



PROGRAM GUIDELINES 2026/27

MusiCounts Slaight Family Foundation Innovation Fund



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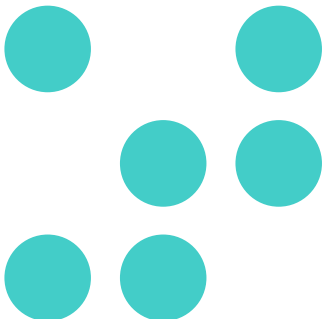
Table of Contents

- 2** - Program Overview
- 4** - How To Get Started
- 5** - Eligibility Criteria
- 6** - Eligible Uses of Grant Funds
- 7** - Application Overview
- 9** - How Funding Decisions Are Made
- 10** - Using AI in your MusiCounts Grant Application
- 11** - Tips for Submitting a Strong Application
- 12** - Frequently Asked Questions

If you have any questions whatsoever about the application process, please send a email to applications@musicounts.ca or schedule a virtual appointment with a member of the MusiCounts team [here](#).

Key Dates

- + September 17, 2026:** Applications Open
- + October 30, 2026:** Early Bird Deadline
- + December 3, 2026:** Final Deadline
- + January–April 2027:** Adjudication Period
- + Late Spring 2027:** Applications Notified of Adjudication Outcome



Program Overview

The MusiCounts Slight Family Foundation Innovation Fund provides schools in Canada with grants between \$5,000 and \$20,000 for instruments, equipment, resources, and clinician fees to support technology-forward, contemporary, or culturally specific music programs in schools.

Whether it be Indigenous drumming, hip hop, rock band, or music production, this MusiCounts funding stream aims to empower innovation in music education in Canada.

This grant program is open to all eligible schools in Canada. In particular, this program is geared towards schools that do not have the instruments, equipment, and resources needed to offer an inclusive and sustainable music program for students. The MusiCounts Slight Family Foundation Innovation Fund aims to ensure that the most in-need youth in Canada have access to the benefits of music education.

Who can apply?

- + All public, separate and First Nations schools in Canada are welcome to apply.
- + Anyone can apply for the MusiCounts Slight Family Foundation Innovation Fund on behalf of a school music program; however, applications are typically submitted by the school music teacher, principal, or a member of the parent council. Please make sure the music teacher and/or the principal at the school are aware of the application.

Why does this funding stream exist, and what approaches to music education does it support?

In MusiCounts' 25+ year history of investing in music education, the majority of our resources have been allocated to music programs that reflect a Western colonial music education tradition; the same approaches to music education that are centered in provincial and territorial music curricula across Canada, and in postsecondary music education programs.

This funding stream has been established to cultivate innovation in music education in Canada, and foster music education programs that speak to the diverse and evolving needs, interests, and cultures of students across Canada.

This program will support approaches to music education that are contemporary, technology-forward, or culturally specific. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Indigenous music
- Steel pan percussion
- Rock/pop/contemporary music ensemble
- Music production/recording
- Hip-hop/beat making
- Electronic music creation

Program Overview

What if my school has no music program?

Schools that currently have no music education program are encouraged to apply for support to start a new music program.

MusiCounts recognizes that some schools may have a strong vision for an innovative music program, but may need support figuring out how to bring that vision to life. Through the Intake Form, MusiCounts may identify applicants who would benefit from a more guided application pathway. This pathway allows applicants to describe what they hope to build, what support they need, and where expert mentorship may be helpful.

If your school already has a clear plan and primarily needs instruments, equipment, resources, or clinician support, you may continue through a standard application pathway. If your school needs support shaping the request or thinking through implementation, MusiCounts may direct you to an application pathway better suited to your needs.

If you are seeking support for a more standard or traditional music education program, please see the **MusiCounts Band Aid Program**.



How To Get Started

If you are interested in applying for financial support for music education at your school, you must start by submitting the [MusiCounts Intake Form](#). This is not your application. This short form will help the MusiCounts team determine whether your request is better suited for the [MusiCounts Band Aid Program](#) or the [MusiCounts Slaight Family Foundation Innovation Fund](#).

New this year, the Intake Form may also help MusiCounts identify applicants who would benefit from additional guidance or mentorship as they shape and implement a new or significantly expanded music program. Some applicants have a clear plan and primarily need funding for instruments, equipment, resources, or clinician support. Others may have a strong vision, but need support determining what they need and how to get started.

Once you complete and submit your Intake Form, you will receive an email from MusiCounts within two business days. This email will prompt you to create an account on the MusiCounts Grant Portal and give you access to a tailored application form to complete.

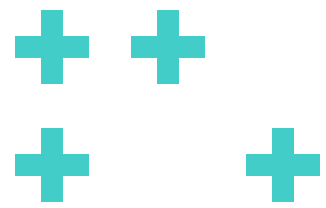
You can access the Intake Form [here](#).

If you are unsure how to complete the Intake Form, please seek support from the MusiCounts team before submitting your Intake Form through either:

1. Sending an email to applications@musiccounts.ca
2. Scheduling a [virtual appointment](#) with a member of the MusiCounts team.



Eligibility Criteria



What types of programs are eligible?

This program will support approaches to music education that are contemporary, technology-forward, or culturally specific. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Indigenous music
- Steel pan percussion
- Rock/pop/contemporary music ensemble
- Music production/recording
- Mixing/mastering
- Hip-hop/beat making
- Electronic music creation

Who can apply?

All public, separate and First Nations schools in Canada are welcome to apply. The music program may be curricular or extracurricular, but the instruments and equipment received through this program must be owned by the recipient school and must be used by the school's students on a regular basis.

My school has no music program. Am I eligible to apply?

Yes. Schools with no music program are encouraged to apply for support to either the MusiCounts Band Aid Program or the MusiCounts Slight Family Foundation Innovation Fund.

Some schools applying to start a new music education may be directed to a separate application pathway if they would benefit from expert mentorship. This pathway is intended for applicants who have a strong vision for an innovative music program, but need support shaping the request, determining what instruments, resources, clinician support, or implementation steps are needed.

Not every new program request will require this additional support. Applicants with an experienced music educator, a clear program model, and a strong plan for implementation may continue through a standard application pathway.

If you have questions about your eligibility for this program, please get in touch by emailing applications@musiccounts.ca.

How often can my school receive this funding?

Schools may receive funding from the MusiCounts Slight Family Foundation Innovation Fund once every five years.

However, special permissions may be granted for previous MusiCounts Band Aid Program recipients from the past five years who received support for traditional music education programs, such as band, Orff, etc., and who are looking to diversify their school's music program offerings.

If your school is interested in pursuing this, you must receive special permission to do so prior to submitting the Intake Form. Please schedule an appointment with a member of the MusiCounts team. In this appointment, prepare to discuss your ambitions for diversifying music education at your school and why this is needed.

My school has an existing music program, but I want to add an additional program offering. Is this eligible?

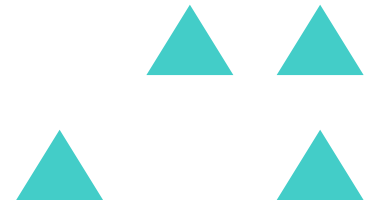
Yes. If your school already has one music program offered at your school, but you wish to implement an additional music program with MusiCounts' support, you are welcome to submit an application to MusiCounts.

Some applicants seeking to add a significant new offering may be identified through the Intake Form as candidates for additional guidance or mentorship, particularly if support is needed to shape the request or plan for implementation.

Ineligible applicants:

- ✘ Schools that charge tuition. Please note that provincially mandated school fees are not considered tuition.
- ✘ Community music programs. Please see the [MusiCounts Community Music Program](#) page.
- ✘ Private music studios/instructors.
- ✘ Schools that discriminate on the basis of race, sex, sexual orientation, or religion.

Eligible Uses of Grant Funds



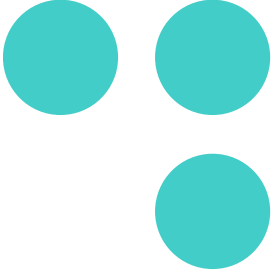
In your grant application, you will be asked to provide details on what you wish to purchase, should your grant application be successful.

- + At least 75% of your grant must be used for the purchase of musical instruments and equipment.
- + Up to 20% of your grant from the MusiCounts Slight Family Foundation Innovation Fund may be used to compensate an external clinician to work with you or your students to prepare you to appropriately facilitate this program. For example:
 - If you intend to offer a music production program at your school, you may use a portion of your MusiCounts grant to compensate a local audio engineer or producer to facilitate workshops with your students.
 - If you plan to offer an Indigenous music program, you may use a portion of your MusiCounts grant to compensate a local cultural educator, Elder, or Knowledge Keeper to work with you and/or your students in implementing this program. Schools looking to engage an Indigenous Elder may wish to consult our Wîtaskîwin resource to help guide your partnership.
- + Up to 20% of your grant may be used for educational resources and accessories, including sheet music, educational apps, music stands, software, etc.
- + Up to 20% of your grant may be used to repair instruments already in your school's inventory.

The following are not eligible uses of the MusiCounts Band Aid Program:

- ✗ Classroom renovations
- ✗ PA/sound system upgrades
- ✗ Field trips
- ✗ Full-time teacher compensation, external/guest clinicians only
- ✗ Shipping costs, except where prohibitive
- ✗ Travel costs, meals, gas, etc., including costs associated with clinician compensation
- ✗ Reimbursements for expenses incurred before being awarded the grant

For applicants directed to a mentorship-supported application pathway, expert mentorship may be coordinated separately by MusiCounts and does not need to be included in the applicant's grant request.



Application Overview

Based on your response to the MusiCounts Intake Form, you will receive a tailored application form asking questions specific to your school's circumstances. All applications for the MusiCounts Slaight Family Foundation Innovation Fund, however, include the following sections.

Some applicants may be directed to a separate application pathway if their Intake Form indicates that they would benefit from expert mentorship or implementation support. This pathway is intended for applicants who have a strong vision for a new or significantly expanded innovative music program, but may not yet have a fully developed purchasing plan, implementation model, or access to specialized music education expertise.

Applicants in this pathway may be asked to describe what they hope to build, why the program is needed, what support would be helpful, and what they need help figuring out. Applicants may include known instruments, equipment, resources, clinician support, or costs, but they may not be expected to have a fully realized plan at the time of application.

For some successful applicants, grant funds may be paired with expert mentorship. A compensated music education expert may work with the school to help refine the final request, determine how funds can be used effectively, connect educators with relevant classroom and professional development resources, and act as a sounding board as the program gets underway.

Application Section

What's Required

School & Applicant
Information

- + Applicants will be asked to provide general information about their school and the primary applicant, meaning the individual preparing the grant application.

Program Details

- + An overview of music education at the school.
- + Details on the particular music education program seeking support from MusiCounts.
- + Details on the current funding available for music education at the school.

Program Leadership

- + Details on who will lead the music program requesting support from MusiCounts.
- + Applicants seeking to engage external clinicians should demonstrate a thoughtful, ongoing relationship with the community member(s) they are working with. Those looking to engage an Indigenous Elder or Knowledge Keeper may wish to consult our [Witaskiwin](#) resource to guide their partnership.

Community Need

- + Applicants will be asked to provide an overview of the community of youth that will participate in the music program requesting support from MusiCounts, including a broad overview of the demographics of this student population and details on any barriers to success they may face.

Application Overview

Application Section

Program Impact & Sustainability

What's Required

- + Explanation of the impact receiving a MusiCounts grant would have on their school.
- + Details on the sustainability of the music program seeking support from MusiCounts.
- + One letter of support from a colleague at your school. We recommend including a letter from an administrator at your school, if the administrator is not the Primary Applicant. We advise that the letter should speak to your school's support for the long term impact and sustainability of music education at your school. The letter of support must be uploaded as a PDF, and may not exceed one page in length.
- + A short testimonial (handwritten letter or video) from one of your students sharing a story about their experience in the music classroom at school.

Inventory

- + Respond to a few questions that pertain to the state of your school's existing inventory of musical instruments and equipment; **schools are no longer required to itemize their existing inventory of musical instruments and equipment, but should still provide a thorough overview of the instruments available at their school.**

Request

- + Completion of the MusiCounts **Request Form**, which you will gain access to once you submit your [Intake Form](#) and have been advanced to your application form. In the Request Form, you must itemize what you intend to purchase, including anticipated cost and retailer selection, should your application be successful.
- + Your **Requested Amount**, which is the total amount of funding you are requesting from MusiCounts. This must be between \$5,000 and \$20,000. Your Requested Amount must match the subtotal reflected in your Request Form.
- + A summary of why your school requires the instruments and equipment you are requesting in this application. Applicants directed to a mentorship-supported application pathway may be asked to provide a broader description of their needs rather than a fully finalized purchasing plan at the first stage. In these cases, MusiCounts may work with the applicant and a music education expert to refine the final request if the application is successful.



How Funding Decisions Are Made

MusiCounts uses a multi-stage review process to assess applications to the School Music Funding Programs. Once applications are received, they are reviewed by MusiCounts staff, volunteer adjudicators, and music education specialists.

Adjudicators are asked to consider:

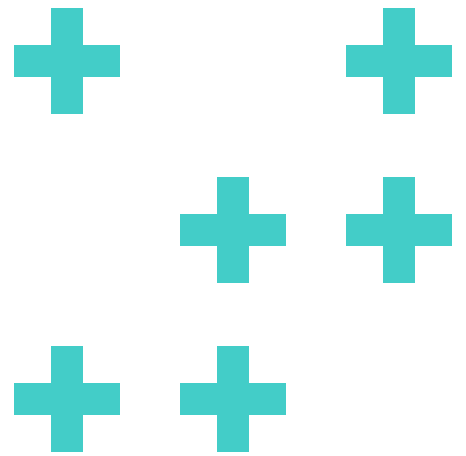
1. **Community need:** the extent to which the school serves high-need or under-represented student communities.
2. **Need for support:** the extent to which the school lacks the instruments, equipment, resources, or specialist support required to deliver the proposed program;
3. **Rationale for the request:** why the specific requested materials or supports are needed, and how they will expand access to culturally relevant, technology-forward, contemporary, or otherwise innovative music education; and
4. **Implementation and sustainability:** how the school will put the requested materials or supports to use, and how they will support music education over time.

Applications are considered in relation to overall demand, the strength of the request, available funds, and MusiCounts' commitment to supporting schools and students with the greatest need.

Some applications may receive additional review to determine whether the applicant would benefit from expert mentorship or implementation support. This may include considering whether the school has a strong vision for music education, but needs support shaping the request, identifying appropriate materials or supports, or planning for early implementation.

Demand for support is consistently high, and not all eligible applications can be funded. In 2026, approximately 30% of Innovation Fund applications were supported.

To continue to ensure that we are reaching the highest need programs across the country, MusiCounts does not use AI to assist in the adjudication of grant applications.



Using AI in your MusiCounts Grant Application

AI is a rapidly evolving tool that can be helpful in preparing grant applications. MusiCounts does not prohibit the use of AI as a supportive tool; however, applicants must declare any AI use in their application and are expected to use such tools with discretion.

Through our adjudication process, we seek out applications that demonstrate a thorough knowledge of music education, a detailed plan for how the requested instruments will be utilized, and an understanding of the unique needs of their student community. In recent years it has become clear to MusiCounts that applications written with AI tools contain similar language and style, which can dilute the uniqueness, originality, and strength of your request.

Simply put: if you rely too heavily on AI to generate your application, it will likely lack the nuance and detail MusiCounts requires to consider your application for approval. If you determine that your application is best served through the use of AI, please ensure that your application reflects your school's distinct identity, plans, and goals as they pertain to your request. Please also be aware that applicants are responsible for ensuring that all information submitted to MusiCounts is true, and all proposed plans are viable and actionable.

Tips for Submitting a Strong Application

Submit your Intake Form ASAP.

Once your [Intake Form](#) is submitted, you will be invited to create an account with the MusiCounts Grant Portal and access your full application form within two business days. The Intake Form should take no longer than 5 minutes to submit. Doing this early ensures that you will have access to your application for a longer period, allowing you more time to familiarize yourself with the questions and to submit a strong application.

Avoid talking about the broad benefits of music education.

No need to preach to the choir! We all know how important music education is for young people. In your application, direct your energy towards providing specific details about how music impacts the students at your school, rather than referencing research that reinforces the value of music education more broadly.

Address each question directly and concisely.

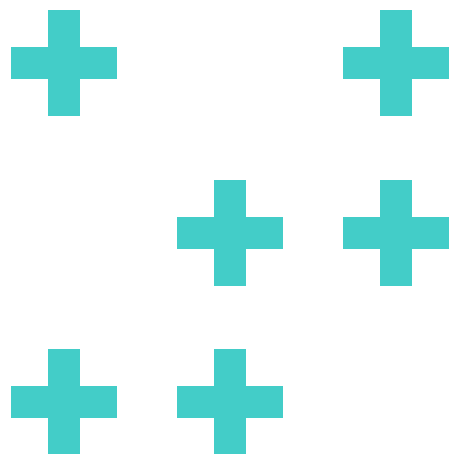
We advise that applicants get to the point in responding to questions in their application.

Ask for help.

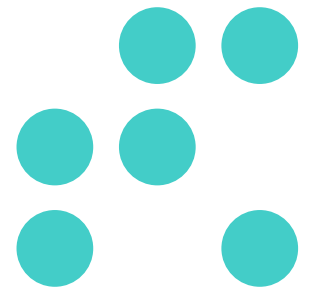
If there is anything at all that you are unsure about, please do not hesitate to reach out to the MusiCounts team for support or clarification. We're here to help.

If you have a strong vision for a music program but are unsure what instruments, equipment, resources, or supports are needed to bring it to life, please indicate this in your Intake Form. MusiCounts may identify applicants who would benefit from a more guided application pathway or expert mentorship.

[Click here](#) to schedule a virtual appointment with a member of the MusiCounts team, or send an email to applications@musiccounts.ca.



Frequently Asked Questions (FAQS)



Who can apply for the MusiCounts Slight Family Foundation Innovation Fund on behalf of the school?

Anyone can apply for the MusiCounts Slight Family Foundation Innovation Fund on behalf of the school music program; however, applications are typically submitted by the school music teacher, principal, or member of the parent council. Please make sure the music teacher and/or the principal at the school are aware of the application.

Can I apply for instruments that will be shared by multiple schools?

Absolutely! We welcome applications looking to share instruments amongst multiple schools. In your application, please apply on behalf of the school where the instruments will be stored and explain in your application how they will be shared amongst each school.

Should I apply using my school email?

Unfortunately, many school boards block email correspondence from MusiCounts. As a result, you **MUST** use a personal email when applying to any of our programs.

How long does it take to fill out an application?

This varies from applicant to applicant. The most important thing you can do is start early so you can familiarize yourself with the application expectations and allow yourself the time needed to complete the application without feeling rushed. The deadline is final and no extensions are granted.

Will I need to save my username and password?

Yes! If your school is selected to receive a grant, you will need your username and password to access your account. Please keep your username and password in a safe place so that you can access your account at any time.

How will I know that MusiCounts received my application?

Once you submit your application online, you will receive a confirmation email stating that we have received it.

What are the chances of my school being selected to receive a grant?

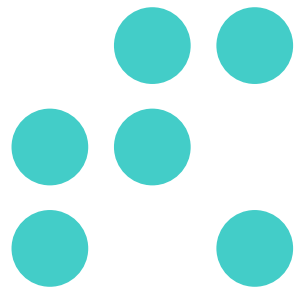
Though this varies from year to year based on the volume of applications received and funds available to allocate, approximately 30% of Innovation Fund applications were supported in 2026.

I have a strong vision for a music program, but I'm not sure exactly what to request. Can I still apply?

Yes. Some applicants may know that music education is needed at their school, but may need support figuring out the right program model, instruments, equipment, resources, clinician support, or implementation steps.

Through the Intake Form, MusiCounts may identify applicants who would benefit from a more guided application pathway. For some successful applicants, grant funds may be paired with expert mentorship to help refine the request and support early implementation.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQS)



There is no full-time music teacher at my school. Am I still eligible to apply?

Yes. We encourage schools to apply so long as there is a committed person in charge of leading the programming at the school. This can be a teacher, administrator, school support staff member, or community member, so long as they are endorsed and supported by school administration.

If your school would benefit from expert mentorship or support determining how to implement the program, please indicate this in your [Intake Form](#).

My school is located in a remote or isolated fly-in community. Will MusiCounts assist with shipping costs?

If your school is located in a remote fly-in community, please let us know! We recognize that schools in remote communities may be subject to shipping costs that are prohibitively expensive. While funds from our grants cannot be used to pay for shipping costs directly, MusiCounts may be in a position to reduce or subsidize shipping costs in these exceptional circumstances, so please reach out to us.

When will the recipients be announced?

We will notify all applicants by no later than the summer of 2027.

I accidentally submitted an incomplete application. What do I do?

Please note that adjustments cannot be made following the final application deadline. However, if you submit accidentally before the final deadline, please reach out to applications@musiccounts.ca.

Contact Info

If you have any questions, experience issues with the grant portal, or would like to request accommodations, please reach out to the MusiCounts Programs team by email at applications@musiccounts.ca.

