



SUNCOR
ENERGY
FOUNDATION

Post-Secondary Donation Program

Welcome to the Suncor Energy Foundation's post-secondary donations program, *Reducing Barriers and Driving Innovation*.

The Suncor Energy Foundation (SEF) has long invested in post-secondary education across Canada. By 2019, SEF had noticed trends in both the post-secondary and philanthropic spaces that had us wondering whether we might tweak how we administer post-secondary donations. So, after several months of internal and external conversations about what that might look like, we compiled ideas into the *Reducing Barriers and Driving Innovation* program.



What we're seeing

We know post-secondary institutions are being challenged to serve society's complex needs. To support more resilient communities of the future, shifts are likely required in how students are educated and trained.

We're seeing, for example, increased movement toward technology, automation, and artificial intelligence while also noticing a rise in social innovation and interdisciplinary problem-solving.

We also know that a transformation of the energy system to a lower-carbon future will affect many aspects of our lives, and warrants consideration at the post-secondary level.

All of this change occurs while socioeconomic income gaps continue to increase, along with political and social polarization.

Systemic barriers affect students and potential students in attending or not attending post-secondary institutions – and these barriers affect a variety of people, including but not limited to Indigenous communities. For related reasons, many post-secondary institutions have embarked on a journey of decolonization and/or Indigenization.

Barriers within the post-secondary system also affect how (or if) researchers and institutions engage community members and organizations in an authentic, reciprocal way – and how knowledge is shared and transferred to communities. Open-source platforms, for example, can create opportunities and challenge existing conventions within post-secondary institutions.



What we'd like to invest in

Against this backdrop, SEF has revised its criteria for post-secondary donations.

In 2020 and beyond, we'll administer an annual process for donating to post-secondary initiatives, and we'd like to see those initiatives meet **three criteria**:

Continue to support the SEF funding priorities¹: Indigenous Peoples, Community Resilience, and Energy Future, and/or connect to the other two elements of our SEF strategy (social innovation and community presence).

Initiatives should also support the reduction or elimination of barriers to participation for students and community members.

This reduction or elimination of barriers should connect to an "end goal" of society moving toward a more fair and sustainable economic system.

We know these points are pretty broad – and that's intentional. There are many ways to fulfill the criteria, and we certainly don't have all the answers. Fortunately, we've already heard some great ideas during consultation with post-secondary representatives about our program.

1. <https://www.suncor.com/en-ca/community-investment/funding-priorities>

What we'd like to invest in

We'll share those ideas below – as a way to hopefully spark additional thinking, not as a guarantee of what we will/won't fund:

- Support for student success within under-represented demographics;
 - “Support” can have a variety of definitions. For example: student-led initiatives, peer support, housing that is culturally/economically/physically accessible, “readiness” training for faculty and staff to engage with under-represented demographics in sincere ways that do not tokenize, etc.
- Paid experiential learning and/or work experience programs that allow students to obtain relevant experience without also having to get an additional job
- Research programs that involve community members and organizations as full and equitable partners in conceiving, implementing, learning from, and sharing research
- Increased inter-disciplinary and cross-departmental collaboration, and/or collaboration with other post-secondary institutions
- Development of more inclusive admissions processes
- Re-imagining of tenure and faculty performance management processes that incentivize authentic community engagement
- Support for students who will enter a workforce that is increasingly automated and requires adaptability
- Prioritization of open-source information and/or sharing of intellectual property



Application Process

You're probably wondering how to apply. We'll cover the details here:

Within Canada, all types of institutions (universities, colleges, technical institutions, polytechnics, etc.) are eligible. Due to regulations from the Canada Revenue Agency, SEF is not able to offer this program to institutions outside Canada.

So, if you're based in Canada and have an idea that meets the three criteria outlined earlier, we hope to hear from you within the following timeline. (As an aside: we know this timing is pretty tight for 2020. This is a new program and we've been working to get the details set and approved. In future, we hope to provide more notice about deadlines, and we're grateful for your patience with us this year.)

APRIL	The post-secondary application form ¹ will open online as of April 1. As submissions are received, SEF will screen them for eligibility, and send them to an advisory group of our Board for review.
MAY	Applications to this program will close on May 8. Later that month, the post-secondary advisory group of our Board will meet to provide recommendations on which submissions should receive donations.
JUNE	The SEF Board holds its quarterly meeting at the end of the month, and they will review recommendations from the post-secondary advisory group. Decisions from this meeting will then be communicated to applicants as soon as possible.
JULY	
AUGUST	SEF will process payments and distribute cheques to successful applicants.
OCTOBER	We'll review the program and obtain feedback so that we can make any necessary adjustments for the following year.
NOVEMBER	We'll set the following year's post-secondary program budget with our Board.
DECEMBER	
JANUARY 2021	Pending budget approval, we'll update materials for the program and send to potential applicants.

1. <https://www.suncor.com/en-ca/community-investment/apply-for-funding>

FAQ

We know you probably have more questions. Hopefully they're answered below, but you can also contact us with any other queries. Please email SEF@suncor.com and include **"Post-secondary program"** in the subject line.

1. Is this the only way for a post-secondary institution to obtain donations from Suncor?

The Suncor Energy Foundation is actually a separate legal entity from Suncor. We work closely together, but there may be an initiative that fits the business strategy of Suncor and not the [philanthropic strategy of SEF](#)¹. In those cases, it's still possible to work outside of SEF's post-secondary program to receive funds from Suncor – perhaps for recruitment activities within Human Resources, or research and development tasks with one of Suncor's technical groups.

2. How much is available from this program?

Let's talk about the total first. In recent years, SEF has donated an average of just under \$1.5 million per year to post-secondary institutions. We plan to stay at the same total amount – at least for now – but will only make about half that figure available to new initiatives each year (recognizing that we'd like to continue supporting multi-year requests).

Now let's talk about what's available for each successful application. We plan to provide donations of up to \$250,000 per year, per institution. That doesn't mean every successful applicant will receive \$250,000; ideally we'll see a mix of donation sizes/amounts.

3. Is it possible to receive multi-year donations?

Yes, definitely. We know the initiatives you'll be considering within this program are not going to happen in a single year. We're open to making commitments of up to four years at a time. And there's no limit on the number of times you can be successful in this program (although we do anticipate only funding one application per institution at a time).

So, if you want to apply for a four-year donation and then another one later on, that's fine. Or maybe you want to explore a few things before committing to an initiative. In that case, maybe it's best to apply for one or two years of donations to start with, and then submit an application in the future for four years.

Also note that you can apply for multi-year donations that include different amounts for different years. Maybe, for example, you know that your costs will be lower in Year 1 while you're in a planning phase, versus Years 3 or 4 when you're in full-on implementation.

4. Do you really think that systemic and structural barriers can be eliminated in four years?

Nope. We're putting a four-year limit on multi-year donations because it's the fiscally responsible thing we need to do. But as we said, there's no maximum on how many times you can qualify. In each application, do your best to outline what is reasonable in the timeframe you're proposing, but also feel free to outline what you'd do later with additional donations from SEF or others. It's great to see your long-term thinking, and it also helps you signal to us what will be needed in the future of the post-secondary system.

5. Do you cover "overhead" costs or just programmatic costs?

You can't create and deliver a program without overhead or administrative costs! We'll cover either type of cost, as long as your initiative fits the criteria mentioned at the beginning of this document.

6. Can our institution submit more than one application at a time?

Preferably not. We're hoping to see increased collaboration between disciplines and departments. If you think this is impossible, let's talk...but our very strong preference is to only fund one initiative per institution at any given time.

1. <https://www.suncor.com/en-ca/community-investment>

FAQ

7. Can more than one institution apply together?

Absolutely! We would love to see multiple institutions collaborate on an initiative. If that's what you're thinking, please note you can exceed the \$250,000 referenced in FAQ #2. Again, let's talk.

8. We're working with a local non-profit/social profit organization and we actually just want to support their work, not obtain funding directly for our institution.

Sure, no problem. We already support situations where a post-secondary institution acts as fiscal agent for another organization/initiative. If that's the situation you're talking about, you don't need to go through this post-secondary donations program. You and the organization can go straight to SEF's "regular" [application form](#)¹, at any time. But make sure you clearly show that the planning and ownership of the work is outside your institution.

And...here's a loophole alert! Some post-secondary institutions partner with community organizations to provide services (evaluation and research are good examples). If that's your situation, you might be better off if the outside organization applies for donations (using the same link as above), separate from this post-secondary program.

9. My institution has a funding commitment from SEF that pre-dates this program. Do I need to re-apply?

No. Post-secondary institutions currently receiving SEF donations will be transitioned to this new program once current commitments are completed. In other words, there's no need to apply to this program until your current funding arrangement is complete. In fact, we won't actually be accepting any new applications from you until that time.

10. There's no Suncor facility or operation near my institution. Do we have a chance at receiving a donation from you?

Donations are available to post-secondary institutions outside of Suncor's operating areas. That said, if multiple applications are deemed equally strong, preference may be shown to the institution(s) in a community where Suncor operates.

11. What will the application include?

Good question! A copy of the application questions can be found [online](#)². Please note the actual application may be formatted a little differently.

12. You mention that an advisory group will review submissions to this program. Who's in this group?

The advisory group will include members of our Foundation staff and Board. It will also include other employees from Suncor, representing a variety of areas, expertise, and experience levels. In future, we may also have advisory group positions for non-Suncor folks.

13. If we're successful in receiving this funding, what requirements come with it?

Expectations for those who receive donations from SEF include an annual update (via an existing online form) on your progress and activities, and we may occasionally want to touch base for a meeting or phone call to hear how things are going. We expect the frequency for these conversations would be similar as with our other funded partners – which is typically 1 – 4 times per year.

In addition, we may look at opportunities to gather funded organizations together. Whether this is focused on post-secondary institutions or more general, we hope you'd be able to have a representative(s) join us. (We typically pay the costs of attending any such events.)

14. I don't know if my idea fits within your program objectives. Can we discuss it?

Yes. If you want to talk through an idea before applying, please get in touch (the sooner, the better). If you have already been working with SEF, reach out to your main contact person on our staff. Otherwise, send a note to SEF@suncor.com and include the words "Post-secondary program" in the subject line.

1. <https://forms.benevity.org/3f4f9e61-d835-4849-9cc9-b025ddb01ea2?lang=en-ca>

2. <https://www.suncor.com/en-ca/community-investment/apply-for-funding>