

Reciprocity Health Fund Grant Recipients 2025

Total Granted to 2025 Applicants: \$217,981

Total Granted in 2025 (includes 2023 & 2024 multi-year funding recipient): \$324,461

Acadia University and Shelburne County Community Health Board - \$22,281

This participatory action research project extends a Community Health Board initiative examining how socio-economic factors affect well-being. This study focuses on barriers that prevent some Shelburne residents from accessing essentials like nutritious food, safe housing, transportation, and mental health support. Through focus groups, workshops, and evaluations, it will amplify community voices, strengthen dialogue with service providers, and co-develop strategies to improve access and well-being. It also aims to build trust between providers and underrepresented groups.

AOK (Acts of Kindness) Society - \$20,000 (Renewable for three years)

This project provides and coordinates meals, food, and basic necessities for homeless, lonely, and vulnerable individuals in the Yarmouth area. It currently delivers an average of 700 meals every Saturday, with plans to expand to additional days and reach a broader area. Cooking events are being developed to build community and offer opportunities for learning, including sessions on budgeting, healthy eating, and preparing cultural dishes, as well as events focused on cooking meals for freezing and distribution. In collaboration with partner organizations, 22 community pantries have been placed between Clare and Barrington, with a goal of keeping them regularly stocked so that food is always available. Alongside food support, the project fosters social connection. Volunteer visits often provide essential companionship and informal mental health check-ins, especially for those who rarely see others. Many individuals who once avoided interaction are now building relationships, participating in shared meals, and contributing as volunteers, creating a stronger sense of community.

Aidaen Mae Fund - \$6,700

This project supports youth ages 9 to 18 through resilience-building and life skills education, recognizing the importance of community and family involvement in helping young people thrive. The initiative will bring 12 to 15 youth on a nature-based, resilience-focused weekend at Birchdale Lake Retreat. Supported by a paramedic, lifeguard, five paid staff, and over a dozen trained volunteers, participants will engage in activities such as after-dark nature



walks, campfires, resilience workshops, yoga, swimming, boating, nature therapy, and guided self-reflection. Youth in the Tri-Counties of Nova Scotia face limited access to mental and physical health resources. This program addresses the growing disconnection from nature and the missed opportunities to develop essential coping skills. The Reciprocity Health Fund will cover this project in full.

Autism Nova Scotia – South West Chapter - \$24,000 in 2025 and \$26,000 in 2026

This fund for the South-West Chapter of Autism Nova Scotia will continue their Program Facilitator Project, launched in 2024, which supports social and recreational programming across Yarmouth, Digby, and Shelburne counties. This part-time role has significantly improved community connection, belonging, and independence for Autistic individuals of all ages, while also providing vital respite for families and caregivers. Rooted in the social determinants of health, the project aligns with promoting community well-being by meeting individuals where they are, offering inclusive, person-centered programs, and amplifying Autistic voices through community-led leadership. Over the next two years, the goal is to expand these supports, build capacity, and reach new members of the Autistic community. Funding from the Reciprocity Health Fund will contribute to Program Facilitator wages, admin costs, and professional development.

Digby & Area Community Gardens Society - \$44,500 (Renewable for three years)

The Digby & Area Community Gardens Society promotes organic farming, food security, and community well-being by supporting education, social connection, and mental health. The Society enables community participation in sustainability and stewardship. The project aims to reduce reliance on stores and food banks by helping people grow their own food while fostering inclusion and healthy activity. It especially benefits seniors, low-income families, children, immigrants, and people with disabilities. Outcomes include improved soil and crop yields through organic methods, stronger community partnerships, and greater involvement of low-income families in gardening, with plans to develop satellite gardens and regional collaborations.

LungNSPEI - \$11,000

This project aims to increase equitable access to virtual pulmonary rehabilitation for low-income Nova Scotians, helping them better manage lung disease and improve quality of life. LungNSPEI will subsidize one-year memberships to the iMaster Health premium plan to remove cost and geographic barriers, especially for residents of the Tri-Counties who face



added challenges due to the location of specialized services. Since only 1% of those who need pulmonary rehab currently receive it, this program addresses financial disparities that worsen lung health outcomes among lower-income groups. It will also benefit long-term care homes by potentially improving resident health and easing local health service demands.

Schools Plus - \$2,000

The grant will fund fuel cards to help families facing financial barriers attend medical and community appointments. Rising fuel costs often prevent access to essential services, so these cards ensure families can reach healthcare, employment, housing, and food support when other resources are unavailable or limited.

Shelburne County Youth Health and Support Association - \$17,000

Shelburne County Youth Health and Support Association works to promote youth health by addressing social determinants of health and empowering young people to build positive relationships and contribute to their communities. The proposed community kitchen at Barrington Community Care and Recovery Centre will provide a welcoming space for residents to connect, share meals, and celebrate cultural traditions while improving access to healthy, affordable food. This project aims to enhance food security, foster social inclusion, and support newcomers and long-time residents through shared cooking and dining experiences. The \$17,000 grant will be used to purchase appliances (two ranges, larger capacity fridge, industrial dishwasher, fans and other small appliances) to support this initiative.

Sou'West Nova Transit - \$5,500

Sou'West Nova Transit provides accessible, door-to-door transportation for Shelburne County residents, focusing on those facing barriers related to age, health, mobility, or finances. This new pilot program aims to identify underserved groups, raise awareness of transit services, and offer targeted subsidies to encourage use. By helping people access medical appointments, food, education, and social activities affordably, the program seeks to improve overall health and reduce the stress of transportation challenges. Funding will support subsidies for new riders and engagement sessions with community groups to broaden the program's reach and impact.

The Youth Project - \$25,000

The Youth Project has supported Nova Scotia's 2SLGBTQIA+ community since 1993, promoting safety, health, and well-being through education, resources, and community development. Queer Provisions is a pilot program for 2SLGBTQIA+ youth aged 14-25 in the Tri-County area. It offers hybrid mental health events, educational programs, and one-on-one peer support focused on queer identity, harm reduction, HIV, mental health, and navigating gender-affirming healthcare. The program uses peer-led, creative approaches, including arts activities and community outings, to build supportive spaces that reduce isolation and empower youth. Working with local GSA networks and community partners, the program aims to strengthen peer support and connection for youth.

Thriving Together Society - \$25,000

The Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) Program provides support, resources, and education to those affected by intimate partner violence. Its goals are to raise awareness through workshops and outreach, offer confidential counselling, legal help, and safety planning, and empower survivors with skill-building workshops and education. The program aims to reduce the impact of IPV and build healthier, more resilient communities in the Tri-Counties. The IPV Program benefits survivors, families, youth, service providers, law enforcement, and the wider community by fostering awareness and support. This grant from the Reciprocity Health Fund will support personnel costs, program delivery, materials and supplies, and administrative costs.

Yarmouth Wesleyan Church - \$15,000

The *We've Got Your Backpacks Program* helps reduce local food insecurity by providing healthy food backpacks weekly to students in Yarmouth Town and County and the Municipality of Argyle. Backpacks are distributed on Thursdays at schools including Yarmouth Elementary, Meadowfields, Yarmouth High, and others, to support students when school meals aren't available. Food insecurity forces families to make tough choices between food and other essentials. Feedback shows the program makes a real difference by ensuring children have snacks and nutritious meals at home. The program serves students aged 5-18 and their families, with schools selecting recipients to ensure backpacks reach those in need. For 2025-2026, the goal is to deliver up to 75 backpacks weekly and provide gift cards for school breaks.