



Manitoba Council for International Cooperation

**Guide for Funding Applications
to the
Manitoba Government Matching Grant Program
Theme Fund
2025 – 2026**

**302 - 280 Smith St.
Winnipeg, MB R3C 1K2**

**(204) 987-6420 (Phone)
(204) 956-0031 (Fax)**

**mgmgp@mcic.ca
www.mcic.ca**

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Section I: Introduction

This guide has been designed to help your organization prepare a Theme Fund application to MCIC. If you have any questions or comments about the application, please contact the MCIC's Global Partnerships Manager at mgmgp@mcic.ca or phone 204-987-6420.

Electronic copies of the Funding Guide can be e-mailed to organizations, and the Guide will also be available in pdf and Word formats on MCIC's web site at www.mcic.ca. Hard copies of the Guide are available by request from mgmgp@mcic.ca.

Please note:

- **Project concept notes must follow the format described in this guide and must address all areas/questions.** Applications that are not in the prescribed format or which do not respond to all questions will be returned.
- **When your project submission is received by MCIC, you will be contacted within 5 business days to confirm receipt and will be assigned a project number. Please use that number in any correspondence with us related to the project.**

Section II: The Theme Fund

Overview

The Theme Fund is a portion of the **Manitoba Government Matching Grant Program (MGMGP)**. The Government of Manitoba has generously supported international development through the MGMGP since 1975.

MCIC defines development as a long term process promoting community involvement in designing strategies to address and improve chronic and structural problems in all areas of individual and community life. The Theme fund is available to MCIC member organizations only.

The goal of this fund is to bring a thematic approach to the MGMGP, as well as to increase accessibility of funding to all MCIC members. This fund combines a base amount of \$50,000 with funds unexpended in our other categories (Development, Relief and Rehabilitation, and Community Solidarity). A new theme is determined every two years with the approval of MCIC's Board of Directors. MCIC members will normally be notified late in the calendar year of the expected amount in the fund.

The general purpose of the Theme Fund is to encourage member agencies to take a broader view of development projects by responding to current issues of international concern reflected in the theme. The Theme Fund encourages maximum participation from MCIC member agencies who may have little or no capacity to raise funds, but do have an overseas partner with whom they

could develop a worthwhile project. We also welcome members wanting to collaborate on a project.

This is a competitive process and all projects will be reviewed through a peer review process by the Overseas Project Committee (OPC) at the same time.

MCIC Guidelines to remember if you are considering making an application to the Theme Fund:

- **Applicants must use this Theme Fund Concept Note Guide and Concept Note Form for the current year.** All areas must be addressed.
- The process of approval for all project concept notes is by peer review, by MCIC's Overseas Project Committee and ultimately by MCIC's Board of Directors.
- **The annual deadline for applications is, without exception, on January 31st, 2026 by 11:59 pm (Central Standard Time).** The project start date must be no later than March 31 of the same year.

Theme for 2024–25 and 2025–26 “Shifting Power to Local Communities”

Theme Description:

Localization is having a resurgence in the global cooperation sector, with increasing recognition that sustainable, impactful change comes from the ground up. Localization is really a global north problem. The innovation needs to be on our models, processes, and expectations.

"Shifting Power to Local Communities" This theme will support grassroots-level groups and community-based organizations that often lack access to conventional funding mechanisms. The initiative will prioritize flexibility, innovation, and localization by directing resources to those best positioned to understand and address local challenges.

MCIC's Theme Fund is seeking project concept notes from **MCIC members' local partners** that aim to pilot a project that will demonstrate a clear commitment to empowering marginalized or underrepresented groups. MCIC will consider funding requests up to \$20,000.

The funding can be used for a wide range of activities and investments, including, but not limited to:

1. Capacity-building for local partners, organizations or groups
2. Small-scale infrastructure improvements
3. Community-driven advocacy and awareness campaigns

Application Process:

- a. Applicants will be asked to submit a concept note rather than a full proposal. The concept note should address:
 - i. The local development problem or opportunity.
 - ii. The proposed response and how it will be implemented.
 - iii. A brief description of the community partner(s) involved.
- b. To ensure accessibility, we will also accept video or audio submissions where local groups can describe their ideas and needs directly.
- c. A webinar will be hosted to guide potential applicants through the process, emphasizing the importance of genuine local involvement and innovation.

Evaluation Criteria:

- **Local Impact:** The extent to which the project will empower the community partner and address local needs.
- **Feasibility:** The practicality and sustainability of the project within the local context.
- **Community Engagement:** The level of involvement and decision-making power given to the local community.
- Applications will be reviewed by the Overseas Projects Committee with a focus on these criteria, and in cases where multiple projects are equally strong, a random draw may be used to determine funding recipients.
- Priority will be given to projects led by, or developed in partnership with, organizations that have limited access to large-scale funding — for example, those not already receiving major institutional support from funders like Global Affairs Canada or large international agencies.

Monitoring and Evaluation of projects:

- We will ask the partner how they want to monitor and evaluate their project? What will a successful project look like to them.
- We will collect stories and testimonials from the participants, which will be used to demonstrate the program's impact and to advocate for similar initiatives within the sector.

Reporting Requirements:

- Reporting will be simplified to reduce the burden on local partners. We will accept narrative reports, video testimonies, or other creative formats that best convey the project's impact. Perhaps it could be an oral report done during a video conference.
- The focus will be on storytelling and the qualitative outcomes of the projects rather than rigid quantitative metrics.

Section III: Information on MCIC

MCIC's Mission Statement

Our vision: A Just World

Our mission: MCIC supports, connects and amplifies the work of our members and partners. We directly engage and collaborate with Manitobans for global sustainability.

MCIC's Guiding Principles and the Sustainable Development Goals

MCIC has adopted a set of guiding principles as a framework for approaching development work. These principles are based on the Istanbul Principles, which were developed and agreed to by Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) from all over the world. The three pillars of sustainable development (social, economic and environmental) are also an integral part of our development practice. We believe none of these areas can work in isolation from one another and each must be considered and integrated into the work of active CSOs in the Global South.

MCIC believes that sustainable development implies positive change. We encourage our members and partners to move beyond a “charity model” of helping to meet only basic needs to a justice model that incorporates a rights-based approach, respectful partnership and long term sustainable solutions. MCIC seeks to support projects that follow these guiding principles and will not fund projects that do not seek to change causes and models of oppression. All members and partners must address MCIC’s guiding principles in any applications to the Manitoba Government Matching Grant Program (MGMGP).

Please note that the italicized portions below represent the wording of the Istanbul Principles, while the regular text is additional notes that distill and clarify MCIC’s own development philosophy.

MCIC’s Guiding Principles:

1. Respect and promote human rights and justice

CSOs are effective as development actors when they...develop and implement strategies, activities and practices that promote individual and collective human rights, including the right to development, with dignity, decent work, social justice and equity for all people.

MCIC works from a rights based approach that includes rights for all, with particular consideration of inclusion of persons with disabilities. MCIC, in relation to its support for the overseas project activities of its member agencies, understands that disability can lead to exclusion from social and economic opportunities. All proposals to the MGMGP must respond to the questions that address inclusion of people with disabilities.

2. Embody gender equality and equity while promoting women and girls' rights

CSOs are effective as development actors when they...promote and practice development cooperation embodying gender equity, reflecting women's concerns and experience, while supporting women's efforts to realize their individual and collective rights, participating as fully empowered actors in the development process.

MCIC supports proposals that involve women as planners and managers, ensure they have access to education, training and resources, and ensure their participation in the democratic political process. MCIC will not support projects that perpetuate current models of gender oppression.

3. Focus on people's empowerment, democratic ownership and participation

CSOs are effective as development actors when they...support the empowerment and inclusive participation of people to expand their democratic ownership over policies and development initiatives that affect their lives, with an emphasis on the poor and marginalized.

We view popular participation in decision-making and planning in all communities as a cornerstone of development. Proposals must identify how and to what extent community members are involved in planning, implementation, evaluation and follow-up to proposed projects.

MCIC supports initiatives that strengthen the ability of policy makers, either in the Global South or in Canada, to improve social or economic conditions or further human rights.

4. Promote Environmental Sustainability

CSOs are effective as development actors when they...develop and implement priorities and approaches that promote environmental sustainability for present and future generations, including urgent responses to climate crisis, with specific attention to the socio-economic, cultural and indigenous conditions for ecological integrity and justice.

MCIC values the wise use of natural resources including the protection and management of the air, water and soil. MCIC also recognizes that environmental sustainability is not isolated from other development principles of social and economic sustainability, and that through environmental stewardship we can foster justice and equality, help to alleviate poverty and preserve cultural integrity.

5. Practice transparency and accountability

CSOs are effective as development actors when they... demonstrate a sustained organizational commitment to transparency, multiple accountability, and integrity in their internal operations.

We expect that our partners in Canada abide by ethical and legal rules, follow Canada Revenue Agency guidelines and provide proper monitoring and reporting information to all involved parties. MCIC also considers the same standards of accountability (being honest and truthful in our applications and reporting) throughout our own organization as we expect from our members and partners.

6. Pursue equitable partnerships and solidarity

CSOs are effective as development actors when they...commit to transparent relationships with CSOs and other development actors, freely and as equals, based on shared development goals and values, mutual respect, trust, organizational autonomy, long-term accompaniment, solidarity and global citizenship.

MCIC supports partnership between member organizations and southern CSOs, local governments (municipal/regional/national) and local/Southern private sector partners. MCIC expects partnerships that promote local control and self-reliance. In all cases, Canadian organizations should have demonstrated links to their local partners and the social groups they represent.

7. Create and share knowledge and commit to mutual learning

CSOs are effective as development actors when they...enhance the ways they learn from their experience, from other CSOs and development actors, integrating evidence from development practice and results, including the knowledge and wisdom of local and indigenous communities, strengthening innovation and their vision for the future they would like to see.

MCIC is responsible for fostering communication and partnership amongst its members. We commit to sharing appropriate information in a transparent and helpful way in order to work within the community towards development effectiveness. We strive to create safe spaces for organizations to share their successes and challenges. We recognize development is a process that includes on-going learning and growing, often learning as much from our mistakes as from our successes.

MCIC members are encouraged to create and execute a plan that allows them to share the lessons learned from their overseas project work within their constituency. The work of public engagement leads to better understanding by our supporters of global concerns and global solutions. When we commit to sharing the knowledge and learning we gain from our overseas experience with Canadians we are all contributing to creating a more sustainable model of development.

8. Commit to realizing positive sustainable change

CSOs are effective as development actors when they...collaborate to realize sustainable outcomes and impacts of their development actions, focusing on results and conditions for lasting change for people, with special emphasis on poor and marginalized populations, ensuring an enduring legacy for present and future generations.

MCIC welcomes project applicants who are undertaking practical, positive action through programs that support sustainable development in the Global South. Within the area of economic improvement, we have traditionally supported projects which use a model of gaining self-reliance and financial sustainability through revenue generating activities such as micro-enterprise development, co-operative development, entrepreneurship and other forms of financial participation by the project community.

While MCIC understands that in the delivery of some projects CSOs must respond to immediate need, overall we favour a long-term approach to development which supports sustainable solutions that results in positive social, environmental and economic change in our world.

Sustainable Development Goals:

On 1 January 2016, the [17 Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#) of the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) — adopted by world leaders in September 2015 at an [historic UN Summit](#) — officially came into force. Over fifteen years, these Global Goals that universally apply to all, countries will mobilize efforts to end all forms of poverty, fight inequalities and tackle climate change, while ensuring that no one is left behind.

The SDGs build on the success of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and aim to go further to end all forms of poverty. The Global Goals are unique in that they call for action by all countries to promote prosperity while protecting the planet. They recognize that ending poverty must go hand-in-hand with strategies that build economic growth and addresses a range of social needs including education, health, social protection, and job opportunities, while tackling climate change and environmental protection.

MCIC endeavors to track how our MGMGP funding through our members' projects is working toward transforming our world and meeting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We

are continuously learning how best to do this. Last year we were excited to learn which SDGs our members' development projects were focusing on. Please see infographic below and also visit our website for details.

Again, this year we are requesting additional information beyond the top four most relevant sustainable development goals your project is contributing towards achieving. We would like you to align some of your project's targets and indicators to relevant targets and indicators of your top ranked SDG. Please note that we do not want SDGs to drive your projects; we rather want you to pick some of your project targets and indicators that are relevant for some SDGs. And, we hope that they are broad enough to cover almost all the projects our members develop.

Please see the Application Form for procedural details on how to do this when preparing your application. The list of goals, targets, and indicators can be downloaded from the UN [website](#).



Gender Equality Marker:

A Gender Equality Marker (GEM) is a scoring system that helps determine the extent to which project activities could contribute to advancing gender equality and/or the empowerment of women and girls.

This year we have added this marker and we want you to pick the level that best describes your project and explain why.

GE 0 Gender blind	Characteristics
The project ignores gender norms, roles and relations, differences in opportunities and resource allocation for women and men. It does not include	The project is designed based on the principle of being “fair” by treating everyone the same.

an explicit focus on gender equality, does not include specific activities designed to reduce gender-based inequalities and has no gender equality outcomes.	
GE 1 Gender sensitive	Characteristics
The project indicates gender inequalities awareness, although no remedial action is developed. It does not include an explicit focus on gender equality in the results/outcomes.	The project: • identifies and acknowledges the existing differences and inequalities between women and men • Does not address inequality generated by unequal norms, roles or relations • An analysis from gender perspective has been conducted to ensure at minimum that the project does no harm and does not reinforce gender inequalities.
GE 2 Gender responsive	Characteristics
The project identifies and acknowledges the existing differences and inequalities between women and men AND articulates policies and actions which address the different needs, aspirations, capacities and contributions of women and men. Gender equality is an important and deliberate objective, but not the principal reason for undertaking the project. The project, in addition to other objectives, is designed to have a positive impact on advancing gender equality and/or the empowerment of women and girls	• An in-depth analysis from gender perspective has been conducted and findings from this analysis have informed the design of the project and the intervention adopts a 'do no harm' approach • Presence of at least one explicit gender equality objective backed by at least one gender-specific indicator • Data and indicators are disaggregated by gender where applicable. • Commitment to monitor and report on the gender equality results achieved by the project • Includes gender equality considerations in activities; and in project's results framework; • Includes technical and financial resources to promote and evaluate progress toward gender equality.

GE 3 Gender transformative	Characteristics
The project is gender sensitive AND addresses and positively transforms the root causes of gender inequality for girls, boys, women and men. It implements actions and initiatives that challenge existing discriminatory policies and/or practices and carries out changes for the betterment of quality of life for all. Gender equality is the principal objective of the project and is designed specially to address gender inequalities and would not otherwise be undertaken.	• An in-depth analysis from gender perspective has been conducted and findings from this analysis have informed the design of the project and the intervention adopts a 'do no harm' approach • The project challenges discriminatory social norms which reinforce gender inequalities across all levels of society • The project aims to create lasting changes in relation to gender equality in the lives of girls, boys, women and men by working with communities, and stakeholders at all levels. • The top-level ambition of the project is to advance gender equality and/or women's empowerment. • The results framework measures progress towards the project's gender equality objectives through gender-specific indicators to track outcomes/impact. • All outcomes in the framework are gender equality outcomes • Data and indicators are disaggregated by gender where applicable • Commitment to monitor and report on the gender equality results achieved by the project in the evaluation phase

Section IV: Public Engagement

MCIC values public engagement and expects you to engage Manitobans through the work of your project or other outreach efforts. Whether it's helping to increase awareness and understanding

of the global issues, showing people how their actions matter or encouraging them to take action, you will have played a great role to help Manitobans engage in the global issues and show the meaning of being a global citizen. The following list provides a few examples of the public engagement activities:

- Social media/online engagement (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, websites, blogs, etc.)
- Newsletters (mail or digital), flyers, bulletin inserts, emails etc.
- Fundraiser events that include an awareness building component such as auctions, dinners, social, tournaments, raffles, bake sales, marathons, etc.
- Displays at a local community centre, business, faith group, shopping mall, festival, campuses, and schools, etc.
- Public engagement events on specific global issues, and/or provides an opportunity for a visitor from the Global South to speak and/or interact with Manitobans.

Appendix 1 provides information on public engagement, what it means at MCIC and how it can be done as part of your project activities. This brief introduction about public engagement at MCIC can also be downloaded from our website mcic.ca in .pdf format, under 'International Projects'.

Section V: Eligibility for Funding

In order to be eligible for the Theme Fund:

- Applicants must be members in good standing.
- Projects must be consistent with MCIC's development philosophy, as outlined in our Guiding Principles.
- All Theme Funds must be expended overseas and cannot fund Canadian based projects or components. However, any funds your agency chooses to contribute may be applied to Canadian expenses related to the project in question.
- If there is more than one funder, agencies must specify which components or aspects of the project MCIC will be funding.
- Projects must begin prior to March 31, 2026.
- Levies must be paid when funding is received (see next section for information on levies).
- The project was being undertaken in a country on the list of Global Affairs Canada's approved countries (does not need to be a Country of Focus, but needs to be an ODA eligible country as defined by OECD DAC available [here](#)).

Levies

For every project funded by MCIC, the successful organization must submit a cheque to MCIC for an amount equivalent to 10% of the funds they receive. This is a non-refundable levy paid to MCIC upon receipt of MGMGP funds. This amount should not appear in the project budget that is submitted with this application.

Submission Deadline

The deadline for the Theme Fund this year is **January 31st, 2026 by 11:59 pm (Central Standard Time)**. The project must start no later than March 31 of the same year.

When your project submission is received by MCIC you will be contacted within 5 business days to confirm receipt and will be assigned a project number. Please use that number in any correspondence with us related to the project.

Matching Funds

Groups applying for the Theme Fund are not required to provide matching funds. However, we encourage applicant groups to show their commitment and sustainability by making a financial contribution to the project. This may also strengthen the proposal.

Two Year Projects

Theme Fund projects are funded on a year to year basis. Because of how the Theme Fund is calculated, we cannot anticipate from year to year how large the fund will be. However, in the first year of the theme, a two year project can be submitted and it may strengthen the application because it demonstrates a commitment to sustainability. However, applications for the continuation of a previous year's project will be considered on the same basis as new projects. **First year funding does not guarantee continued funding into Year 2.**

Applications for a second year project must follow the same application process as a single year project.

MCIC's development philosophy is based on supporting projects which address causes rather than symptoms and which support local control and self reliance. It is hoped that all MCIC funded projects will be sustainable and eventually operate without outside assistance.

Section VI: Selection Process and Evaluation

- 1) Preliminary assessment** – Upon receipt of a concept note, MCIC staff will review it to determine if it meets the basic eligibility requirements and if all sections of the application have been completed. Incomplete applications or applications not presented in the proper format will not be considered and will be returned to the applicant.

- 2) **Decision making levels** – All projects are reviewed by MCIC’s Overseas Project Committee, composed of agency peers. The committee will recommend projects for funding to the MCIC Board who make all final funding decisions.
- 3) **Project assessment process:**
- a) Each concept note is reviewed by all committee members
 - b) Projects are reviewed using an evaluation matrix with a point system as follow:
 - b.1 Local Impact (Score (1-10)) :** Extent to which the project empowers the community partner and addresses local needs.
 - b.2 Feasibility (Score (1-10)):** Practicality and sustainability of the project within the local context.
 - b.3 Community Engagement (Score (1-10)):** Level of involvement and decision-making power given to the local community.
 - b.4 Overall Assessment:** An overall score (1-10).
 - c) After discussion of all proposals, recommendations are made regarding which projects should be funded and for how much. Please note that the committee may recommend that a project be approved at a different amount than requested depending on the availability of funds.
 - d) This decision is sent to the Board for final approval.
- 4) **Types of Decisions** – Theme Fund proposals are ranked via the point matrix system. Based on available funding and questions that may arise about the individual projects, submissions may be:
- a) **Approved** – No further information required.
 - b) **Approved with Recommendations** – The project is approved with suggestions for consideration by the member agency. In some cases, MCIC may request a six-month follow-up report when this type of approval is given.
 - c) **Conditionally Approved** – Additional information is required. If the agency responds adequately to the questions and/or concerns, the project is normally approved. MCIC’s Project Officer will assess whether the response is satisfactory.
 - d) **Not Funded** –Not ranked high enough to receive available funds.

Contact Info



Questions about public engagement? pe@mcic.ca

Questions about sharing stories, events or photos?
communications@mcic.ca

Questions about projects, funding or reporting? mngmp@mcic.ca