Principal UBC Applicant, and any UBC Faculty Co-signers (if applicable) are expected to review and approve of the application.

To submit the full 2025 CUES application, please complete the following steps:

1. Draft your CUES application with your co-applicants. We suggest using the [Sample Application](#) word doc that we provide as that will be to make it easier to collaborate with your partner. It can also serve as a backup in case anything goes wrong when completing the online application form.
2. Complete the [budget spreadsheet](#). When you have finished drafting your budget, please pdf the document, using the naming convention “**2025 CUES Budget Principal Community Applicant Last Name_Principal UBC Applicant Last Name**” (e.g., 2025 CUES Budget Walker_Gercken)
3. Complete the CUES application webform (you can cut and paste answers from your draft application template).
4. Upload budget spreadsheet into the webform.
5. Click “submit”. All completed applications must be submitted by **November 21st, 2025**.

Each Principal Community Applicant, Principal UBC Applicant and UBC Faculty Co-signer (if applicable) will receive a copy of the submitted application.

If you have any questions about this process, please contact us at cues.fund@ubc.ca.

Tips for a Strong CUES Application

#1. Review the CUES website and applicant guide thoroughly before you begin.

Familiarize yourself with the purpose of the fund, project eligibility, the principles of engagement and the evaluation criteria. Double-check both partners' eligibility and ensure the community partner is registered charity, qualified donee or a registered non-profit. Contact us if you have any questions before submitting your NOI.

#2. Work collaboratively with your partner.

Start the discussion early and check in often to ensure that you remain in agreement on your shared goals and roles in both the proposal development process and subsequent project activities. The strongest CUES applications clearly and honestly reflect the voices and interests of both UBC and community partners.

#3. Clearly define the community your project will impact, and how you are connected.

Successful CUES projects work in service of a particular community or communities. Strong proposals clearly identify all communities that are engaged and impacted by the project, and state clear plans for their involvement.

#4. Make explicit your commitment to reciprocity AND mutual benefit

Strong applications clearly state anticipated benefits for everyone involved: the community partner, the UBC partner, and the communities they intend to engage. Outline how community members, in addition to the community co-applicant and UBC co-applicant, co-develop the project and share knowledge. Explain both *how* you will work together and *what* you each hope to get from it.

#5. Paint a clear picture.

You may have a clear picture in your head of the proposed work you will do together, but your project and its community context could be brand new for the application reviewers. Please explain your project in the clearest terms possible using plain language. Spell out acronyms. Remember to describe the activities you will undertake together in detail. Be as concrete as possible, with a detailed project timeline of activities and their related milestones and deliverables. **CUES is a community-focused fund, so your application should be clear and accessible, using less academic language than typical research funding applications.**

#6. Keep the evaluation criteria and principles of engagement top of mind.

The evaluation criteria for CUES applications are explained in the following section of this document. Each set of questions in the full application addresses an evaluation criterion. As you develop your answers, ensure that you are addressing the relevant key criteria and the associated principles of engagement. It may help to re-read your proposal from the perspective of a reviewer. On which criteria do your proposal score highest? Which areas may need more clarification or development? Do this exercise early so you have time to make any necessary changes.

#7. Addressing equity

CUES seeks to remove or reduce financial barriers to relationship development and partnership activities so all communities, **especially those who are historically, persistently, or systemically marginalized (HPSM)**, can benefit. If your project targets the general population rather than an HPSM group, be sure to highlight any accessibility considerations, to the needs within the general population. For example, plain language materials, culturally relevant programming, multilingual outreach, accessible spaces, equitable pay rates etc. to reduce any barriers to participation.

#8. Responsiveness to Indigenous Contexts (if applicable)

If your project involves work with Indigenous communities, you will want to show how you are recognizing Indigenous governance and knowledge. Show awareness of and commitment to the community's governance processes, cultural protocols, and data sovereignty (e.g., OCAP® principles for First Nations). Explain how you will seek permissions, acknowledge cultural and intellectual property, and ensure that the community controls how their knowledge is used and shared.

How Proposals Are Evaluated

CUES applications are adjudicated by a multidisciplinary review panel composed of UBC faculty members, staff members, and community representatives from across British Columbia. Each application is reviewed in-depth and scored by three assigned reviewers using the evaluation criteria listed below. The scores are then averaged, which provides a ranking of applications. The review panel then convenes to discuss any applications with a high standard of deviation in scoring between the reviewers, finalize the rankings and to make recommendations for funding.

Evaluation Criteria

CUES applications will be evaluated according to the following criteria (see Table 1).

Applications are scored on 9 evaluation criteria, with up to 5 points per criterion (maximum total of 45 points).

A score of "5" will exceed all key requirements; responses are clear, detailed, and supported with concrete examples. All guiding questions are fully addressed and demonstrate strong alignment with the [Principles of Engagement](#). Whereas a score of "1" falls well short of requirements; responses have major gaps, limited or missing information, and show little to no alignment with the Principles of Engagement.

[See Evaluation Rubric here](#)

What to Expect if You're Approved

CUES is a highly competitive, with an average success rate of around 27%

If your project is approved:

- Successful applicants will receive a notice of approval by email. A Letter of Agreement (LOA) and an invoice template will be sent via **DocuSign**. Both co-applicants will be asked to sign the LOA while only the authorized community co-applicant (the contact who is expected to receive and manage the funding) will be asked to fill out the invoice template.
- Upon receiving the signed LOA and completed invoice, CUES staff will process the grant. Turnaround time for this process can range from 4 to 6 weeks.
- CUES projects are expected to begin no more than 60 days after funding approval is granted. Projects may run up to 18 months from the funding receipt date. Extensions of up to 6 months will be considered, as needed, but we ask that these be made before the project passes its 12-month mark).
- The CUES Program Manager will schedule an interim check-in approximately 6 months after the project start date.
- After completing the CUES project, recipients are asked to submit a project report within 2 months of the end date. Reporting options include:

- Written report (a template will be provided)
 - Recorded interview or podcast (facilitated by the UBC Community Engagement team)
 - Site visit with the CUES Program Manager
 - Other- If you have another idea in mind for how you would like to report out on your project, please reach out to the CUES Program Manager to discuss options.
- All recipients will be asked to complete a CUES evaluation survey to help our team improve program delivery.

Contact Us

We are always happy to hear from potential applicants to answer your questions and help you interpret the application guidelines. If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to CUES program staff at cues.fund@ubc.ca.