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Frequently Asked Questions Family Independence Fund (FIF)

What is the Family Independence Fund?

The Family Independence Fund is a \$30 million fund provided to Vancouver Foundation by Community Living British Columbia (CLBC). The Fund is administered by the **Giving in Action Society** which is supported by the Vancouver Foundation.

The Family Independence Fund helps families who have children or adults with **developmental disabilities**, keep their family member at home by providing one-time grants for home renovations or expenses related to wheelchair-accessible vehicles.

Who can apply to the Family Independence Fund?

Families throughout B.C. who have a child or adult relative with a developmental disability may apply. Individuals with the disability must reside in their family home, (or family-supported home).

For the purposes of establishing eligibility, **developmental disability** is defined as follows:

- Low IQ
- Manifests before the age of 18
- Concurrent with impaired adaptive functioning

Families receiving support from other government-funded programs will need to demonstrate in the application that the grant from Family Independence Fund will **complement versus duplicate** that support.

Previous recipients of a Community Living Restructuring Fund grant may apply as the Family Independence Fund is not a continuation of that program and is a completely different fund.

Caregivers and foster parents are **not** eligible to apply to the Family Independence Fund as the intent is to provide support for families caring for family members, in family homes. Although foster parents provide a “family” environment, the government is ultimately responsible for children in care.

What will the Family Independence Fund support?

The Fund will assist families with **one-time** grants for capital expenses incurred to accommodate the individual with a disability and enable them to keep their relative at home.

Examples of eligible expenses:

- Door widening to provide wheelchair access
- Flooring
- Ramps
- Lifts, elevators
- Wheelchair accessible vehicles and/or conversions
- Bathroom renovations to accommodate individuals

Examples of ineligible expenses:

- Home purchases or new home construction
- Renovations outside of the house footprint – **exception:** addition for individuals over 16 to facilitate independent living.
- Upgrades and renovations that exceed basic accessibility requirements i.e. pools, hot tubs, use of high-end materials
- Expenses related to completed projects or projects in progress prior to the approval of the Family Independence Fund grant.

How much can families receive from the FIF?

For renovations and/or vehicle expenses the grant amounts are normally:

- **Renovations – not more than \$50,000**
- **Wheelchair-accessible vehicle expenses – not more than \$25,000**

Recognizing that project costs vary, all applications, which appear to be eligible, will be considered.

Will the Family Independence Fund cover the full cost of projects or purchases?

Grants from the Family Independence Fund are not intended to cover the full cost of the project or purchase. The Family Independence Fund should represent a **contribution** to the project and families are expected to secure additional funding for the total cost.

When completing the Letter of Inquiry and the Full Application, applicants are asked to confirm what contribution they or other funders (i.e. Variety, President's Choice) are making.

If other funding is not available, an explanation will be required. If this information is not included, your application may be delayed.

Can families apply for more than one thing – i.e. costs associated with a renovation and a wheelchair-accessible vehicle?

Yes – Families can apply for renovations and expenses related to wheelchair accessible vehicles. As noted above, if approved, the grants will not normally exceed the maximum amounts and there is no guarantee that both requests will be funded.

Can we apply to the Family Independence Fund and the Children and Youth with Special Needs Fund?

No – The Family Independence Fund will provide grants to individuals with developmental disabilities only. If a child has both a developmental disability and other special needs, the application will be directed to the Family Independence Fund.

How Do I apply?

The Family Independence Fund has a **two-stage** application process.

First stage: Letter of Inquiry (LOI), consists of a very simple, informal two-page proposal to determine if the request meets the general guidelines. This step saves families the effort of completing the full grant request for ineligible projects.

The LOI form can be found at:

<http://www.givinginaction.ca/applicationprocess/letterofinquiry.htm>

Print the Letter of Inquiry, complete and **mail to**:

Giving in Action Society

Suite 1200 – 555 West Hastings Street

Box 12132 Harbour Centre

Vancouver, B.C. V6B 4N6

Or fax: 604-683-3134

Program Staff will review your Letter of Inquiry and if your request is not eligible for funding, you will be notified by letter indicating the reasons for decline.

Second stage: Full application

Once your Letter of Inquiry is reviewed (2-3 week turnaround) and it is determined that it fits within the FIF guidelines you will be e-mailed (or hardcopy if preferred) a letter and an application form with additional instructions and important information that you will need for completion.

The completed application and supporting documentation is sent to the Giving in Action Society. The Advisory Committee (comprised of experts in the areas of disabilities) will review applications on a monthly basis and the Program staff will advise you of the Committee's decision.

How will I know that my LOI has been received?

You will receive a letter **2-3 weeks** after submitting the LOI, notifying you whether or not a full application is requested. If there is missing information in your LOI program staff will contact you.

Can I send the full application via email?

No - For privacy and verification purposes, the application requires several original documents; therefore emailed applications will not be accepted.

How long will the whole application process take?

From the Letter of Inquiry stage through to final decision the FIF application process is expected to take between 10-14 weeks.

Please note: Due to the volume of applications being reviewed, we request that applicants do not contact Giving in Action Society/Vancouver Foundation to check on the status of your application.

Stages	Time line
Stage 1: Applicant submits Letter of Inquiry.	Proposals are reviewed on a continual basis and, if eligible, will invite you to submit an application to the next available deadline. Notification of LOI status will be approximately 2-3 weeks
Stage 2: Applicant submits completed grant application form. Program Director assesses application And may discuss project with applicant.	Submit within 6 months . You may be contacted if information is missing or needed. Depending on the number of applications being reviewed at the monthly Committee meeting, applications may take approximately 7 weeks for assessment.
Applicant receives final decision by phone and letter.	Approximately 10-14 weeks after submitting the LOI

Who makes the decision about the grant?

An Advisory Committee, which is comprised of dedicated volunteers who have extensive experience (personal and professional) in the area of supporting

individuals with disabilities, reviews all applications to the Family Independence Fund. These individuals come from regions throughout the province of B.C. Their career experience includes work with community organizations, rehabilitation facilities, social services, research and development focused on accessibility supports and support for ethnic groups.

If my application is declined, can I reapply?

- **No** – You cannot apply for the same project or purchase **UNLESS** you have changed the request and addressed the concerns detailed by Giving in Action.
- **Yes** - If the application is a different request from the original that fits within the Fund guidelines

If I have more than one child with a disability, do I need to complete more than one LOI?

No. Because your request will likely benefit both children's needs, please submit one LOI indicating that the application is to support more than one child, with details for each.

Exception: If one child does not have a developmental disability; then a second LOI to the Children and Youth with Special Needs Fund would be required.

How long will these grants be available?

The Family Independence Fund will be paid out in grants over a 3-year period beginning in January 2007. Currently there are funds allocated to each of the provincial health regions for each of the three years. This allocation of funds will ensure that families throughout B.C. will have the opportunity to access grants in a fair and equitable manner.

For more information contact:

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