

# Municipal Innovation Program



## Application Guidelines 2025-26

### Introduction

The goals of the Municipal Innovation Program (MIP) are to support regional governance, regional economic development, and regional planning by encouraging municipalities to work together.

The MIP is designed to help municipalities working together, to achieve the following program outcomes:

- New or enhanced regional municipal services
- Improved municipal capacity to respond to municipal and regional priorities
- Effective intermunicipal relations through joint and collaborative activities

### Funding

The program may provide funding for up to a maximum of 75% of eligible project costs, though the actual cost-sharing percentage could vary based on project specifics or budget availability. Applicants must demonstrate their ability to cover the remaining project costs through municipal and/or other funding sources.

### Eligible Recipients

This program is available to Nova Scotia Municipalities and Villages. You need to have 2 or more municipalities to apply. Applications from Regional Municipalities may be considered, please contact the Department of Municipal Affairs (DMA) to discuss your situation.

DMA encourages municipalities to engage with Regional Enterprise Networks where applicable and strongly encourages including First Nations and other under-represented communities as project partners.

## Examples of Eligible Projects

- Creation of project plans to determine how municipalities will collaborate on an agreed-upon project
- Investments that need to be made to move ahead an agreed-upon initiative
- Cost/benefit studies to determine the details of an approach to delivering an agreed-upon outcome
- Projects that produce a regional result

For more examples of project types refer to **Appendix B**. New and innovative proposals that advance the goals of the program outside of these examples are strongly encouraged.

## Eligible Costs

- Professional services work that supports the development of action plans and implementation plans
- Employment costs for a shared term position that builds capacity within participating municipalities to help achieve project outcomes
- Costs for implementing project, including professional services (like legal services, land use planning and facilitation costs)

## Examples of Ineligible Projects

- General feasibility studies and projects to determine whether municipalities should collaborate on a project
- Projects which only benefit participants individually
- Implementation and direct delivery of a regional service

## Ineligible Costs

- General feasibility studies or projects to determine if municipalities should collaborate on a project.
- Employment costs of existing staff positions.
- Bonuses or severance related to a term position.
- Purchase of equipment and furniture.

- Costs of purchasing or owning buildings and land.
- Capital projects and operating pilots.
- Facility construction.
- Principal costs, interest, bond discount and other financing costs.

## Application and Submission

Municipal applicants may submit a maximum of 2 applications. Applications can be downloaded from the program website: <https://beta.novascotia.ca/apply-funding-support-innovative-approaches-regional-collaboration-municipal-innovation-program>. You can also use a search engine (i.e. Google) to locate our website. Please use the following key words in your search, 'Municipal Innovation Nova Scotia'.

Once the application is completed, it must be emailed including any attachments to the program email [mip.info@novascotia.ca](mailto:mip.info@novascotia.ca). Please make sure that you have confirmation from DMA that your completed application has been received.

- **Separate proposal, if applicable** (refer to Appendix A)
- **Council Resolution:** a resolution of council from all project partners supporting the submission of the project for funding consideration under MIP.
- **Cost Estimate:** A detailed cost estimate for the project.
- **Location Shapefile:** a kml file of the project location.

## Evaluation Criteria

Project evaluations may be based on the following factors:

- Project results in a regional service delivery framework
- Project produces an intermunicipal planning strategy (IMPS), intermunicipal land use by law (ILUB) or intermunicipal collaboration framework
- Project will help address outstanding regional service gaps
- Project will resolve an issue(s) and enhance collaboration
- Project will help the partnership resolve capacity related barriers in order to undertake the project
- Capacity to facilitate or resolve issues or to collaborate
- Regional partners are actively engaged in project delivery and demonstrate a good working relationship to support project success
- Project budget estimate is supported

Proposals with more collaborating municipalities or that benefit larger populations may receive special consideration in the distribution of program funding. Only applications submitted by two or more municipal partners will be considered.

## Review and Approval Process

Applications submitted to DMA will be reviewed to ensure requirements outlined in these guidelines have been met. Incomplete applications may result in your project not being reviewed for funding consideration.

The review and evaluation of applications is a competitive process. Although a project may be eligible, it is not guaranteed funding from this program.

If the project is approved, it is possible that the approval will not match the full level of funding requested in the application.

Preference will be given to applicants with no current active MIP projects (including extended projects) or outstanding reporting requirements with DMA.

It should take 6 to 8 weeks for the DMA to review funding applications and let you know if your application is approved.

## Payment

Successful lead applicants will receive an approval letter and Terms and Conditions (T&Cs) outlining the requirements of the approval. DMA will release 100% of the payment upon receiving the signed T&Cs.

## Use of Other Grant Funds

MIP grants may be used in combination with funds from other grant programs, unless doing so is prohibited by the other program. If a recipient chooses to use multiple grant funding sources for a project, it is their responsibility to understand each grant program's specific funding requirements. All grants supporting the project must be clearly outlined in the project. If the other grants are obtained post-approval of MIP funding, the recipient is obligated to inform DMA.

**Not allowed:** using MIP grant funds for expenses already funded by other funding programs.

## Project Amendments

After project approval, if the project scope changes or anticipated completion date extends beyond the project deadline outlined in the Terms and Conditions, an amendment is required. The amendment request (i.e. Project Monitoring Report) must be submitted to and approved by DMA.

## Project Completion

The project must be complete and all invoices must be dated no later than March 31, 2026.

DMA has the right to require the return of any unspent funds or any funds that have been spent on items that were not part of the Agreement.

## Final Reporting

Recipients must submit to DMA a Project Closeout Report, Statement of Expenditures including invoices, and proof of payment (if requested) and confirmation of project outcomes achieved, as outlined in the application, to DMA for approval within 60 days of the project end date. DMA will provide the required reporting templates.

## Communications

Funding approvals must be kept confidential until DMA has coordinated a public program announcement.

The contribution by DMA must be recognized in any project promotion or communication.

A list of successful project applicants may be made public after the process is completed.

## For More Information

### **Municipal Innovation Program**

Department of Municipal Affairs  
1505 Barrington Street, Floor 8 N  
PO Box 216, Halifax, NS B3J 2M4  
902-424-6642

[mip.info@novascotia.ca](mailto:mip.info@novascotia.ca)

## Appendix A – Proposal Requirements

Completed application must be sent to program email ([mip.info@novascotia.ca](mailto:mip.info@novascotia.ca)).

The application form must be completed in full; however, if there is insufficient space, the applicant may attach a separate proposal. The proposal should provide information under the following headings:

- **Project Scope:** Please provide project overview and what the project aims to achieve.
- **Project Lead:** Municipal Partner responsible for project administration with DMA
- **Project Partners:** Include a list of all participating municipalities, organizations, etc., including full contact information. For each project, partner/municipality should provide an appendix containing:
  - Certified copy of council resolution indicating their agreement to participate in the project
  - Financial and human resource commitment to the project
  - Commitment to implement the results of the project
- **Innovation:** describe innovative approach used for this project.
- **Impact:** a description of how this project will improve municipal collaboration, improve the conditions of the participating municipalities, and fill any gaps in regional services, priorities, and activities.
- **Collaboration:** a description of how the municipalities are collaborating in the development and implementation of the project. This includes:
  - How each participating municipality will be involved in project planning, administration, and decision-making.
  - Description of dispute resolution mechanisms that will enable the partner municipalities resolve conflicts and ensure a successful outcome for all project participants.
- **Scalability:** a description of how the project is scalable to other municipalities in Nova Scotia.
- **Outcomes and Measurements of Success:** a description of the project outcomes and the process that will be used to measure and report on the successful completion of the project. This is typically acceptance of the project outcome by each participating council.

- **Reporting:** a description of a reporting structure that highlights outcomes, success metrics, and lessons learned, presented in a way that helps other parties enhance the success of similar initiatives.
- **Work Plan and Timeline:** a work plan and timeline for the completion of the project, broken down by task and stating who will be responsible for completing the task. The work plan must explain potential risks to the project and describe mitigations that will be implemented to manage risks.
- **Budget and Contributions:** a budget describing the financial costs, for each task, and a summary of the contributions of each participant. All partners/municipalities must make a financial commitment to the project. Contributions to the collaborative project, from each participant do not need to be equal. Options for participant contributions include land, cash, transfer of assets, and the introduction or relaxation of regulatory controls. While in-kind contributions demonstrate commitment to the project, in-kind contributions cannot be leveraged toward the provincial contribution of the project. Applicants are encouraged to work with DMA to determine the provincial contribution to be included in the proposal and/or may submit assuming a provincial contribution of up to 75%.

## Appendix B – Project Examples

The Municipal Innovation Program (MIP) has been established to support innovative approaches to create:

- New or enhanced regional municipal services
- Improved municipal capacity to respond to municipal and regional priorities
- Effective intermunicipal relations through joint and collaborative activities

These approaches support the program outcomes of:

- Regional economic development
- Intermunicipal collaboration

The following are provided for example purposes only. Municipalities are encouraged to submit proposals for any type of project that meets the overall outcomes of MIP. The Department of Municipal Affairs (DMA) strongly encourages municipalities to apply for funding for projects not specifically mentioned here but that have an intermunicipal collaborative focus.

### Examples of Relevant Regional Economic Development Projects

The funding is for local action and will not support trade missions, the development of investment attraction materials, or any marketing initiatives which should be coordinated through the appropriate provincial government departments and local NGOs.

Possible projects could include, but are not limited to:

- Regional planning initiatives to have appropriate land areas zoned and ready to accept developments being pursued by regional economic development plans
- Plans to coordinate infrastructure investments with the regional economic development plan, thereby coordinating land development with available infrastructure capacity and the efficient extension of servicing
- Coordination activities with Federal and Provincial Departments and Economic Development Agencies
- Regional planning initiatives involving implementable Municipal Climate Change Action Plan activities that help mitigate climate impacts on regional-scale economies
- The development of a regional tax-base sharing agreement to support economic development goals



- Localized revenue sharing: an agreement is struck on how tax revenues will be shared on an asset that is located in one of two or more municipalities
- Projects to help municipalities and the province improve and better coordinate their development and business approvals processes
- Community engagement and support services (e.g. Nova Scotia Digital Service Initiative).
- Streamlining the development and planning approvals process
- Coordination of business approvals (e.g. licensing, public health, permits)
- Other workforce-oriented policy/regulatory improvements

## Examples of Relevant Intermunicipal Collaboration Projects

These types of projects will enable municipalities to rely on an agreed-upon process for collaboration. They support municipalities in establishing mediation, facilitation, or other dispute resolution alternatives to resolve intermunicipal conflict, since local solutions enable control over the outcomes and create options in the best interests of residents.

These types of projects will provide proactive support to municipalities for building relations and cooperative processes. Projects could include, but are not limited to

- Collaborative processes and protocol development (including dispute resolution); includes implementation and testing and adjusting the processes to achieve the desired objective
- By-law harmonization
- Regional land use planning, including the creation, review, or harmonization of municipal planning strategies and land-use by-laws of two or more adjacent municipalities.
- The designation, regulation, sale or transfer of land or assets for a municipal need or purpose between two or more municipal units
- A collaborative effort to help a partnership to resolve capacity-related barriers in order to undertake a project. Participating municipalities should have the ability to influence project outcomes; processes should be in place to facilitate input into decision-making and resolve conflict. This could include the formation of joint accessibility advisory committees and developing joint accessibility plans with other municipalities.