Action Grants Applicant Workbook

A step-by-step guide to build a strong Action Grant application for The Youth Harbour.

THE YOUTH HARBOUR

Applying for a grant can feel overwhelming, especially if it's your first time. This workbook breaks down the Action Grant application into smaller, manageable steps. Each section includes exercises, tips and examples so you can submit a confident, well-structured application.

The goal is not just to get funded once but to strengthen your ability to plan, budget and communicate your project so you're set up for future funding, too. Less is more: your answers should be concise but meaningful, and clear enough for someone who has never heard of your project to "get it" at a glance.

Before You Start

Check your eligibility

- ☐ Youth-led (aged 30 and under at the time of applying; youth who are Indigenous to Turtle Island [what is currently North America] can apply aged 35 and under). This includes Indigenous youth who may be reconnecting, non-status, urban, or connected to their communities in non-formal ways.

- ☐ Canadian citizenship, permanent residency, refugee status or a visa

- ☐ Have a project or initiative that will reduce the impacts of the climate crisis in what is currently referred to as Canada.

- ☐ Be grassroots in nature and/or conduct not-for-profit activities

- ☐ The organization or project can have an operating budget of no more than $300,000 CAD annually

- ☐ Non partisan, non violent and legal activities

Get familiar with The Youth Harbour

- Read the Action Grants webpage & The Youth Harbour Principles.
- Browse past grantees on the "Our Impact" page

Practical tips

- The application takes about 60 minutes to complete. You can save and edit your answers, plan to do a first draft, then come back to revise.
- Prepare a draft budget in advance of your application. Feel free to use The Youth Harbour Budget Template.
- Questions? Email grants@fesplanet.org to ask questions and/or to book a coaching call with a Youth Harbour staff member.

Crafting a Clear Project Description

Summarize your organization or project and include a mission statement. Describe how it is related to youth, the environment, and climate justice in what is currently Canada. (max 150 words)

Your description is your elevator pitch. One - two paragraphs answering the W5H (Who, What, Where, When, Why, How).

Exercise: Write a draft using the template

WHO?	Stakeholders & team	Who benefits? Who is delivering the work?
WHAT?	Key activities	What exactly are you doing?
WHERE?	Location & scale	Where will it take place? Local, regional, national?
WHEN?	Timeline (start/end)	When does it begin? Is it ongoing?
WHY?	The need & impact (stats welcome)	What problem or gap are you addressing?
HOW?	High-level approach to achieve goal	What is your overall strategy?

Exercise: Draft your vision and mission statements

Your **vision** is the long-term change you want to see (20-30 years).
Your **mission** is how you'll achieve it right now.

EXAMPLE

Vision: "A world where all homes are powered by 100% renewable energy."
Mission: "Providing affordable solar roof shingles to communities across Canada."

Core Activities & Addressing Community Needs

What problem is your organization or project aiming to solve, or address? Describe the specific activities and your approach to solving this problem. (max 250 words)

List a few key activities, meaning, the concrete things you'll do to achieve your mission. This shows reviewers that your plan is realistic.
- Focus on what you're passionate about and what your community has asked for.
- Consult your community (formal or informal) if you haven't already.
- Be specific: "Provide one-hour climate workshops for grade 9 students in Halifax" vs. "Educate youth about climate change."

Exercise

a) Identify each core activity, then
b) Explain why it matters and why it meets the needs of your community

Finally, if all activities go as planned, what are some deliverables that would indicate that your project is a success? And what are their approximate timelines? Please share between 3 - 5 deliverables total, which can be a mixture of qualitative and quantitative metrics.

Think of deliverables as proof of progress.

What tangible outcomes will demonstrate that your project made a difference? These could include events hosted, people reached, partnerships formed, materials created, or lessons learned.

Include both measurable results and meaningful experiences.

- Quantitative examples might include:
  - "50 youth trained in climate advocacy by June 2025."
  - "Three community workshops delivered by August 2025."

- Qualitative examples might include:
  - "Increased confidence and leadership among participants."
  - "Positive community feedback gathered through post-event surveys."

Be realistic and time-bound.

Aim for deliverables that are specific, achievable, and linked to your project timeline, something you can look back on and say, "Yes, we did that."

Example Format:

DELIVERABLE	DESCRIPTION	TARGET TIMELINE
1	Launch of a 3-part storytelling workshop series for BIPOC youth	May - July 2026
2	Creation of a digital zine showcasing participants' climate art	August 2026
3	100 attendees engaged through in-person showcase event	September 2026
4	Participant feedback shows increased confidence in creative advocacy	October 2026

What makes your approach, experience, or role in your community well situated and necessary to be able to "solve" this "problem"? (250 words max)

This question is about why you, your team and/or your team/organization are the right people to lead this work. It's your chance to describe what makes your perspective, relationships, and lived or professional experience unique.

Tips for Responding

CONNECT YOUR STORY TO THE ISSUE

Explain how your personal journey, community ties, or professional background give you insight into the problem. For example: "As someone who grew up in a flood-prone neighbourhood, I've seen firsthand how climate change impacts low-income families."

HIGHLIGHT YOUR APPROACH

What's distinct about how you're tackling this problem? Is it community-driven, culturally rooted, youth-led, or based on collaboration?

SHOW TRUST AND CREDIBILITY

Describe how your community sees you or your organization. Are you a trusted convener, a creative connector, or someone who brings underrepresented voices to the table?

NAME YOUR STRENGTHS

Mention any skills, networks, or partnerships that strengthen your ability to make an impact.

Some suggested prompts to get you started:

- "Our approach is unique because..."
- "We are deeply connected to this issue through..."
- "Our team brings lived experience in..."
- "We are trusted in our community as..."

Are there existing entities, organizations or individuals addressing a similar problem or mission statement that you have already collaborated with, or wish to collaborate with? Please describe why or why not. (250 words max)

This question helps us understand how your project connects to a broader movement or ecosystem of change. Collaboration can strengthen impact, prevent duplication, and create space for shared learning. Whether you have been working on this project for years, or it's a pilot project and is brand new, the goal is to demonstrate that you have a good understanding of key stakeholders, and how you can collaborate with them to achieve a common goal.

Tips for Responding

MAP THE LANDSCAPE

Think about others doing similar or complementary work: community organizations, grassroots groups, local leaders, coalitions, unions, or youth collectives.

HIGHLIGHT COLLABORATION (IF IT EXISTS)

Describe how you've worked together or supported each other's missions. Example: "We've partnered with a local food justice collective to combine their urban gardening expertise with our youth-led storytelling approach."

IF YOU HAVEN'T COLLABORATED YET

That's completely fine, explain why. Maybe your approach is unique, the issue is emerging, or you're still building trust and relationships. Example: "We haven't collaborated yet, but we plan to connect with community artists and educators as our project develops."

SHOW ALIGNMENT, NOT COMPETITION

Emphasize how your project adds value or fills a gap within your community rather than replicating existing efforts.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Who's already working toward a similar vision and how could your project connect, complement, or learn from their work?

You're doing great. Take breaks, pace yourself, and remember: a clear, honest application increases your chances of funding and strengthens your project planning overall.

Equity & Climate Justice

Action Grants prioritize youth-led, equity-centred climate work.

Question Corner!

Explain how your organization or project is engaging with equity-deserving groups and/or communities. (250 words max)

This question is about understanding how your work centres equity, who benefits from your project, whose voices are included, and how you're ensuring meaningful, respectful engagement. These questions are encouraged to be answered, but not mandatory, so that you can feel comfortable in sharing as much or as little as the need about your equity-deserving identity and positionality. The goal is not to check off all equity areas in order to have a stronger application, rather, to share a clear and honest focus and approach towards equity and inclusion.

Tips for Responding

START WITH WHO YOU SERVE

Describe which communities or groups your project focuses on and why. What gaps or barriers are you addressing for them?

EXPLAIN HOW YOU ENGAGE

Outline how these communities shape or lead your work through co-design, feedback, storytelling, advisory roles, or leadership positions. Example: "Our programming is co-created with newcomer youth, ensuring their experiences and priorities drive our workshops."

SHOW MEANINGFUL INCLUSION

Move beyond participation, show how your project creates belonging, amplifies voices, or redistributes power and resources.

REFLECT ON YOUR APPROACH

Mention any principles or practices (e.g., accessibility, trauma-informed design, anti-oppressive frameworks) that guide how you work with community members.

Resources, Budget & Capacity

Think through what it will really take to run your project without burning out.

People	Paid staff, members, contractors, volunteers. If applicable, finances set aside for payroll, E.I., vacation and/or wellness.
Program resources	Equipment, software, venues, travel, consultants.
Admin	Incorporation fees, software, banking fees, insurance.

Then, estimate or gather quotes for the approximate costs for the calendar year or the project timeline. Budgets should reflect needs that tie back to your previous responses about project activities, deliverables, and overall operations.

Budget tips

- Base it on project needs, not on what you think funders want to hear.
- Show other potential funding sources if possible.
- Use the The Youth Harbour Budget Template, or your own
- No matter the formatting you choose to submit your budget with, ensure that there is a clear ask for $5,000-$30,000. While further details are appreciated, you do not want to leave the reader confused about what amounts you are actually requesting directly from The Youth Harbour.

Exercise: List your top cost items under: Direct Costs, Shared Costs, Admin Costs.

- Consider if there are other grants that only cover certain line items, or other ways you can fundraise to cover costs that are less of a priority (i.e. in kind donations, venues that are free of charge, discounts you can receive)
- If you have many line items and your budget will well exceed $30,000, feel free to label and prioritize these line items in the notes section
- Try and be clear if a certain cost can be partially funded, or must be fully funded by The Youth Harbour

Optional Reflections

Thinking beyond the application form, think of how can you improve, refine, or clarify aspects of your organization or project by considering the following:

- What risks might your project face, and how will you mitigate them?
- How long do you plan on doing this work, and what's your transition plan?
- Who might oppose the project and how could you work towards a common goal?
- How are you incorporating climate justice into your project as it grows?

Submitting & Support

Before you click "submit," double-check:

- ☐ Have you read The Youth Harbour Principles and Action Grants webpage?

- ☐ Have you completed all questions?

- ☐ Have you attached your budget?

- ☐ If you have any questions or concerns, you've reached out to the Youth Harbour team for any help and clarifications.

Need help? Email **grants@fesplanet.org** to ask questions and/or to book a coaching call with a Youth Harbour staff member.