

Accelerating to Zero Grant Program Description and Guidelines

March 2023

The program is designed to support innovative projects that help Halifax/Kjipuktuk reach its goals of becoming net zero by 2050 through a just and equitable low-carbon transition. Ideal projects will either directly reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions or enable the conditions for equitable and meaningful climate solutions to support the region's journey to net zero. We are seeking scalable and replicable projects that will have impact over the long term.

The grant program aims to support a broad range of climate solutions while unlocking shared benefits for local communities, including promoting equity, reconciliation, job creation, community resilience, and other environmental benefits. The program follows four key principles:

- **CLIMATE IMPACT:** Projects have long term carbon reduction potential and are scalable and replicable.
- **COMMUNITY:** Communities benefit beyond GHG reduction, e.g., through building partnerships, job creation, resilience, capacity building, and/or affordability.
- **EQUITY:** Groups and populations that have been traditionally excluded and systematically disadvantaged in climate solutions, and those who are most vulnerable to the impact of climate change, are resourced and empowered to participate in climate solutions that affect them.
- **RECONCILIATION:** Our work contributes to a reconciliation economy where wealth and resources are equitably shared and sustainably stewarded for this generation and those yet to come, in relationship with both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.

Challenge Statements

HCi3 is seeking projects that address at least one of the following questions:

1. How can we accelerate deep energy retrofits in commercial, institutional and/or residential buildings?
2. How can we increase uptake of clean transportation, especially in underserved communities, including electric transportation, active transportation, micro-mobility and/or shared mobility?
3. How can we accelerate community-led renewable energy, including preparing for community shared solar energy?
4. How can we find integrated ways to reduce energy demand and increase resiliency in buildings, including through energy storage, vehicle-to-grid charging, and solar energy?
5. How can we support community-led climate action? This could include engagement, education, demonstration projects, participatory builds, or other measures that will help drive support,

knowledge, and capacity for equitable climate action, as well as direct carbon reduction initiatives.

6. How can we center equity and reconciliation in climate action to ensure that the transition to net zero benefits everyone?
7. What other critical barriers or gaps to climate action are not currently being addressed or funded through other government or non-profit programs?

If you have a project idea that aligns with the objectives of HCl3 and the evaluation criteria but does not directly respond to a challenge statement, please reach out to us to discuss at grants@hci3.ca.

Funding

HCl3 will award approximately \$500,000 for 2023. Grants are available for up to \$50,000 per project. We may consider larger grants for projects that have high impact and multiple co-benefits in line with program criteria.

Our commitment to an equitable and just net-zero transition leads us to prioritize projects led by and/or directly benefiting historically marginalized and racialized groups or populations. This includes, but is not limited to, Indigenous and African Nova Scotian communities. To ensure fairness and inclusivity, we have set aside a minimum of 20% of funds for these initiatives.

HCl3's grants will cover up to 80% of total project costs. At least 20% of the project costs need to be covered through matching funds or in-kind contributions.

Eligible Projects

We strongly encourage projects that have direct GHG reduction potential at the short-term project level and/or over a 20-year time span. We also welcome 'enabling' projects that will create conditions for an equitable and just net-zero transition. For example, projects might increase capacity within traditionally marginalized groups to participate in the green economy, raise awareness of climate action among youth or provide services to support acceleration of deep retrofits.

Applicants may propose projects up to 24 months in duration.

To be eligible for funding, projects must have:

1. At least 20% matching funds
 - a. Projects can have multiple sources of matching funds including additional funding from the federal government. However, federal government funds will NOT count towards the 20% matching requirement, since HCl3 funds flow from the federal government.
 - b. Non-cash contributions or in-kind contributions, such as salaries, can be used as matching funds provided they are an auditable expense and directly related to the delivery of the project.

2. Activities and benefits occur in Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM). For applicants representing Indigenous or African Nova Scotian organizations or communities, or proposing initiatives where their participation or engagement is meaningfully included, we will accept projects that are located outside of HRM boundaries if they will also result in benefits within HRM.
3. Clearly articulated how the project could be scaled up or replicated in the future, i.e., to have increasing impact over time beyond the initial project scope, within and beyond HRM.
4. Multiple community benefits beyond greenhouse gas emissions reductions (equity, reconciliation, affordability, jobs/skills development, community resilience, etc.)

HCi3 will fund initiatives at different stages of the project cycle, from concept development to project implementation.

Ineligible Projects

HCi3 Grant Program cannot fund:

1. Redistributing the funding as grants/rebates to other organizations
2. Organizational administration, start-up costs, and restructuring
3. Single, one-off, roof-top solar, technology installations, building retrofits or new building projects without an accompanying approach to scaling up across a demographic or sector
4. Operational costs for electric vehicle charging infrastructure, transit, or shared-mobility services.

Eligible Organizations

Any organization or company is eligible to apply for a grant with the exception of:

- Individuals
- Individual schools or classrooms (note, school boards are considered eligible)
- Political parties

If the applicant is applying in partnership with another entity or community group, that primary partner must be based in or have activities in Nova Scotia.

Projects that are led by or are in partnership with organizations or communities that represent historically marginalized and excluded groups or communities will be viewed favorably.

Project Budget & Expenses

Grant funds can be used for any reasonable costs that are directly related to the project. We encourage applicants to use full cost accounting when determining the project budget. Ineligible expenses include:

- Any cost that is not directly related to the eligible project, with reasonable limits on pro-rated administrative expenses

- Any non-auditable expenses
- Any cost incurred prior to the receipt of an application for grant program funds
- Non-recoverable taxes, interest charges or financing fees
- General business development costs not directly related to an eligible project or any fundraising costs.

Application Process

There are two stages to the HCl3 Grant Program application process: an Expression of Interest (EOI) and a full application.

1. **Expressions of Interest** will be accepted until March 29, 2023. We will invite all EOIs that meet basic eligibility criteria to submit a full grant application. EOIs can be submitted by email to grants@hci3.ca.
2. **Full applications**, using the application form provided by HCl3, will be accepted until April 10, 2023. This will include a detailed project plan and budget.

Eligible applicants can request support in GHG emission quantification and project scoping before the full application is submitted if time allows. If other accommodations or extra support are needed, please reach out to us at grants@hci3.ca.

Key Dates

March 2, 2023	Program announced and expressions of interest open
March 15, 2023	Introductory grant program webinar/workshop(s)
March 29, 2023	Expressions of Interest close
April 10, 2023	Full application deadline
Early May, 2023	Funding decisions communicated.

Evaluation Criteria

We will evaluate projects based on the following criteria.

Criteria	Description	Weighting %
Alignment with program objectives	Project clearly addresses one of the challenge statements and will lead to accelerated change in that area	10
Impact	Project contributes to direct reduction of GHGs at the project level and potential GHG reductions over a 20-year period. OR	30

	Project meaningfully enables change that will indirectly lead to increased GHG reductions and/or support an equitable and just low-carbon transition	
Scalability/replicability	The project has the potential for accelerated or exponential change beyond the project's direct scope, e.g., through policy change, commercialization, social innovation or adoption in other regions.	20
Community benefit	The project integrates community social, economic and/or environmental benefits such as housing affordability, job/skills development, safety, well-being, resilience, connectivity, or biodiversity.	15
Social equity and reconciliation	The project is led by and/or directly benefits traditionally excluded or disadvantaged groups and communities, including Indigenous people and African Nova Scotians, and incorporates Indigenous or Afro-centric values and ways of knowing.	15
Partnership and community support	The project was developed by the community or addresses a community-identified need. Local leadership and partners are involved in the project.	10

About HCl3

The Halifax Climate Investment, Innovation and Impact (HCl3) Fund is a not-for-profit organization established as a subsidiary of EfficiencyOne. HCl3 is part of the [Low Carbon Cities Canada](#) (LC3) network that helps cities and communities reach their carbon emissions reduction potential and build equitable, resilient communities. LC3 was established with funding from the Government of Canada. HCl3 gratefully acknowledges the support of the Government of Canada, Province of Nova Scotia and McConnell Foundation whose funding makes this program possible.