

# Youth led Community Initiative Application Guide

**Empowering Leadership in Youth  
through Community Action**



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## Introduction

Incorporated in 1995, AHC Alberta has been dedicated to capacity building for equity-deserving communities. Community Initiatives (CI) have been a core strategy since the organization's inception, driven and led by communities leveraging their strengths and assets to improve lives and foster community growth.

Youth are tomorrow's leaders and today's change-makers. Their voices, perspectives, and actions are essential to building a better future. We provide underserved youth with the space and opportunities to be heard, take action, and develop the skills needed to create positive, lasting change in Canada.

AHC's Empowering Leadership in Youth through Community Action (ELYCA) program equips young people with the resources and skills needed to drive social change. Small teams of three to five youths work collaboratively to transform their innovative ideas into impactful community projects. Through customized training sessions, personalized mentoring, and microgrants, ELYCA ensures that youth take charge, amplify their voices, and create sustainable change in their communities.

This comprehensive guide serves as a roadmap, ensuring clarity, alignment with objectives, and long-term impact for both youth participants and their communities.

## ELYCA Overview

### Objectives

The goal of ELYCA is to foster civic engagement among youth aged 15 to 30 through youth-led community initiatives, prioritizing increased participation from equity-deserving communities, which include but are not limited to BIPOC, newcomers, Indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities, and individuals within the 2SLGBTQIA+ community.

In ELYCA, youth will:

- Develop leadership and life skills
- Expand positive and meaningful social networks
- Foster a sense of belonging.

Furthermore, ELYCA aims to generate community-level benefits that enhance the capacity building of communities, including:

- Cultivating an inclusive society.
- Strengthening youth resilience.
- Addressing other community issues identified by youth groups.

## Process

1. Form a team of 3–4 like-minded youth.
2. Complete the mandatory training package I: In person
  - ELYCA Application Preparation
  - Budget Development
  - Project Evaluation
3. Project Ideation
4. Submit your project and microgrant application.  
Collaborate with program staff to update any required areas as needed.
5. CDAC (Community Development Advisory Committee) Presentation.
6. Complete the mandatory training package II – Online Module
  - Marketing, Communication and Outreach
  - Teamwork and Collaboration
  - Time Management
  - Report Writing
7. Create a group joint bank account
8. Sign the Microgrant agreement
9. Microgrant Disbursement starts: Funds will be released in several installments.
10. Project Implementation
11. Mid-Term Reporting: Submit both a progress and financial report.
12. Networking and Sustainability: Attend an in-person networking event and participate in a Project Sustainability Workshop.
13. Final Reporting: Submit final project and financial reports.
14. Impact Sharing: Attend the Impact Sharing Event and receive a certificate of completion.
15. Continue Your Project
  - Consider the sustainability of your project beyond its ELYCA period for long-term by adapting, developing, widening its scopes. AHC will guide the process.

## Eligible Youth Participants

- Must be a Canadian Citizen, Permanent Resident, or granted refugee status in Canada.
- Must be 15 to 30 years old at the time of application.
- Must have a community project idea or demonstrate a passion for positive social change, fostering an inclusive Canada, and enhancing youth resilience.
- Represent equity-deserving groups (e.g., BIPOC, newcomers, low-income individuals, persons with disabilities, and 2SLGBTQIA+).
- Previous ELYCA participants are not eligible to reapply.

## Expectations

- **Group Ownership:** Take full responsibility for developing and executing your project, dedicating 5–7 hours per week to ensure its successful completion.
- **Active Participation:** Stay fully engaged in every phase of the project—from planning through implementation and evaluation—to ensure success.
- **Reporting and Financial Documentation:** Submit timely interim and final progress reports along with complete financial documentation that details your project's achievements and challenges.
- **Contribution to Knowledge Sharing:** Share your project experiences and outcomes through various channels—such as impact events, interviews, or networking sessions—to contribute to collective learning and inspire the new cohort.

## Eligible Projects

- **Youth-Originated Projects:** The project **must be driven by and led by youth**, meaning that young individuals or groups play a significant role in planning, implementation, and decision-making.
- **Alignment:** Projects should align with the grant's focus areas fostering an Inclusive Canada or promoting Youth Resilience.
- **Feasibility:** Projects must be viable, well-planned, and have a realistic timeline and budget.
- **Innovative:** New projects/initiatives, ideas, approaches, or solutions to address issues in the community that have not been implemented before.

## Ineligible projects

- Projects that engage in illegal activities, violate local laws or ethical standards, contain discriminatory or harmful content, or involve hazardous substances that pose a risk to community health and safety.
- Projects that primarily focus on religious or political advocacy, lobbying, or endorsing specific candidates or parties.
- Projects intended for personal gain or profit, disburse cash, or that primarily benefit a small group rather than the broader community.
- Projects already fully funded or supported by other sources for the same objectives.
- Projects operating outside of Canada.
- Previously funded ELYCA projects or activities.

Note: This list is not exhaustive; other projects that do not align with the program's objectives may also be deemed ineligible.

## Project Ideation

### Community Asset and Needs Mapping

Begin by mapping your community's assets and needs using the ABCD approach to form the foundation of your project plan.

The ABCD (Asset-Based Community Development) model focuses on identifying and leveraging existing community strengths, resources, and relationships—rather than solely concentrating on deficits—to drive positive change. It also considers challenges and envisions a future where these assets are used to overcome obstacles and meet community needs.

Refer to Appendix A as a template.

#### 1. Assets and Strengths

- 1) What Brings You Joy & Your Community Dreams
  - What makes you happy in your community?
  - What dreams do you have for your community's future?
  - What unique gifts or strengths do you and your group bring?
- 2) Community Strengths: What are the valuable resources, skills, and assets in your community?
  - Organizations & Institutions: List local organizations, businesses, parks, cultural centers, or community leaders that inspire you or could partner with.
  - Networks & Partnerships: Identify existing partnerships or informal networks (neighbors, friends, community groups) that can support your project.
  - Skills & Physical Resources: Specify which skills and physical resources (venues, equipment) community members can contribute.

#### 2. Community Needs

- What are the most significant gaps or challenges in your community?
- How severe are these issues? Provide specific examples or situations.
- What barriers or limitations contribute to these challenges?

### Project Development & Design

Use your Community Assets and Needs Mapping to develop a project that leverages local strengths, overcomes obstacles, and addresses key challenges—transforming your vision into reality. Identify and utilize your group's unique assets and community resources to turn dreams into achievable goals. Develop a detailed plan that covers the following areas, as they will be required to complete your Project and Microgrant Application Form. Refer to Appendix B as a template.

**Team Roles:** Form a team of 3–4 like-minded youth, each taking on a specific role to ensure project success. For example, designate one member as the Communication Lead to handle outreach and public relations, another as the Financial Manager to track expenses and manage the budget, and a Project Manager to oversee planning, execution, and coordination. Please refer to Appendix C.

**Project Title:** Come up with the name of your community project. Ensure it reflects the purpose and vision of your initiative.

**Community Needs:** Based on your community asset and needs mapping, identify **one** specific need you aim to address through your project. Clearly explain why this need is important and how your initiative will respond to it.

- Example: In our community, youth are socially isolated and have limited access to community programs and extracurricular activities, reducing opportunities to develop social skills, build networks, and feel a sense of belonging.

**Target Audience:** Describe the specific group your project will serve. Include details such as age range, background, and any barriers they face (e.g., language, isolation, limited access to programs).

- Example: Youth ages 15 – 24 in Nepali community who are new to Canada

**Objectives:** Define the objectives of your project by linking them to the identified community needs.

- Example: To connect newcomer youth with mentorship opportunities that build social skills and foster a sense of belonging.

**Activities:** Describe how you will achieve your goal by addressing the identified community needs. Consider different formats that best align with your objective and available resources.  
Example:

- Pair youth with volunteer mentors for regular one-on-one or small group sessions.
- Organize monthly skill-sharing workshops led by mentors and community leaders.
- Facilitate networking events where youth can meet peers, role models, and community members.

**Logistics of Activities:** Details on how your activities will be structured and implemented. Consider the following aspects:

- Frequency: How often will the activities take place (e.g., weekly, biweekly, monthly)?
- Number of Sessions: How many sessions will be held throughout the project?
- Group Size: How many participants per session?
- Location: Where will the activities take place (e.g., community center, library, online)?
- People Involved: Who will facilitate or participate? (e.g., volunteers, guest speakers)
- Materials Needed: List the required supplies, such as art materials, handouts, equipment, or digital tools.

**Budget:** Up to \$4,000 per group

- Prepare an accurate cost estimate for project implementation, ensuring alignment with the activity plan. A well-planned budget simplifies both execution and financial management. Example) Space for Activity 1: Space \$75/hr. x 3 hrs. x 5 sessions = \$1,125 before GST
- Consider leveraging community support and available resources identified during the Community Asset & Needs Mapping exercise, including both monetary and in-kind contributions, to maximize impact and efficiency.
- Eligible expenses include space, materials, transportation, refreshments within the National Treasury Board amount. Printing, promotion cost etc.
- Ineligible expenses:
  - This funding is **NOT** intended to compensate youth leaders.
  - Personal expenses that are not directly related to the project's implementation.
  - Expenses incurred before the project's official start date.
  - Costs related to fines, penalties, or legal disputes arising from the project activities.
  - Any expenses not adequately documented or supported by appropriate receipts, invoices, or necessary documentation.
  - Liquor and tobacco products (except for Indigenous recognition tobacco).
  - Luxury items or excessive spending that are not essential for the project.

**Measuring Outcomes: Consider** what meaningful impact looks like and how you will track progress.

- What does success look like? Identify key indicators of achievement.
- How will you measure outcomes? Use methods such as surveys, interviews, testimonials, videos, and photos to document impact.
- Plan ahead: Schedule evaluations in advance to ensure timely data collection and assessment.

## Review Process

- In-Person Presentation: Applicants will present their proposals to the Community Development Committee (CDAC).
- Feedback & Revision: Address any CDAC feedback and make necessary adjustments.
- Notification: Written results will be communicated after the CDAC evaluation.
- Grant Approval: The microgrant amount may be adjusted based on proposal relevancy.

## Signing the agreement

- Sign the agreement, including all terms and conditions.
- A Group Joint Bank Account must be established to sign the agreement and receive the grant.
- Please refer to Appendix C: Group Joint Bank Account for further details.

## Grant Disbursement

AHC will release grants in multiple installments as follows:

- Grants between \$500 and \$1,500 will be disbursed in two installments.
- Grants between \$1,501–\$3,000 will be disbursed in three installments.
- Grants between \$3,001–\$4,000 will be disbursed in four installments.
- An initial cheque is provided upon signing the agreement. Subsequent funds are released upon milestone completion and receipt submission.

## Project Management

- **Project Management:** Throughout the process, youth groups will utilize the Moodle platform for project application submission, communication, training, progress tracking, budget management, volunteer hour logging, and reporting.
- **Continuous communication:** Youth groups are required to attend regular virtual and in-person meetings with the Youth Community Liaison to provide updates, receive feedback, and submit progress reports. The meeting schedule will be determined collaboratively with AHC.

## Training

- Youth leaders must complete mandatory training at each project stage. These sessions cover essential topics such as budget planning, evaluation, marketing, communication, and outreach. Additional training focuses on teamwork, collaboration, time management, and report writing to enhance effective project execution.
- Recognizing that managing a project can be challenging, AHC will provide ongoing mentoring and support to address obstacles. If needed, short-term counseling services will also be available to help ease any difficulties and maintain project momentum.

## Reporting and Evaluation Requirements

- **Ongoing Updates:** AHC requires regular updates and progress reports on your initiative during scheduled meetings. The specific meeting schedule will be determined collaboratively between AHC and CI group.
- **Mid-Term Report:** A Mid-Term Report must be provided to AHC upon completion of 50% of the milestones.
- **Financial Report:** Maintain detailed records of expenses by category and approved items and submit all receipts and proof of payment.
- **Final Report:** A Final Report is due to AHC within 3 weeks of the initiative's completion.

## **Reflection and Sustainability Plan**

Youth groups will participate in an Impact Sharing event to present their insights, lessons learned, and project impact. AHC will provide ongoing support and connect them with additional resources to sustain community service beyond the ELYCA program.

## **APPENDIX A. Community Asset and Needs Mapping**

### **1. Assets and Strengths**

- What makes you happy in your community?
- What dreams do you have for your community's future?
- What unique gifts or strengths do you and your group bring?

### **2. Community Strengths: What are the valuable resources, skills, and assets in your community?**

- **Organizations & Institutions:** List local organizations, businesses, parks, cultural centers, or leaders that inspire you or could partner with.
- **Networks & Partnerships:** Identify existing partnerships or informal networks (neighbors, friends, community groups) that can support your project.
- **Skills & Physical Resources:** Specify which skills and physical resources (venues, equipment) community members can contribute.

### **3. Community Needs**

- What are the most significant gaps or challenges in your community?
- How severe are these issues? Provide specific examples or situations.
- What barriers or limitations contribute to these challenges?

## APPENDIX B. Project Development & Design

Project Title		
Community Needs		
Objectives		
Project Summary		
Target Audience		
Requested microgrant amount		
Activity 1	Number of sessions	
	Expected number of participants	
	Timeline	
	Budget needed for Activity 1 (Breakdown)	
Activity 2	Number of sessions	
	Expected number of participants	
	Timeline	
	Budget needed for Activity 1 (Breakdown)	
Partnerships & Support: List any partners and/or supporters involved in your initiative.		
Evaluation Plan (indicator and method)		

## APPENDIX C. Team Roles Breakdown

In a youth-led community initiative, teamwork is key! Each member plays an important role in making sure the project runs smoothly. The goal is to divide tasks effectively so that everyone contributes, uses their strengths, and keeps things manageable and fun.

Below are suggested roles and responsibilities that can help organize your team. Each project is different, so feel free to adjust these roles based on your team's size, strength, and goals.

### How to divide your team roles

1. Here are some key tasks involved in running a community project:
  - Project Management & Coordination
  - Outreach & Community Engagement
  - Marketing & Promotions
  - Logistics & Event Planning
  - Finance & Budgeting
  - Monitoring & Evaluation
2. Assess Team Strengths and Interests
  - What are your strengths? (e.g., Are you good at organizing? Designing? Talking to people?)
  - What tasks do you enjoy? (e.g., Do you like working with numbers, planning events, or writing social media posts?)
  - Do you have experience with any of these tasks? (e.g., Have you handled a budget before or run a social media page?)
3. Define Clear Roles and Responsibilities  
Develop comprehensive role descriptions that align with your project objectives and clearly outline the associated tasks for each position.
4. Consider group size and roles
  - If one role feels too big, split it up!
  - If you don't have enough people, some roles can be combined.
5. Support Each other: Once roles are assigned, each person should:
  - Understand their responsibilities and what is expected of them
  - Communicate regularly with the team about progress or challenges
  - Help each other out when someone needs support

- Remember: A strong team is flexible and works together to make the project a success!

**Suggested Team Roles Example:**

1. Project Coordinator

- This role ensures everything stays on track and keeps the team organized.
- Leads project planning and overall coordination
- Ensures reports, proposals, and presentation materials are submitted on time
- Supports team members and helps problem-solve
- Implements project evaluation and tracks overall progress
- Coordinates team meetings and ensures communication flows smoothly

2. Finance Coordinator

- The Finance Coordinator manages the project's budget and financial accountability.
- Tracks spending to ensure the budget is properly allocated and spent
- Ensure that all purchases have invoices and the payment receipt, and are submitted to AHC- ELYCA team on time
- Ensures transparency by keeping clear records of financial transactions

3. Communications & Outreach Coordinator

- The **Communications & Outreach Coordinator** promotes the project and engages participants.
- Designs flyers, posters, and social media content
- Recruits and engages participants (youth, volunteers, and supporters)
- Shares important event details (date, time, venue) with participants
- Builds relationships with community members and partners for collaboration
- Prepares presentations and raises awareness about the project

4. Logistics & Operations Coordinator

- This role ensures smooth event planning and execution. *If you have only three members, divide these responsibilities among the team.*
- Event Logistics & Resources: Secure and book venues for meetings, workshops, and events, and manage and organize supplies and materials for activities.
- Stakeholder Coordination: Coordinate with guest speakers, mentors, and arrange transportation and accessibility support when needed.

TEAM ROLE ASSIGNMENTS		
ROLES	NAME	ANY NOTES

## APPENDIX D. Group Joint Bank Account

### **Purpose:**

To effectively manage and track funds for your community project, maintain required transparency and mitigate any potential risks, it requires to open a group joint bank account. This account will allow multiple authorized members of your group initiative to access and manage the available funds and build a strong financial history of your community/group for any future initiatives.

### **Step 1: Choose a name for your group**

Choose a name for your group that will be used to open a joint bank account. The name can be the same as your project/initiative name but doesn't have to be.

### **Step 2: Choose a Bank**

Here are a few options; please check with your bank and explore others to ensure they meet your accessibility and convenience needs. Monthly fees vary by bank, typically ranging from \$1.95 to \$4 per month. You can allocate this expense from the project budget. Check the link below.

- [RBC Royal Business Community Account](#)
- [CIBC Not for Profit Operating Account](#)
- [TD Community/Not-for-Profit Plans](#)

### **Step 3: Gather Required Documents**

Before visiting the bank, ensure you have the following documents:

- Government-issued photo ID for all account signatories (e.g., passport, driver's license).
- Community Group Documentation:
  - Proof of your group's existence, such as meeting minutes, a constitution, or a letter of authorization. (if available)
  - A document outlining the purpose of the account and the names of all authorized signatories. You may use the attached 'Letter of Direction' template.

### **Step 4: Visit the Bank**

- Schedule an appointment with your chosen bank.
- Ensure all authorized signatories are present, as they will need to sign account-opening documents.
- Discuss any specific needs with the bank representative, such as requiring dual signatures for transactions.

### **Step 5: Set up account management protocols**

- Assign responsibilities for daily account management, monthly reconciliations, and compliance monitoring.
- Plan to review the account regularly as a group to ensure transparency. Monthly or quarterly financial reports should be prepared and shared with all members.

## Letter of Direction for Opening a Group Joint Bank Account

Name of Community Group	
Objectives of the Group	

We would like to open a joint bank account for our group to perform the objectives mentioned above for community impact. We are nominating two individuals (President and Treasurer) to manage the account on behalf of the group.

Name of Group Members	Role	Mailing address	Phone number	Signature
	President			
	Treasurer			
	Secretary			
Date of Application				