



Seed Grant Stream Overview



United Way
Halton & Hamilton

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Seed Grant Snapshot

United Way Halton & Hamilton’s (UWHH) Seed Grant Stream aims to cultivate new ideas and growth in the social sector. Funding supports capacity building and innovation processes focused on amplifying impact and transformation.

2024 marks the second year of the Seed grant stream and will utilize many of the elements and processes of the previous year’s pilot initiative. Like the previous year, the total Seed funding pool is \$500,000; limited grants, of a maximum of \$75,000 per agency, will be available. The application process embeds diversity, equity and inclusion considerations throughout. Organizations led by equity-deserving populations are encouraged to apply. To support any organization in deciding whether their initiative is a good fit, we are offering application coaching.

Key Features:

- Open to registered charities, but can represent non-profits, partnerships or networks
- Funding up to \$75,000 for projects scoped for one year
- Applicant’s mission aligns with one or more of our focus areas, and benefits Halton and/or Hamilton communities
- Supports diverse pathways for capacity building and transformation based on where an applicant is at, and the relative degree of change and impact they’re pursuing
- Offers supportive granting features including application feedback, submission options (e.g., videos), learning-based reporting, and grant advisory sessions
- Flexibility to adapt budgets, outcomes and timelines alongside emerging needs
- Grantee-determined outcomes that align with unique contexts and impact objectives
- Focused on different levels of growth, including learning from successes and failures
- Sector advancement with grantee commitment to share key insights externally
- Grantees with strong outcomes and need can apply for an extension (at a maximum of 50% of the initial grant) to action next steps for a maximum of one additional year

For more information and to apply, visit our website at uwhh.ca.

The Seed Grant is part of UWHH’s investment framework. Its short-term funding complements our other longer-term grants.

Key Dates:

June 3	June 24	July 8	October – December 2024	November – December 2025
Registration & Application opens (open call) 9:00 AM EST	Final date to request application coaching	Application portal closes 5:00 PM EST	Grantee initiatives start	Grantee initiatives end

Eligibility & Registration

The Seed Grant is for agencies or collaborative groups driving social impact. Applications involving more than one lead agency (e.g., partnerships, collaborative groups, networks) must designate one registered charity as the lead applicant and grant holder.

You **are eligible** for the grant if you meet all of the following criteria:

- ✓ Registered charity, or a non-profit with a registered charity as a fiscal sponsor*
- ✓ Mission aligns with one or more of United Way's focus areas
- ✓ Proposed initiative benefits Halton and/or Hamilton, Ontario
- ✓ Good governance and financial accountability
- ✓ Proposed project aligns with Seed Grant priorities
- ✓ Proposal is clear, impactful and feasible to implement within budget requested
- ✓ Agency embeds diversity, equity and inclusion considerations
- ✓ Agency demonstrates commitment to evaluation and sharing learnings

You **are not eligible** if any of the following apply:

- ⊗ Agencies without a registered charitable number, unless sponsored by another eligible registered charitable agency/organization
- ⊗ For-profit organizations
- ⊗ Business non-profit institutions, including business associations, chambers of commerce, and condominium associations
- ⊗ Provincial/territorial entities, including hospitals, medical centres, schools, private schools, universities, colleges, health authorities, public health authorities, educational institutions, health/social services institutions
- ⊗ Municipalities and entities controlled by a municipality including municipal governments, regional governments, and regional districts
- ⊗ Environmental, heritage, or arts agencies with missions and outcomes that are explicitly environmental, heritage or arts focused
- ⊗ Faith based entities, political parties, or organizations that require adherence to or promotion of a religious faith or political affiliation as a condition of receiving services
- ⊗ Individuals

If your agency meets the above eligibility, and wishes to apply, the agency will be invited to complete a short **Registration** form online. This process acts to verify the agency and project are appropriate for the Seed grant, and, if registration is successful, ensures UWHH has all necessary information to then invite the agency to fill out the Seed Application. Link to register will be found online at uwhh.ca.

*Non-Qualified Donees (NQDs)

UWHH will continue its current practices of accepting NQDs that apply in partnership with a qualified donee (i.e. registered charity) who will act as the fiduciary agent for the project. In these situations, the fiscal sponsor must complete parts of the grant application.

Grant Impact Priorities

Social Innovation and Capacity Building

Social innovation and capacity building are broadly used terms within the social sector and have various definitions with nuanced meaning.

In this context, social innovation refers to processes focused on creating positive change to address complex social problems that are rooted in systemic issues. It can include new ideas, services, processes or frameworks intended to meet social needs, however should ultimately contribute toward system-level impact by changing aspects of organizations, processes or relationships in the social impact ecosystem.

Capacity building is the process of building or strengthening the knowledge, skills, resources, cultures, structures or systems needed to achieve a mission. It might involve training, hiring consultants, or leveraging other external supports, but ultimately involves the active engagement of individuals, organizations, partnerships, networks, or communities to empower themselves.

Social innovation and capacity building processes work toward creating more effective, efficient, sustainable, and equitable solutions than what currently exists.

The common theme is **change**.

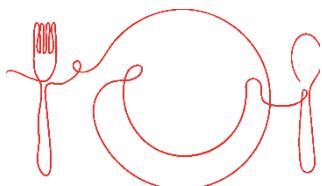
This Grant Stream is for organizations or networks who want to make changes, whether small or transformational, with the intention of increasing their ability to create positive social impact.

Focus Areas

UWHH shares three high level Focus Areas with United Way Centraide Canada, and has identified additional local investment priority areas to address these issues. To be eligible, an applicants' mission must align with one or more of UWHH's Focus Areas. While an applicant's project may not directly focus on client services (e.g., it may focus on operations, collaborations or systems), applicants must demonstrate how their proposed project will empower them to serve community in more effective, efficient, sustainable or equitable ways.

To learn about our Focus Areas and Investment Framework please visit our website.

Poverty to Possibility



Priority areas: employment and financial security, and food security

All That Kids Can Be



Priority areas: youth supports and family supports

Healthy People, Strong Communities



Priority areas: mental health and safety, and community inclusion

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

UWHH is committed to continuously strengthening diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI), which includes who we fund, where we invest, and how we manage grant processes.

To support this commitment, our Seed Grant application asks applicants several questions related to DEI. These include questions around intentionally serving equity-deserving communities, leadership representation, organizational commitment to DEI, and how the principle “nothing for us, without us,” is being considered in the proposed initiative. Supporting equity-deserving populations, who have been traditionally underfunded, is a key priority for UWHH.



In addition to who and where we invest, UWHH is introducing several new granting practices that have been identified as important for supporting DEI and capacity building. These include offering grant coaching before the submission deadline, providing different submission options (e.g., videos and recorded interviews), and application feedback.

Definitions

Equity-deserving communities: Individuals or groups who face barriers to participating fully within their community, including equal access to opportunities and resources. Equity-deserving groups include but are not limited to: Indigenous Peoples, people identifying as Black, other racialized communities, language minority populations, people with disabilities, 2SLGBTQIA+ and women.

Nothing about us without us: This principle recognizes that individuals with lived experience know what is best for themselves and their community and that their participation is integral to the success of the program. When the principle is used, the organization’s work is guided by the needs and aspirations of the people being served. Those people served are provided meaningful opportunities for participation in project planning, leadership, evaluation, and promotion.

Grant Scope

“Keep it open! Innovation and improvement happen in all sorts of different ways!” - Agency

We consulted non-profits throughout the development of our Seed Stream and heard valuable insights about the grant scope related to purpose, breadth of activities, budget, and sustainability. In addition, we’ve taken feedback from the 2023 Seed grantees into account when revising this year’s grant. This section outlines key parameters related to these areas.

Purpose

Our consultation emphasized the importance of keeping the scope open to diverse change pathways. Below, we’ve summarized some common innovation and capacity building areas that agencies might explore. Applicants may wish to describe their initiative in relation to one, several, or something completely different.





Frameworks can help to inspire and articulate, but they can also create a box. Let's think outside of the box, shall we? You have an idea with purpose, and think it should be added to the list.

Outcomes

Innovation and capacity building both involve some uncertainty, and you might end up with unexpected results or learnings. Because of that, this grant focuses on learning and agency-determined outcomes.

There will be no predetermined outcomes to select, because the possibilities are abundant and context-dependent. Applicants will be asked to define their intended outcomes. They might relate to your staff, organizational infrastructure, processes, community relationships, systems, clients, or something else connected to your stated purpose.

Due to the uncertain nature of innovation and capacity building, we are looking for grantees to have clear approaches for documenting learning as they go and adapting as needed. We recognize that outcomes and indicators might be uncertain or "fail" to be accomplished as originally planned. If you "fail," we will still expect outcomes... they might just look a bit different.

Activities

Innovation and capacity building processes can involve diverse activities. Below is a non-exhaustive list of some examples. Proposals may include something completely different.

- Human-centered design
- System mapping
- Needs analysis
- Research (qualitative, quantitative, market, etc.)
- Supports to develop innovative, creative and agile cultures
- Preliminary design
- Piloting new ideas
- Evaluation
- Impact measurement
- Branding
- Legal services
- Business planning
- Market expansion
- Financial modeling
- Feasibility studies
- Strategic planning
- Collaboration
- Collective impact
- Partnership development
- Organizational training
- Board development
- Strengthening diversity, equity and inclusion
- Retooling
- Digital transformation

Budget

Funding Amounts

Organizations can apply for only one initiative, up to maximum of \$75,000. This amount reflects agency feedback that grants should support employment with decent work practices and wage considerations and a range of other potential project expenses. There is no minimum amount, in order to be inclusive of lower-cost training or resources that agencies may require for building foundational capacity for social innovation.

The Seed Grant involves a funding pool of \$500,000 and will be highly competitive. Agencies are encouraged to apply if their ideas strongly align with the purpose of this grant stream. Agencies are also encouraged to reach out to UWHH staff if unsure if the Seed stream is the right avenue for your organization/project.

Allocation Payment

Given the size of the grants, one lump sum payment will be transferred to the agency after the funding agreement is returned at the beginning of the grant cycle. Agencies are encouraged to review all financial documentation thoroughly and commit to utilizing all United Way dollars to support the operating budget of the program for which they were allocated Seed funding.

Eligible Expenses

All costs funded by the Seed Grant must be necessary to carry out the described initiative. Applicants will be asked to complete a project budget aligned with the following eligible expense categories:

- ✓ Staff Costs (e.g., new or maintained staff positions specifically focused on project)
- ✓ Consultants or service providers
- ✓ Rental Costs (e.g., for workshops meetings or convening space)
- ✓ Supplies, materials and/or equipment required for the project
- ✓ Participant accessibility supports and honorariums (e.g., travel, childcare, honorariums to participants of research or co-design activities; gift cards may not exceed \$500)
- ✓ Other: Include other project expenses that may not be covered by the above categories.
- ✓ Administration (Maximum 15% of budget; overhead related to administration, staffing and rent)

Ineligible Expenses

Your initiative cannot include the following expenses:

- ⊗ Regular operating expenses
- ⊗ Expenses that are incurred prior to the initiative start date (*If grantees incur any hiring costs related to the project up to 6 weeks prior to the project start date, these costs may be included)
- ⊗ Expenses covered by another funding source
- ⊗ Taxes for which an organization is eligible for a tax rebate
- ⊗ Alcohol or cannabis
- ⊗ Capital

Budget Flexibility

Innovation is unpredictable and requires flexibility. We hope grantees will be responsive to new insights that emerge throughout their grants, and encourage budget adaptation if funds can be better utilized in other ways. Grantees can change their budget usage throughout the grant to

other eligible activities. To support accountability, grantees must receive advance approval from UWHH for any budget changes over \$5,000. All other changes will be captured in the final report outlining actual budget expenditures.

Funding Timeframe and Sustainability

Projects must be scoped for a **maximum one-year timeframe**. This one year can occur between October 2024 – December 2025, allowing grantees with plans to hire staff or consultants with enough time to recruit.

Because innovation and developmental initiatives are unpredictable, it's possible that projects may experience unexpected challenges or opportunities throughout the granting period. Grantees are encouraged to reach out to UWHH staff to discuss any challenges or changes to a project as we will work together to provide flexibility in timelines. Grantees will also be offered opportunities for grant extension should projects prove successful and gain momentum past the one-year project timeline.

Extensions

Grantees that achieve strong results during their initial Seed Grant, and show significant need to extend certain activities will be invited to receive an extension to continue experimentation and innovation, valued at 50% of their initial grant. While applications should be scoped for a one-year timeframe, agencies should indicate whether they anticipate additional project phases to be required. However, the Grant Stream is highly competitive, and a grant top-up is not guaranteed.

Sustainability

One-year grants are short, and are not appropriate for every endeavor. For example, agencies hoping to launch proven program models would likely want to seek longer-term funding, because of the larger upfront financial costs associated with full program development and the social impacts of potentially having to pause programming for community members. Short-term funding is better suited to time-bound projects and developmental initiatives with uncertain outcomes. Reviewers will consider these factors when reviewing applications, to try to avoid unintended consequences.

The Seed Stream is part of UWHH's funding ecosystem and functions as a shorter grant to complement other longer-term grants, including 3-year program funding (Feed Stream) and 5-year systems funding (Root Stream). Agencies seeking support in launching more proven models may decide that those streams are more suitable, and wait to apply in the next open call application period (Feed open call in fall 2026). For agencies that do feel Seed is appropriate for their initiative and are successful in receiving Seed funding, our Feed or Root Streams may be appropriate next steps. However, open intakes do not occur annually. UWHH continues to explore new resource development strategies and pathways for supporting sustainability.

Application Process

Registration

- Registration & Application form opens on June 3, 9:00 AM EST
- The registration form allows UWHH to check basic eligibility and set agencies up with access to online application portal
- Please allow 1-2 business days for review and response

Application Coaching

- UWHH will offer agencies application coaching if they would like, on a first come, first served basis
- UWHH staff will coach agencies based on their challenges and questions, using our grant evaluation matrix for reference
- Agencies must request coaching session by June 24; UWHH will complete all confirmed requests by July 4

Submit Application

- Application closes, July 8, 5:00 PM EST
- Application has ~40 questions of mixed variety (yes/no, checkboxes, open answer, tables)
- Video submissions are allowed for some questions, though not required
- UWHH will support other accessible formats as needed

Volunteer Review

- In July - August, applications are reviewed by UWHH for completion
- Completed and eligible applications will be distributed to a Volunteer Community Impact Committee (CIC), who will use an evaluation matrix to evaluate applications and provide recommendations to UWHH staff
- Applicants may be asked to participate in a call to discuss any questions

Board Approval

- UWHH's Community Impact staff and Executive Team will review recommendations and submit final recommendations to our Organizational Performance Committee and Board of Directors for Approval in September

Investment Notice

- Applicants will be notified of their acceptance or rejection by September 27, 2024
- Investment notices will include CIC feedback notes about the application
- Approved agencies must submit their Funding Agreements by mid-October
- Funding will be transferred to agency in October, following successful receipt of the signed Funding Agreement

Feedback Survey

- UWHH will connect with grant recipients to gather feedback on the application process, grant alignment and support, and report back methods. This feedback shall inform future iterations.

To schedule coaching, coordinate accessible submission formats, or receive technical assistance, contact communityinvestment@uwhh.ca

Application Assessment Criteria

The Seed Grant has broad inclusion criteria to support the diversity of approaches and needs across social sector agencies. To select grantees, reviewers will evaluate applications across several categories described below. Questions are evaluated using different assessment methods. These include basic eligibility (meets criteria, or does not meet criteria), grading (low-high strength), and portfolio balancing information that will be used by reviewers when deciding between close contenders.

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|--|---|
| Organizational | The application includes several questions to evaluate baseline eligibility criteria of aligning to UWHH's mission, Focus Areas, and focus in Halton and/or Hamilton. It also asks several questions about the organization's size and capacity that will be used for DEI considerations and portfolio balancing. |
| Diversity, Equity and Inclusion | Applicants will be evaluated on how they embed DEI into their overall agency, and their proposed project. Questions focus on how equity-deserving populations are involved in an agency, an agency's current and future commitments to improving DEI, and how the agency intends to use the principle "nothing for us, without us," in its proposed project. |
| Governance and Financial Accountability | This section evaluates an agency's governance and financial accountability. A range of questions are asked, including ones on Board of Director involvement, financial policies, and financial statements. Some questions evaluate eligibility, but others are for information purposes and to signal whether UWHH might provide additional supports to agencies with lower capacity. |
| Impact | This category focuses on the potential impact of an agency's proposed project. It evaluates questions that focus on describing the connection between the initiative to social innovation and/or capacity building, its connection to an agency's mission, the intended deliverables and outcomes, evaluation practices, and practices for embedding learnings. Evaluation focuses on relative impact, or where an agency is at (i.e., a project that is small to one agency might be transformative to another). When deciding between close contenders, reviewers will focus on DEI and may also factor in absolute impact for community. |
| Feasibility | This category focuses on the feasibility of an agency's proposed project. It evaluates questions that focus on the budget requested, timeframe, supporting evidence, and implementation plan. Reviewers will assess questions in relation to the proposed impact, and whether the proposed activities and budget align with the anticipated impacts. |

Grantee Supports and Reporting

Volunteer Advisory Committee & UWHH Staff Supports

Participants in UWHH's original Seed Social Innovation Lab shared strong enthusiasm about the opportunities to participate in relevant training, and to engage volunteers in their design processes to gain diverse insights and expertise. This Grant offers an adapted model with UWHH staff and/or our Community Impact Cabinet that will offer engagement sessions several times throughout the grant cycle for feedback, mentorship, or creative brainstorming.

The sessions are encouraged but not mandatory. Agencies can sign up on a first come-first served basis. Agencies will describe their objectives and receive support from UWHH staff and/or the Community Impact Cabinet to plan/prepare for the Seed grant, and/or review the application after decisions have been made. UWHH staff can be approached at any time to discuss the timing of the Seed grant, the theme of that year's grant, and offer supports to agencies to understand alignment between UWHH and the grantees work.

Reporting

Grantees will be expected to participate in reporting at the mid-way point of their grant, and one month after the completion date of their initiative. Because grantees will be starting their initiatives at different times, the reporting periods will vary.

The reporting will look different than our traditional reporting models, and focus on learning.

Mid-grant check in: Instead of formal progress reports, we will engage grantees in real life check-ins to discuss progress, learnings, and any additional capacity building supports that we could help to facilitate.

Final report: The final report will involve some accountability-based reporting, such as reporting on actual expenditures. However the reporting will focus on agency-directed outcomes and learnings.

Sector Knowledge Dissemination

The purpose of this Grant Stream is to empower the social sector to take transformative and innovative action toward social impact. While grants are provided to a specific agency, grantees are expected to contribute to knowledge dissemination activities. With limited resources, this participation will help to strengthen our collective capacity and network

The knowledge dissemination might be as simple as identifying key insights and learnings on the final report that a grantee consents for UWHH to share publicly, such as through a summary report. Grantees might also choose to engage in additional knowledge dissemination activities on their own, or partner with UWHH through our ConnectED capacity building program.