



## The 2026 Leadership Fund

### Background

It can be very hard to access professional development opportunities in the non-profit sector, especially for people working in small and grassroots organizations with limited resources. In order to have a sustainable impact on systemic issues like food insecurity, Canada requires a talented and diverse group of leaders – especially leaders who reflect the communities most impacted by food insecurity and poverty.

### The Leadership Fund

Launched in 2024, the Leadership Fund is a grant program run by the Maple Leaf Centre for Food Security. The Leadership Fund is for emerging and experienced people leaders working for small-to-medium non-profits that work to address food insecurity. The Fund is intended to support these leaders on their journey to gain the skills or practices they need to unlock the next level of impact in their career. The purpose of the Fund directly aligns with the Centre's commitment to build capacity within the non-profit sector to address food insecurity and to alleviate the disproportionate impact of food insecurity among Black and Indigenous communities.

Grants of \$1,500 or \$3,000 will be available to individual applicants to cover costs associated with self-directed learning opportunities – including attending workshops, knowledge-sharing gatherings, gaining certification, completion of courses, or fees associated with professional coaching or mentoring.

Preference will be given to applicants who are Black, Indigenous, or identify as a person of colour.

### Examples of what the Fund money could be used for

- Tuition for a leadership course
- Fees for a professional coach or honoraria for a mentor
- Registration fees for a workshop series
- Travel costs for a knowledge sharing gathering or conference
- Travel costs to visit other food security programs

### Applicant eligibility

- Paid staff of charities, non-profits, or grassroots organizations with an annual budget up to \$2 million in the 2025 tax year. These organizations must have a mission or vision that aligns with the Centre's focus on food insecurity.
- Have the support of their organization to apply for the Leadership Fund (grant funds will be transferred to the organization itself).
- Be an emerging or experienced people leader.
- Be able to spend the funds by July 2027.

## How to apply for the Leadership Fund

You can apply for the Leadership Fund through a [Google form](#).

We ask you to submit the following written information on the form:

- Name
- Email address
- Role and organizational affiliation
- Organizational support for this application (yes/no)
- Organization annual budget in 2025 was \$2 million or less (yes/no)
- Amount requested from the Leadership Fund (\$1,500 or \$3,000)

You will need to answer three questions, either in writing or by video. You can respond in English or French. If you choose to write your answers, please use the space on the form (up to 750 words). If you prefer to record a video, upload your video file to the form. (up to 3 mins in length and max 1 GB, total).

1. What skill, competency, or practice could the Leadership Fund help you achieve?
2. How would having this skill, competency or practice help you overcome a challenge you have encountered and unlock the next level of your career? Please provide an example or anecdote.
3. What specific expenses are you hoping the Leadership Fund will help to cover?

**Applications are due by May 8th, 2026.**

### Applications will be assessed for fit with the following criteria

- The applicant demonstrates a high degree of self-awareness of the skills, competencies, or practices they need to grow in their career.
- The applicant can clearly connect the skill, competency, or practice to the next step(s) in their career journey or their career goals.
- Applicant has a plan for how they might start gaining this skill, competency, or practice with the help of the Leadership Fund.

### Reporting requirements

To help us improve the grant program, people who receive the leadership fund will be asked to share their reflections and feedback on the application process and how the funds have supported their professional development. This will involve a short meeting with a member of Maple Leaf Centre staff in early 2027.

We are eager to receive applications from impactful emerging leaders who are working to make a difference to food insecurity in their communities!

### About the [Maple Leaf Centre for Food Security](#)

The Maple Leaf Centre for Food Security ("the Centre") is a registered charity committed to working collaboratively to reduce food insecurity in Canada by 50% by 2030. The Centre advocates for critical public policies and invests in knowledge building and programs that advance the capacity of people and communities to achieve sustainable food security. The Centre was created in 2016 and is governed by a board of directors, including four independent experts.

## FAQs

### **How are you defining leader?**

We have a broad definition of leader not defined by your job title. If you or your peers see you as a leader, we want to hear from you!

### **What types of expenses can I use the funds for?**

You can use funds for anything that helps you gain your desired leadership skill, competency, or practice. People have typically used their Leadership Funds for travel expenses, registration or tuition fees, hiring a leadership coach, and honoraria for mentors.

### **Who reviews my application?**

Centre staff will first screen your application. Then, Maple Leaf Foods team members across Canada review applications using a shared rubric based on the criteria listed above. These team members have experience as leaders or developing leaders. We have found that it is a powerful experience for team members to gain a better understanding of the joys and challenges of working in the non-profit sector.

### **How do I decide whether to apply for \$1,500 or \$3,000?**

Choose the grant amount which will best meet your learning goals. You don't need to provide exact costs of your learning activities, but providing some information on how you will use the funds will strengthen your proposal.

### **How many grants are you giving out?**

This year, we will also give out \$30,000 through this fund. The number of grants will depend on the amount requested by successful applicants.

### **When will I know whether I was successful? When will I receive funds and by when do I need to use the funds?**

We expect to notify applicants about their application status in June. Funds will be sent in July, and we ask that you use the funds by the end of July 2027.

### **Do I have to submit my application in writing?**

Applications must be submitted via the [2026 Leadership Fund Application Google Form](#). However, applicants are welcome to submit a video answering the three detailed questions at the end of the form, as opposed to submitting written responses.

**If you have other questions not answered here, or would like to set up a phone call, please email [info@feedopportunity.com](mailto:info@feedopportunity.com). We will be hosting a webinar in early April where you can also talk with Centre staff.**