

Circular Food Innovators Fund Information Session

Questions and Answers

Below are the questions and answers from the January 26, 2026 and February 18, 2026 information sessions for the City of Toronto's [Circular Food Innovators Fund](#).

January 26, 2026 Information Session

1. How mature should a company be to apply? Is a one-founder, pre-seed company eligible?

There are no eligibility requirements around the maturity of a business, but as outlined in the [Application Guidelines](#), applications will be reviewed on the basis of their organizational capacity to plan and deliver the project. Any for-profit business must provide documentation that confirms they are active and their legal status, such as a Corporate Profile for incorporated businesses, registration of Business Name, etc. Other acceptable documentation may include provincial business registration records (for example, after registering with the [province](#) for a sole proprietorship) and Canada Revenue Agency documents.

2. Can we apply for a Green Workforce Project without applying for a Circular Food Innovators Fund (CFIF) Project?

No, you cannot apply for only a Green Workforce Project grant. Although the Green Workforce Project does not need to be tied explicitly to the CFIF Project, funding for a Green Workforce Project is only available to those applicants who are eligible and successful in receiving funding for their CFIF Project.

3. Is there an advisory team member available who can assist with technology questions before submitting the application?

Yes, please email circulareconomy@toronto.ca or call 416-396-4699 if you require technical assistance with the application forms or submission portal.

4. If an organization is seasonal and physically takes place from June to October, what would a site visit in January look like?

City of Toronto staff recognize that project timelines submitted at the application stage are often conceptual, and that some projects may be completed before the January/February site visit window. If an applicant knows or anticipates that January/February will not be conducive for a site visit, they will be expected to flag this during the Fund Agreement signing process. This will allow City staff to plan the site

visit, either during the Project's active period or through an alternative format, that will enable them to see the CFIF Project in operation.

5. Are expenses for a third-party reusable container provider eligible?

Yes, expenses related to a reusable provider are eligible. For example, as per Section 2.3.1 of the [Application Guidelines](#), costs for obtaining reusable dishware would fall under Project Materials, while third-party subscription fees would fall under Subscription Services.

6. We are not in the food service business, but a workspace with an idea for a project to bring fewer single use packages into our workspace and purchase food in a circular system. Would this type of project be eligible?

To be eligible for funding, an applicant must meet the eligibility requirements set out in Section 2.2.1 of the [Application Guidelines](#). Specifically, the applicant must be a business that provides, or most be a Business Improvement Area or academic institution that is working with a business that provides, food and beverage products for takeaway consumption or delivery or reuse system infrastructure for food businesses. If you require further clarification to determine the eligibility of your organization and/or project, please contact circulareconomy@toronto.ca.

7. Are there any benefits to using products made in Canada?

While there are no direct evaluation criteria for using products made in Canada, there are opportunities in the application to highlight other community benefits of your proposed project, such as supporting local economic development. This will be considered when evaluating applications, as well as how each proposed project aligns with and advances the City of Toronto strategic priorities including the City's economic development strategy, [Sidewalks to Skylines: A 10-Year Action Plan for Toronto's Economy \(2025-2035\)](#).

8. My organization is in the beverage alcohol industry. We are in the LCBO and use upcycled fruit and citrus for production. Would our upcycling program be eligible for funding?

No. The current round of funding is limited to reuse systems to replace single-use and takeaway items and does not extend to other components of the broader food system such as food waste and upcycled food products. Learnings from this round of funding will be used to evaluate if and how the City can expand support for business innovation across the food value chain in Toronto as part of future phases of the Circular Food Innovators Fund program.

9. Are you also measuring the weight of compost reduction?

The current round of funding is limited to reuse systems to replace single-use and takeaway items and does not extend to other components of the broader food system such as food waste and compost.

10. Does this program support manufacturing of our own reusable containers?

If you are an applicant that is requesting funding to manufacture reusable containers for retail, this would not be an eligible project. To qualify for funding, the container manufacturing must be directly tied to the eligible services that your business provides, as defined by the CFIF program (eligible businesses are those that provide food and beverage products for takeaway consumption or delivery or provide reuse system infrastructure for food businesses). Thus, the manufacturing of containers would only be eligible if the containers are part of your organization's reuse system whereby your business distributes food in the containers and is then responsible for collecting, washing, and redistributing them.

If you require further clarification to determine the eligibility of your organization and/or project, please contact circulareconomy@toronto.ca.

11. Will the presentation be shared?

Yes, a copy of the presentation is on the [CFIF webpage](#) under 'Information Sessions & Important Dates'. A recording of the presentation is also available on the same webpage.

February 18, 2026 Information Session

12. Are products such as packaging for non-food related items (e.g., cosmetics) or reusable bags eligible?

As per Section 2.2 of the [application guidelines](#), the Circular Food Innovators Fund is available to businesses that provide food and beverage products for takeaway consumption or delivery, or that provide reuse system infrastructure for food businesses. Projects deploying reuse systems for retail goods and food, or for products other than food and beverage, are not eligible.

Reusable bags that are a part of an eligible reuse system (a reuse system for takeaway or delivery of food and beverages) would be eligible. To be an eligible expense, the bags would have to be not only given out to customers, but also collected and redistributed for reuse by the business that provided the bag as a part of the reuse system. Please refer to the definition of a reuse system found in section 1.4 of the [Application Guidelines](#). When applying to the grant, you will need to describe how

reusable items in the proposed reuse system will be returned back to your business for reuse by future customers.

Reusable bags that are not part of an eligible reuse system would not be an eligible expense.

13. Does funding need to be used to fully transition an organization's entire operations to the reuse system, or can it be used for a smaller-scale pilot project to transition a portion of the operations?

There is no requirement for an organization to transition 100% of their operations to the reuse system in order to receive funding. Smaller-scale pilot projects are acceptable.

14. Can the funding be used to purchase reusable items for the customer to keep?

No, the reusable items must be introduced with the intention of them being returned to the business for cleaning and redistribution for continued reuse by future customers (i.e., as part of a formal reuse system). While we recognize that not every item will be returned and losses will be incurred, there must be a system in place to encourage return.

15. Our organization receives funding from the City for another program. Can we still apply?

Yes, you can still apply so long as the funding your organization is receiving from the City is not for the same project that you are submitting for the Circular Food Innovators Fund.

16. Are projects that institute reuse systems at solely dine-in establishments eligible?

No, only projects that deploy reuse systems where food or beverages are being provided for takeaway consumption or delivery are eligible.

17. Does the City have a list of vendors who can provide reusable materials or appliances for the project?

Applicants are responsible for selecting the vendors they wish to work with. The City's Solid Waste Management Services Division developed a Reducing Single-Use Program, which includes a [Reducing Single-Use Directory of Service Providers](#) to connect businesses with service providers that can help them reduce their use of single-use and takeaway items. This directory is intended as a reference only and should not be considered complete. Inclusion in the directory does not constitute endorsement or verification by the City of Toronto, and applicants are encouraged to conduct their own due diligence.

18. Does the City have any guidance on what constitutes reusable containers, and how many times plastic containers can be reused before they degrade to the point of being unsafe?

Reusable foodservice ware must be made of durable materials that are intended to stand up to frequent washing and reuse. It is the applicant's responsibility to assess whether a material is appropriate for their organization's uses or determine how long it is safe to use. Applicants can look to the Food Premises Regulation under the Ontario Health Protection and Promotion Act for requirements around reusable items. Applicable guidance for reusable food containers as per the Food Premises Regulation is summarized on the [Toronto Public Health webpage](#).

19. How competitive is the program?

In the first intake year of the program, 40 complete applications were submitted and 9 projects were funded. Actual competitiveness in any given year will vary based on demand and the total value of funding requested by eligible applicants.