



Free to Play Applicant Guide

About

Free to Play brings funders, local community foundations, and community organizations together to support children through the power of outdoor play.

Annauma Community Foundation is partnering with Community Foundations of Canada to provide access to this important initiative to Nunavut organizations and communities. Annauma has \$250,000 available for a consensus granting cohort of up to 5 organizations.

A second round of this funding will be available in 2027. If you are not selected for funding in 2026, or if you are not ready to submit an application, we encourage you to watch for the next funding announcement in early 2027.

Objective

Free to Play supports children by creating the conditions for them to play their own way: moving, imagining, taking risks, and connecting with others how they choose. Caregivers and community members can help create the conditions for outdoor play by providing the time, space, and freedom for children to explore, take safe risks, and play on their own terms.

The Fund aims to:

- Increase opportunities for outdoor play;
- Reduce barriers that limit everyday outdoor play opportunities;
- Contribute to the well-being, confidence, and healthy development of children in your community; and
- Contribute to a long-term shift that values outdoor play as essential to childhood.

What is outdoor play?

Outdoor play is voluntary engagement in an activity that takes place outdoors, is fun and rewarding, and is driven by children's own curiosity and imagination. It gives children room to explore, take risks, and play their own way, often alongside other children, caregivers, and community members. Outdoor play is children's time on the land, where every rock, river, and snowdrift teaches them who they are, how they belong, and how to care for the world around them.

Outdoor play may include:

- Running, climbing, digging, building, splashing, rolling, imagining, pretending
- Playing with natural materials like rocks, mud, water, sand, grass, or snow
- Taking risks, testing ideas, and learning how to navigate challenge and uncertainty

Purpose

For Inuit, childhood has always been connected to the land, the seasons, and learning by doing. Children grow strong and confident through time spent outside—travelling on the land, playing, observing, and learning from Elders, family, and community.

Today, many Inuit children spend more time indoors and on screens, and less time outside on the land or in unstructured play. Crowded housing, limited outdoor community spaces, safety concerns, and fewer unstructured opportunities make it harder for children to play, explore, and learn in the ways Inuit knowledge has long supported.

Even when families and communities value outdoor play and land-based activities, they often face barriers such as lack of equipment, staff, and safe, accessible spaces. These challenges reduce opportunities for Inuit children to experience free play, movement, cultural learning, and connection to land and community.

Free to Play responds to this challenge.

This program supports free-to-play opportunities that will help Inuit children spend more time being active, playing, and learning together—strengthening health, confidence, cultural identity, and community well-being.

When we invest in outdoor play, we invest in:

- **Healthier, happier children:** Outdoor play supports physical and mental health, helping children stay active, manage stress, experience joy, and develop confidence and resilience.

- **Curiosity and creativity for a lifetime:** Outdoor play gives children the space to imagine, problem-solve, and explore. Through experimentation and discovery, children learn to take risks, adapt to challenges, and think creatively, skills that last well beyond childhood.
- **Connected families and stronger communities:** When children play together, families come outside, neighbours meet, and communities grow closer. Outdoor play strengthens the social fabric of a place, bringing people together and reviving shared community spaces like parks and playgrounds.

Key Dates

- Expressions of Interest open: **February 5, 2026**
- Expressions of Interest close: **March 6, 2026**
- Applicants notified by: **April 1, 2026**
- Consensus granting sessions: **April 14 & 16, 2026**

Eligibility

Eligible Organizations

To submit an expression of interest, organizations must be a **registered charity, nonprofit organization, or hamlet located in Nunavut**.

Ineligible Organizations

The following types of organizations are not eligible to submit expressions of interest:

- For-profit organizations;
- Unincorporated nonprofits;
- Business nonprofit institutions, including business associations, chambers of commerce, and condominium associations;
- Individuals.

Eligible Activities

Projects must:

- Take place in Nunavut
- Support the objective of Free to Play

Note: Structured, adult-led sports or activities (such as travel for competitions, equipment for youth sports leagues, skills workshops, etc.) **are not eligible for funding**. Contact grants@annauma.ca for information on funding available for these types of activities.

Components of Outdoor Play Activities

When planning for outdoor play, communities and organizations can consider four key ingredients for successful initiatives:

- **Access to outdoor spaces and materials:** Ensure children have access to quality outdoor spaces along with materials that support play, like tools and/or storage for equipment.
- **Training and support:** Provide opportunities for caregivers, educators, and community members to learn how to encourage and facilitate outdoor play.
- **Supportive policies:** Develop or adapt policies and tools that make outdoor play easier to include in programs and help manage risk.
- **Community engagement:** Involve families, caregivers, and community members to understand and support outdoor play and risk.

Examples of Eligible Activities

These examples are meant to spark ideas. We welcome creative ideas that reflect your community's needs and encourage you to explore projects beyond this list of examples.

- A municipality brings together child-serving organizations, Elders, and community members to co-create a vision for outdoor and land-based play. The municipality provides information and training on play and risk, and builds relationships to plan outdoor play experiences. Activities may include temporarily closing streets for outdoor play, hosting traditional land-based activities, supporting intergenerational play, and training staff and volunteers to facilitate outdoor play in parks and public spaces.
- A nonprofit organization conducts research on traditional outdoor play activities among Inuit and creates a resource kit to encourage child care centres, schools, and other child-serving organizations to incorporate elements of traditional outdoor play into their activities.
- A child care centre develops a vision for a new or modified outdoor play space in collaboration with outdoor play consultants and Elders. Working with a landscape architect, they naturalize their outdoor play space. After sharing information about play and risk with

community members, they develop policies for using the play space in their own programming and sharing the space with other organizations and community members.

- A cultural organization invests in equipment and training to create opportunities for children to play on the land in all seasons, including materials, labour, and expertise to build qamutit and make traditional outdoor clothing.

Examples of Ineligible Activities

The Fund will not support activities that:

- Support structured, adult-led sports or activities (for example, staff or equipment for organized sports; support for sports teams to travel to competitions; skills camps);
- Are partisan, political, or election-related;
- Are purely research-based;
- Are religious or include a requirement to participate in any dimension of faith;
- Benefit private individuals or interests;
- Build endowments and reserve funds;
- Deliver virtual programming for children;
- Focus solely on purchasing playground equipment without activities that promote outdoor play;
- Focus solely on core funding where there is no project;
- Involve major capital projects (e.g., building infrastructure or purchasing land or buildings);
- Involve the purchasing of electronic devices.

Eligible Expenses

Projects can begin in 2026 and may continue for up to three years, as long as all funding is spent by the end of November 2028.

Eligible expenses may include:

- Administrative costs directly related to the project;
- Communications;
- Contractor or professional service fees;

- Evaluation of the project;
- Honoraria;
- Materials and supplies;
- Staff salaries and related employment costs;
- Training and workshops;
- Travel and transportation costs

How to Apply

Complete an Expression of Interest by visiting www.annauma.ca. **Expressions of interest open February 5, 2026, and close March 6, 2026.**

If you need support completing the expression of interest, contact Annauma by email at community@annauma.ca or by phone at 867-222-5502.

Outdoor Play Resources

For organizations seeking ideas, research, and tools to design or strengthen their outdoor play activities, [Outdoor Play Canada \(OPC\)](#) offers a comprehensive collection of evidence-based resources. The OPC website includes examples of successful projects, research reports, and practical guides that explore how outdoor play can thrive across different settings and communities.

- [Outdoor Play Toolkit](#)
- [Outdoor Play Canada Resources](#)
- [Outdoor PLAYbook](#)
- [Canadian Paediatric Society](#)
- [2025 Position Statement on Active Outdoor Play](#)
- [Risk Benefit Assessment Toolkit](#)
- [Play, Learn, and Teach Outdoors—Network \(PLaTO-Net\)](#) definition of terms
- [Seven Cs Design Guidelines](#)

For more information, contact Annauma Community Foundation by email at grants@annauma.ca or by phone at 867-222-5502.

Free to Play is made possible through partnership with participating community foundations, Waltons Trust, the Lawson Foundation, and Canadian Jumpstart Charities.