Frequently Asked Questions

National Social Purpose Real Estate (SPRE) Accelerator, 2027

The Accelerator Program is a six-month, project-based program focused on advancing a specific development project. The program helps organizations develop project details and pursue partnerships, financing, and support from funders, investors, and government agencies.

Applications for the 2027 Winter cohort are due November 20, 2027. Learn more about the program below.

About the program

What is the National SPRE Accelerator Program?

The SPRE Accelerator Program is a free, 6-month program for Canadian registered nonprofits or charities that are in the pre-development stage of social-purpose real estate projects.

The program goes beyond capacity to support organizations with drafting the project details they need to pitch projects to partners, funders, investors and government agencies. The curriculum explores all aspects of the development process and offers key pre-development support services, including business planning and project financing fundamentals.

The National SPRE Accelerator program will run from January to May 2027. Virtual sessions will take place bi-weekly. In total, there will be 10 core learning sessions. Outside of session time, organizations will have the option to advance their project through coursework books, receive mentorship from industry leaders and have access to resources through the program website.

Learn more on the Accelerator program webpage.

What inspired the program?

The program was created in 2022 to help close the gap between idea and action for mission-driven organizations seeking to develop or improve spaces that serve their communities. Social infrastructure, including affordable housing, community facilities, and cultural spaces, can be challenging, expensive, and risky to develop.

Accelerator helps organizations navigate the pre-development stage by clarifying their project vision, assessing organizational and financial feasibility, identifying partnerships and funding opportunities, and planning for long-term operations.

The program is intended for organizations that may not see real estate development as their primary purpose but view real estate as a way to advance their mission and better serve their communities.

When does the program take place?

The program includes 10 interactive virtual sessions:

- **Dates:**
  - Virtual Kick-off and Onboarding Session: December 10, 2026
  - Knowledge-based Sessions: January 14, 2027 to May 20, 2027.
- **Time:** Thursdays, biweekly, 1:00–3:00 p.m. Eastern Time.
- **Format:** Synchronous and virtual.

What is the time commitment?

Participants should expect to dedicate approximately **three to four hours per week** to Accelerator activities throughout the six-month program.

This includes:

- One two-hour live sessions bi-weekly for 6 months.
- Optional workbook activities and preparation between sessions.
- Attend 10 core sessions to advance learning
- Meetings with Mentors

How many representatives from each organization can participate?

One to three representatives from each organization may participate. Two to three representatives are encouraged where possible so that knowledge can be shared internally and the organization can maintain continuity if one participant is unavailable. Organizations may wish to include a combination of staff, board members, volunteers, or other key project representatives.

Does one person need to attend every session?

At least one representative from each organization should be able to attend all or nearly all of the sessions. The program is interactive, and participants benefit from engaging with facilitators, guest speakers, and other organizations in real time.

If a participant must miss one or two sessions because of illness or an unavoidable conflict, recordings and materials will be available. Organizations that cannot attend any live sessions may miss an important part of the program and should consider whether this is the right opportunity for them.

How many organizations will participate?

Approximately **15 to 20 organizations** will be accepted for this national cohort.

Is the program available in French?

All programming will be delivered in English. Applicants who have questions about participating in an English-language learning environment are encouraged to contact Raisa Masud, Project Lead at raisa.masud@utoronto.ca.

Applying to the Accelerator

How can I apply to the program?

Applications are submitted online through the National SPRE Accelerator Google Form. A PDF containing the application questions is available here to help applicants prepare their responses.

The PDF is for reference and drafting purposes only. **Please do not submit the PDF as your application.** Only applications submitted through the Google Form will be considered.

What is the application deadline?

Applications are due by **11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on Friday, November 20, 2026**.

When will applicants be notified about their application status?

All applicants will receive notification of their application status by **December 7, 2026.**

Who can I contact with questions?

Please contact Raisa Masud, Project Lead, SPRE Programs, at raisa.masud@utoronto.ca with questions about eligibility, the application, project fit, or participation.

Do I need a Google account to apply?

Applicants should be prepared to sign in with a Google account to submit the Google Form. Applications are submitted online through the National SPRE Accelerator Google Form

A PDF version of the application is available here to help applicants prepare their responses in advance, but only the Google Form submission will be considered.

Can I save the application and return to it later?

Applicants using a Google account may be able to save their progress and return to the form later. Please confirm that your responses have been saved before closing the form.

If you have trouble accessing or submitting the application, contact the program team.

How long does the application take to complete?

The application may take approximately **15 to 30 minutes** to complete.

What information is requested in the application?

The application includes four main areas:

- Organization and primary contact information.
- Project details, including site, funding, and partnership status.

- Advisory needs and areas of support the organization is seeking through the program.
- Program commitment.

If two organizations are working together on one project, should they submit separate applications?

No. Partner organizations working together on a joint project **must** submit one shared application. The application should identify the partner organization, explain the nature of the collaboration, and indicate which representatives from each organization would participate.

Eligibility and project fit

Who can apply to the National SPRE Accelerator Program?

The program is open to mission-driven organizations that:

- Are registered Canadian charities, nonprofits, or faith-based organizations.
- Are based in Canada. Organizations from all provinces and territories are eligible.
- Can commit to participating in the six-month program.
- Have a project concept **and** a confirmed project site to assess through the program.

The program will be delivered entirely in English. Francophone applicants are encouraged to consider their comfort participating in an English-language learning environment.

Applicants are also encouraged to complete the Infrastructure Institute's SPRE 101 video modules before participating.

What is Social Purpose Real Estate?

Social Purpose Real Estate (SPRE) is a term used in the planning and development sector to describe spaces developed, owned, or operated by mission-driven organizations to deliver social value and advance community well-being.

Examples include:

- Affordable or transitional housing.
- Shelters.
- Childcare facilities.
- Community spaces.
- Cultural spaces.
- Arts and creative hubs.
- Mixed-use projects that combine community-serving uses.
- The redevelopment, repurposing, or preservation of existing community facilities.

Learn more through the SPRE 101 video series.

What kinds of projects are eligible?

Any project being considered by a mission-driven organization to deliver social value or advance its mission may be eligible.

Previous projects have included childcare centres, arts spaces, community centres, cultural spaces, youth-serving facilities, disability justice initiatives, affordable housing, and community land trusts.

Examples of previous projects are available on the Infrastructure Institute website.

Are only housing projects eligible?

No. Housing-focused projects are eligible, but housing is not a requirement.

What types of organizations have participated previously?

Participants have included nonprofit, faith-based, and charitable organizations of different sizes, missions, and geographic contexts.

Examples include youth social service organizations, nonprofit arts hubs, cultural hubs, disability justice organizations, rural affordable housing societies, and community land trusts.

Since 2022, 218 projects have participated through the Infrastructure Institute's SPRE training programs, including 97 projects through Accelerator.

Is the program open to rural communities?

Yes. The National SPRE Accelerator Program is open to organizations in both rural and urban communities across Canada.

Can a small or volunteer-led organization participate?

Yes. Organizations of all sizes are encouraged to apply.

Ideally, at least two representatives, including one staff member and one board member, where applicable, will be able to attend the program sessions. This allows the organization to share knowledge internally and maintain continuity if one participant is unavailable.

Can a private individual apply without an associated organization?

Accelerator is designed to support mission-driven organizations through the pre-development process of a specific project.

Individuals who are interested in the program but do not currently represent a formal organization and have a project concept in mind should contact the project team to discuss their circumstances.

Do I need to have a confirmed project site?

Yes, a confirmed site is required to participate in the Accelerator program.

Do I need secured funding or project partners?

No. Organizations do not need secured funding, a finalized partnership, or a complete project team to apply.

If you already work with architects, developers, consultants, nonprofit organizations, or other partners, you can describe those relationships in the application.

Are organizations repurposing or redeveloping an existing building eligible?

Yes. The program welcomes organizations considering new development, renovation, redevelopment, repurposing, reconstruction, or preservation of an existing building or site.

Is the program appropriate for organizations that are not planning to become landlords, developers, or housing operators?

It depends on the organization's role and the proposed initiative. The program is primarily focused on organizations developing or redeveloping a specific real estate project.

An organization creating a platform or service to support other groups, for example, by arranging financing or partnerships to preserve community-serving properties, may be less aligned if its work is not connected to a specific development or redevelopment project.

Organizations with questions about fit are encouraged to contact the program team before applying.

Curriculum and outcomes

What topics are covered in the curriculum?

The curriculum explores key concepts across the pre-development stage, from project ideation and organizational planning to funding, partnerships, feasibility, and long-term sustainability. Sessions are as follows:

1. Virtual Mixer
2. Kickoff & Visioning
3. Building Your Foundation Capacity
4. Business Planning & Pro Forma Basics
5. Planning Foundations
6. Designing with Purpose
7. Legal Frameworks & Development Partnerships
8. Predevelopment Funding & Financing
9. Procurement + Development Management
10. Getting to Yes & Community Engagement
11. Project Pitches

Sessions are led by the interdisciplinary Infrastructure Institute team—including urban planners, designers, project managers, and researchers—in partnership with industry leaders who have experience taking SPRE projects from ideation through operation. The session descriptions are available in the Program Package.

What resources and support are included?

Participants will have access to:

- 10 facilitated knowledge-based learning sessions.
- 1:1 Mentorship from SPRE leaders in the subject area you are seeking support
- Weekly peer presentations, a tie to learn from national cohort members about challenges, successes and strategies
- Expert-led presentations and discussions.
- A dedicated program wiki, updated bi-weekly with session recordings, slides and curriculum materials.
- Additional real estate development resources for ongoing reference.
- Program workbooks to guide project planning between sessions.
- Practical tools for assessing organizational and project readiness.

What is the main outcome or deliverable?

By the end of the six-month program, participating organizations should have:

- A clearly articulated project concept that reflects community need and aligns with the organization's vision and strategic priorities
- A documented project roadmap and key next steps.
- A preliminary assessment of project feasibility, risks, and development requirements.
- A foundational business plan and operating model.
- A preliminary project budget and financing strategy.
- A clear understanding of potential funding and financing sources.
- A compelling project narrative and core information for approaching partners and funders.
- A targeted list of priority partners, stakeholders, and resources to help advance the project forward.
- A clearer understanding of organizational capacity gaps and support needs.
- A post-Accelerator action plan for advancing the project toward the next stage of development.

Mentorship and technical support

What does the mentorship component for this program look like?

The mentorship component will provide participating organizations with access to subject-matter experts across six key social-purpose real estate development pillars: Financing, Legal & Governance, Planning, Design, Development Management, Pro Forma, and Structure. Mentors will be recruited and confirmed before the program launches and will help co-design relevant portions of the curriculum. Over the six-month program, organizations will rotate through the mentor network, engaging with experts during each phase of the program to build knowledge, test ideas, and receive guidance specific to their projects.

Mentors will serve as both advisors and active contributors to the learning experience. They will lead sessions and labs, provide strategic guidance through structured touchpoints, participate in project feedback and working sessions, and support organizations as they advance their projects. Mentors will also contribute to the final pitch evaluation, helping organizations strengthen their projects and prepare to communicate their opportunities effectively to potential partners, funders, investors, and government agencies.

Funding and changing government programs

Will the program provide information about funding opportunities?

Yes. The program will help participants identify potential funding strategies and opportunities as part of their broader project planning.

Because government programs, eligibility requirements, and available funding can change, the program team cannot guarantee that a specific funding opportunity will be available or that an organization will qualify.

Will the program provide up-to-date information about government funding?

The team does its best to monitor changes and will bring in knowledgeable representatives and practitioners where possible. However, the Infrastructure Institute cannot speak on behalf of governments or guarantee the accuracy or continuation of any funding program.

Participants should verify current requirements directly with funders before making financial or project decisions.

Can the program help organizations navigate funding challenges affecting churches and other faith-based organizations?

The program does not provide partisan political advice or make funding decisions on behalf of governments. It can share general information, examples, and strategies that may help organizations understand a changing funding environment. This may include discussion of partnerships, organizational structures, portfolios, and approaches used by other mission-driven organizations. Organizations should obtain independent legal, financial, and tax advice before restructuring assets or creating a related organization.

Materials and follow-up

Will the presentation slides and recording be available after the information session?

Yes. The presentation portion of the information session will be recorded. The slide deck, recording, and FAQ document will be shared with participants and made available through the Infrastructure Institute's website. The Q&A portion is not recorded; key questions and responses are reflected in this FAQ.

Where can I find more information?

More information about the program, application process, curriculum, and related opportunities is available through the Infrastructure Institute website.

You can also review the SPRE 101 video modules and examples of previous projects on the 2025 cohort webpage.

For questions, contact Raisa Masud, Project Lead, SPRE Programs, at raisa.masud@utoronto.ca.

Who supports the program?

The program is made possible through support from:

- Community Housing Transformation Centre. Learn more
- United Way Greater Toronto. Learn more
- The Catherine Donnelly Foundation. Learn more
- RBC Foundation. Learn more