

Frequently Asked Questions

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 Vancouver Foundation.

The Family Independence Fund helps families who have children or adults with developmental disabilities keep their family member at home. The Fund provides 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 a 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 the Family Independence Fund will complement (versus duplicate) that support.

Who is not eligible for funding from the Family Independence 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 by supporting expenses related to the purchase/conversion of wheelchair-accessible vehicles and/or home renovations. The grants will increase a family’s ability to provide access for their child or relative and enable them to participate in home and community life.

Examples of eligible expenses:

- Door widening to provide wheelchair access
- Flooring
- Ramps
- Lifts, elevators
- Wheelchair accessible vehicles and/or conversions (the applicant must have a valid driver's licence and be the primary operator of the vehicle)
- Bathroom renovations to accommodate individuals

Examples of ineligible expenses:

- Home purchases or new home construction
- Renovations outside 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 FIF?

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

- Not more than \$50,000 for renovations
- Not more than \$25,000 for a wheelchair-accessible vehicle

How many times can families apply to FIF?

Normally a family's application should include requests for any eligible items funded by FIF (i.e. a renovation and wheelchair-accessible vehicle). However, we recognize this is not always possible due to delays in quotes or permits. In these situations, families may apply to FIF in two stages: one time for a vehicle and one time for a home renovation.

Will FIF 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.

If invited to submit a full application, families are asked to confirm whether they are able to contribute financially to the project. Applicants are also required to list the project's sources of funding, including the dates applications were submitted to other funders. Giving in Action staff may contact other funders to confirm these funding requests.

Can families apply for more than one thing at one time (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. If approved, the grants will not normally exceed the maximum amounts (as noted above) and there is no guarantee that both requests will be funded.

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, two-page proposal to determine if the request will meet the general guidelines. A Letter of Support Form, to be completed by an appropriate professional (i.e., therapist, doctor or social worker), is also required at this stage.

The LOI and Letter of Support Form can be found at:

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

Print the Letter of Inquiry, complete, and submit with the Letter of Support Form by **mail or fax:**

Giving in Action Society

Suite 1200 - 555 West Hastings Street

Box 12132 Harbour Centre

Vancouver, B.C. V6B 4N6

Fax: 604-683-3134

Staff will review your Letter of Inquiry and, if your request is not eligible for funding, you will be notified by phone and/or 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 mailed a 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 GIA 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 your LOI is incomplete or missing required information, your request will not be processed.

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, provided all the requested information is submitted and complete.

Please note: We request that applicants do not contact Giving in Action to check on the status of your application.

Stages	Timeline
Stage 1: Applicant submits Letter of Inquiry.	Proposals are reviewed on a continual basis and, if eligible, we 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 staff assesses the application and may discuss project with applicant.	Upon receipt of application, submit within 6 months for renovation requests and 3 months for vehicle requests. (Submit within 6 months if your request is for a vehicle <u>and</u> renovation.) 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 using the same grant request UNLESS you have changed the request and addressed the concerns detailed by Giving in Action
- **Yes** - if the application is different from the original request and it fits within the Fund guidelines

If I have more than one child/family member 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 family member, with details for each.