

Introduction

The Nova Scotia Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage is committed to increasing opportunities to use active transportation throughout the province. Supporting community driven active transportation projects increases connectiveness and accessibility, physical activity, improves quality of life, and reduces carbon emissions.

Active transportation is any mode of human-powered transportation, including walking, cycling, and wheeling. Active transportation is destination-oriented, such as travel to get to work, school, retail areas, recreation and leisure pursuits, and other activities of daily living.

Connect2 (C2) is a Provincial Grant Program intended to respond to the growing interest and need from communities to create active transportation solutions. The intent of Connect2 is to support local projects and initiatives by funding feasibility studies, designs, pilots, plans, engagement activities, and the implementation of a variety of active transportation initiatives throughout Nova Scotia.

Main objectives of the program:

- Investing in active transportation to increase physical activity and improve quality of life.
- Facilitating active transportation connectivity within communities, between destinations, and to modes of transportation.
- Supporting community led approaches to active transportation.
- Growing capacity to improve active transportation opportunities within communities.

Program Overview

The Connect2 grant program enables communities to create more options for walking, biking, wheeling, and shared mobility, while increasing connectivity to community and other modes of transportation. The program supports projects that enable and increase active transportation options, including building infrastructure for short-distance travel. We are seeking projects that test new ideas or best practices that connect destinations, increase equity and access in transportation opportunities, and decrease dependency on personal vehicles by improving transportation hubs and integrated mobility.

The province has allocated funding in the amount of \$400,000 to the Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage to advance active transportation options throughout Nova Scotia for the 2025-2026 fiscal year.

Projects are eligible for funding up to 75% of their total project costs and are due to be completed by March 1, 2026

EDIA Commitment Statement:

- **Communities, Culture, Tourism & Heritage supports our communities to thrive by promoting active living, tourism, and Nova Scotia’s diverse culture, heritage, and languages. We pride ourselves in helping to grow communities and organizations by providing programs and services that support these areas.**
 - **We are committed to ensuring that our programs and services are free of discrimination and barriers, and value equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility (EDIA). By applying this lens, and ensuring it is a core value in our programs and decision-making processes, we are taking steps to address the long-standing systemic barriers that impact many communities in our province.**
 - **Communities, Culture, Tourism, and Heritage is committed to advancing equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility across Nova Scotia, and we support partners who share in this commitment.**
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Project Submission Process

We will be accepting and reviewing applications for the 2025-26 fiscal year on an ongoing basis until February 14, 2025

Step 1

READ AND REVIEW the updated program description for eligibility requirements and guidelines to determine if your project fits under C2. Contact us if you have any ideas you want to discuss.

Step 2

EXPRESS YOUR INTEREST by submitting a brief overview (Expression of Interest (EOI)) of your project idea. **The EOI deadline is January 13, 2025.** You will receive confirmation that we have received your submission within two business days. A Program Coordinator may contact you for clarification before confirming the project's eligibility.

Step 3

RECEIVE AN APPLICATION upon the approval of your project idea/expression of interest. Please reach out if you have questions when filling out your application form. The applicant is responsible for completing the application in full.

Step 4

SUBMIT YOUR APPLICATION PACKAGE. We will confirm the receipt of your submission via email. In addition to the application form you will also be required (if applicable) to include the following documentation:

- confirmation of the applicant's contribution (required)
- proof of permits and/or support from other provincial departments if project involves design/infrastructure/construction (required)
- letters of support from community or partners (required)
- visual materials (i.e. map of location) (required)
- any additional relevant information

NOTE: Applicants are expected to ensure all forms are completed and that supporting documents are provided at the time of submission.

Questions? Staff are available year-round to discuss potential projects and partnerships. Please contact the Program Coordinator at connect2@novascotia.ca

Project Categories

Active Transportation Infrastructure & Design

Projects under this category may include:

- Temporary changes that test approaches to design and infrastructure with temporary installation of bike lanes, public spaces, and active transportation routes
- Engineering or feasibility studies
- Core active transportation network plans
- Core active transportation network infrastructure
- Multi-use pathways
- Small scale projects increasing connectivity to priority destinations for the community

**Core AT Networks are safe, convenient, accessible routes to and through the heart of NS Communities. They typically involve connectivity for a Mainstreet or a downtown core for walking and cycling to services and amenities.*

Connect2 will provide grants of up to \$100,000 per project in this category.

Shared Mobility

Projects under this category may include:

- Active transportation shared mobility services pilot projects
- Bicycle fleet pilot projects

Connect2 will provide grants of up to \$75,000 per project in this category.

Capacity Building and Community Engagement

Projects under this category may include:

- Municipal staff training, capacity building, or networks
- Social marketing
- Public engagement activities
- Education and awareness
- Community Building and Engagement

Connect2 will provide grants of up to \$50,000 per project in this category.

Please Note: Connect2 funding will not exceed the value of 75% the total project costs and/or the category capped value. The examples provided above are illustrative but not comprehensive. We welcome project ideas outside those listed, provided they align with a category. A program coordinator will confirm the category under which your project is eligible

Eligibility

Eligible Applicants

This program welcomes applications from community groups, municipalities, universities, equity seeking communities and organizations, and non-profit organizations that have community connected projects. Non-profits must be registered entities under Nova Scotia Registry of Joint Stock Companies. Applicants demonstrating connections and or partnerships with surrounding communities, local organizations, utilities, and private sector businesses will be viewed more favorably

Eligibility Criteria

- The primary partner must be based in Nova Scotia and ideally will be based in the community or region the project will serve.
- Projects should be identified as a community priority, or identified in a community plan/municipal document, or should have a letter of support from Council.
- You must be able to demonstrate the project's potential to reduce greenhouse gases (GHGs).
- You must clearly demonstrate the project improves connectivity to services, active transportation networks, and other modes of transportation.
- You must demonstrate that you have all necessary permits at the time of application.
- You must provide proof of matching funds and/or in-kind contributions (max 50% of applicant's contribution); and
- Multiple submissions are allowed; however, the priority level of each submission must be identified.

Ineligible Projects/Costs

- Any active transportation infrastructure that does not connect two major destinations/services within a reasonable distance.
- Sidewalks are not eligible under Connect2.
- Trails that are primarily used for recreational purposes and activities that are not active transportation related.
- Trails that allow Off Highway Vehicle (OHV) use (e.g. ATVs, snowmobiles, off-road motorcycles) and that have been identified as a non-viable active transportation project.
- Active transportation infrastructure projects constructed alongside provincial transportation infrastructure projects.
- Operational costs for shared mobility services.
- Paved shoulders; and
- Organizational administration, overhead, and restructuring.

Funding Guidelines

This grant will cover up to 75% of eligible costs, up to a maximum of \$100,000 for the infrastructure and design projects, up to a maximum of \$75,000 for shared mobility and bicycle fleet pilot projects, and up to a maximum of \$50,000 for capacity building and community engagement projects.

All reasonable and direct project costs are eligible for funding under this program. Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage staff reserve the right to question/decline funding for costs that are deemed unreasonable.

For all projects, applicants must provide funding and/or in-kind contribution that meets the following criteria:

- **In-kind contribution:**

- Qualified in-kind contributions include donated material, equipment, and labor from another party
- Incremental costs incurred by the applicant or partners must be in association with the proposed project. To be eligible, incremental costs must be new costs incurred because of the initiative, including new space provided for the project or volunteer labor associated with the project.
- In-kind contribution cannot exceed 50% of the total applicant's contribution.

- **Remaining funding:**

- Funding can include other sources of municipal, federal provincial or community government contributions and/or other sources of funding, including resources from community organizations, non-profits, or businesses. However, **no more than 75% of the total project cost can be funded through the provincial government.**

For more information and resources, assessment criteria, and examples of potential funding partners, please contact the Program Coordinator at connect2@novascotia.ca.