

PRINCIPLES & CRITERIA HEALTHY WATERSHEDS INITIATIVE FUTURE FUNDING

JUNE 2022



**HEALTHY
WATERSHEDS
INITIATIVE**



The [Healthy Watersheds Initiative \("HWI"\)](#) began as a \$27 million one-year funding envelope under [Stronger BC](#) as a part of the COVID19 pandemic response and economic recovery strategy. This unprecedented global emergency meant rapid responses to economic recovery which did not allow much-needed time for developing consensus-based criteria and principles to inform funding decisions in partnership with Indigenous peoples and organizations.

HWI OUTCOMES

To deliver the funding the Province formed an agreement with the Real Estate Foundation of BC ("REFBC") to administer HWI with support from Watersheds BC. The following outcomes were included in the original shared costs arrangement between the Province of BC and the Real Estate Foundation of BC.

- Economic stimulus through direct and indirect job creation in COVID-19 affected demographics and affected communities.
- Improved workforce skills with the potential for longer-term employment.
- Restore and maintain ecosystem services (e.g., healthy wetlands as natural flood control).
- Restore and maintain watershed health with linkages to government's climate mitigation and adaptation objectives.
- Support local organizations in meeting their mandates and support provincial government objectives.
- Support for reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples and advance implementation of UNDRIP principles.

With one year of implementation now complete, informed by direction from the Indigenous Leaders Advisory Circle, and feedback from Indigenous and non-Indigenous led projects, as well as other outreach and engagement with key partners in watershed health, we now have a better idea of the types of Criteria and Principles that can guide future funding opportunities.

The following are draft Criteria and Principles that can help inform the following:

- A potential shared cost arrangement between the provincial government and a Funder.
- Call for Expressions of Interest for Funding.
- Proposal/application intake review and approval/rejection guidelines for staff and decision-makers.
- Future funding programs in support of healthy watersheds and watershed security.

PRINCIPLES

What are we fundamentally trying to do? What is our intent? What are culturally relevant principles we have heard from Indigenous Advisors and communities that can help advance UNDRIP and our collective work to support healthy watersheds?

1. Water is essential to Aboriginal title lands, integral to Indigenous territories, and a conduit for health and well-being for Indigenous communities.
2. Watershed work should have a long-term focus, with the ability for some immediate action. Multi-year, Indigenous-led projects (with appropriate partners where needed) are encouraged and supported.
3. Watershed work should encourage and empower relationship building and water stewardship champions that endure beyond the 1-2 year funding envelopes. Relationships between Indigenous people and organizations, NGOs, local government, industry, and local communities are all essential to healthy watersheds now and in the future.
4. Proposal and intake, as well as interim and final reporting processes, should avoid undue administrative burden on Indigenous and smaller organizations, and focus on meaningful outcomes for watershed health. Options for reporting should be opened to include various media formats (e.g. video, presentations/webinars, one-on-one interviews).
5. Granting needs to strive for regional equity across what is referred to as British Columbia, recognizing that some regions suffer capacity deficits in terms of water-related funding, and/or may also be at greater risk in terms of climate and impacts and need for restoration stemming from cumulative industrial development.
6. Indigenous people need to be empowered at all levels, including but not limited to: project staff, project leads, partnerships with non-Indigenous project leads, input on project design, the Funder's staff, decision-making on grant approvals. Efforts to achieve this shall be transparent, while also recognizing that prioritizing Indigenous applicants does not always guarantee outcomes.



7. Projects should embrace and advance inter-generational learning between youth and elders, with a focus on mentorship and long-term stewardship of watersheds.
8. Continuing to support the advancement of UNDRIP and continue to evaluate its progress openly and transparently with its government and Indigenous partners.
9. Decolonizing practices play a pivotal role in capacity and training for projects and staff teams. Training and dialogue should be offered for both projects and Funder staff, and incorporated into budgets and programming.
10. Projects will support and embrace healing of watersheds (restoration), in an effort to return watersheds to their natural ecological state and function, which in turn supports reconciliation and environmental redress.
11. Working at a watershed and drainage basis scale better reflects the natural functioning of ecosystems (from headwaters to tidewaters) compared to more arbitrary jurisdictional boundaries; efforts to share information, collaborate and work on complementary projects and proposals within watersheds should be supported and encouraged.
12. Timelines should recognize the urgency of climate emergencies and crisis to encourage shovel-ready projects but should allow space for projects that move at the pace of relationship-building. Balancing these two objectives should be supported by staff.
13. A range of grant sizes should be considered, to meet organizations and communities where they are at in terms of capacity. Smaller grants should have minimal proposal and reporting requirements.
14. Further evaluation and learning should include:
 - a.) assessing potential additional economic spin-offs when funds are invested in Indigenous communities, in terms of job creation, procurement, and induced economic activity.
 - b.) data gathering on restoration needs/priorities categorized by industry sector impacts, including but not limited to: forestry, mining, agriculture, urbanization, recreation and tourism, hydro-electric development, water use for municipal and other users. The Funder should help inform greater understandings of costs of restoration by type of impact, and help to inform other provincial initiatives on forestry and mining reform, modernized land use planning, and others.



CRITERIA

What conditions need to be met to achieve the principle? What do we want to encourage in successful future projects?

1. Projects should balance and integrate Indigenous knowledge and laws with western science and provincial laws and policy on water.
2. Where projects are led by non-Indigenous organizations, evidence of research of Indigenous history and culture in the watershed and efforts to engage and seek partnership should be included in proposals.
3. Priority areas for future funding include climate change adaptation, mitigation and monitoring; flood and fire recovery and resilience; habitat restoration; continued focus on wetland health and collaborative data-gathering and restoration; and watershed planning.
4. Staff should be encouraged to play a role in supporting regional collaboration, prior to proposals being submitted. Where a neutral party may be able to convene multiple Indigenous nations or other organizations around potential partnerships on projects, staff may provide a safe and neutral space to help support, but not impose, new partnerships where possible.
5. Projects are encouraged to take a long-term approach to watershed restoration and health. Demonstration of understanding of where the project fits in the broader long-term context of watershed health is essential for successful projects. Multi-year grants will be considered where needed to complete outcomes.
6. Successful projects will include mentorship and inter-generational learning to foster future generations of water champions and stewards.
7. For non-Indigenous led projects, resources in project budgets for Indigenous engagement can and should be adaptable to the host or affected nations' needs and priorities. For example, where hiring Indigenous people for the project is challenging due to competing labour demands, projects may consider tendering contracts to the nations' Guardians, fisheries, or other environmental technician programs.



REFERENCE MATERIALS

Meeting Summaries, Healthy Watersheds Initiative Indigenous Leaders Advisory Circle. Dates: April 12, 2021; July 6, 2021; Oct. 19, 2021; January 25, 2022.

BC Watershed Security Fund: A Collaborative Vision. Strategic Directions from the Sustainable Funding Working Group. December 2021.

Meeting Notes, First Nations Fisheries Council Water Roundtable, June 9, 2021 (HWI Update Presentation, Q&A).

Meeting Summary, Water Leaders Forum (POLIS), June and October 2021 (HWI Update Presentations, Q&A).

Extension Survey Results, Healthy Watersheds Initiative survey of 49/61 Projects on Future Funding Priorities and Project Extensions. Oct. 26, 2021.

Meeting Summary, BC Wildlife Federation, Year-End Gathering, Nov. 4, 2021.

Our Water, Our Future: Interim Report on Job Creation, Watershed Restoration, Reconciliation, and Climate Action, Healthy Watersheds Initiative, August 30, 2021.

PHOTO CREDIT

Cover: Training program in Clayoquot Sound. (Photo: Graeme Owsianski)

Page 2: Central West Coast monitoring in Clayoquot Sound. (Photo: Lora Tryon)

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- Northern Lights Student and project manager for the BCWF's Wetlands Workforce identify a type of Willow. (Photo: Cheyenne Bergenhenegouwen, HWI)
- Ahousaht Nation crew doing work at Anderson Creek. (Photo: Ahousaht Nation)
- Young Biologist at Clayoquot Sound. (Photo: Lora Tryon)

Page 4: Nature Trust of BC crew during WESP training. (Photo: Jordan Neal, Nature Trust of BC)

Disclaimer Note: This is a working draft, reflective of input from the Indigenous Leaders Advisory Circle, but has not yet been reviewed and endorsed by the Circle. Endorsement is pending and any changes made will be shared immediately with affected parties.