



Community
Initiatives Fund

Reshaping Community Programming

By the Community Initiatives Fund

COVID-19 has presented many unexpected challenges for Saskatchewan organizations. Community program and service providers continue to adapt their programs and activities as they respond to the pandemic. Organizations are creating innovative approaches to programming to ensure critical services and quality of life programs are still offered to communities in a safe and socially distanced manner. This may include modifying programs to be delivered online, providing instruction for take-home activities, or reducing in-person participant numbers to adhere to the [Re-Open Saskatchewan Plan](#) and meet public health recommendations.

As a grant provider in Saskatchewan, the [Community Initiatives Fund \(CIF\)](#) has received a number of program modification requests from grantees. The most common approach to date is to adapt in-person programs to be delivered virtually through online platforms. These virtual programs tend to be delivered through a combination of live online programming efforts, pre-recorded activity tutorials and/or the use of supplemental at-home activity kits for participants. Organizations should remain mindful of program accessibility, effective communication strategies, impact and evaluation as well as collaboration opportunities when modifying programming for a virtual audience. **CIF has gathered some tips, tools, and questions to consider:**

How to ensure your online programming remains accessible

- Who is your intended audience and what is the best inclusive way to reach them? Do participants have access to internet and technology? Do participants require visual or audible support? Can your program provide alternatives such as activity kits, closed captioning, and/or other supports for those with limited access?
- Determine which online platform (e.g. [Zoom](#), [Discord](#), [Miro](#), [Facebook](#), etc.) is best-suited for delivering your program content. Keep in mind scheduling and flexibility. Would live sessions, recorded content, or a combination of both work best to reach participants? For example, if folks are not able to attend programming during a specific time, having it recorded and available can increase accessibility and reach.
- Make things easy for participants. What information, materials and/or supports can be provided to participants beforehand?
- Create a friendly space for participants to engage. Keep virtual meeting opportunities short (20-30 min) or build in more opportunities for breaks. Are you able to create opportunities for participants to unplug from technology? What would create the best experience for participants? Continue to check in with participants to learn about their experience.

Collecting impact data and evaluating programming

- To collect data such as number of participants, you can track registrations, the number of activity kits provided, the number of people who join your zoom session, Facebook likes, YouTube views, etc. If possible, collect participant demographics such as whether your program is reaching early years, children, teens, youth, adults, older adults, families, etc.
- Evaluating your programming provides an opportunity for the organization to reflect on the project, share program successes, and reflect on where improvements could be made. Evaluating programming and tracking metrics can help with improving, refining, or developing programming, can demonstrate accountability, and can help monitor the success and program effectiveness. Online surveys would be one way of reaching online participants for feedback.

Best practices for communicating about programming in this ever-changing landscape

- Be sure to keep your modes of communication up-to-date as your programs shift to keep in line with public health recommendations.
- Provide clear and focused information or program changes in as many places as possible including on your website, in e-updates, and on social media. Deliver facts and instructions that are as complete as possible.
- Let participants know exactly what your program will do. What else do you want your participants to know before, during, and after programming?
- Ensure potential participants can easily reach you by email or phone to ask questions.
- Check out '[A tip sheet for nonprofits and charities: Communications during COVID-19](#)'.

Connect and share with other organizations

- **[Join our Private Facebook Group!](#)** How has your organization adapted programming in response to COVID? Do you know of resources or tools to help nonprofit organizations adapt their programming? Join our Private Facebook Group! We have created a space for Saskatchewan community program and service providers to share best practices, ask questions, network, collaborate, provide support for one another, and build connections across the province. We encourage you to start conversations, exchange ideas, ask questions, and share your success stories with each other.

Below is a list of tools, guides, examples, and informative resources to use when creating and delivering your programming this summer and beyond.

Public health orders change often, so be sure to always follow current provincial recommendations to ensure the health and safety of all.

- [Re-Open Saskatchewan](#)
- [Public Health Recommendations](#)
- [SPRA Re-Opening Parks and Recreation in Saskatchewan: COVID-19 Best Practices](#)
- [Innovation in the Time of COVID-19: Creative Alternatives to In-person Arts-based Activities](#)
- [Culture Days Programming Ideas](#)
- [9 Ways Charities and Nonprofits are Adapting to COVID-19 by Imagine Canada](#)

