

## Program Guidelines

### OVERVIEW

Bow Habitat Station (BHS) coordinates the provincially delivered Fish in Schools (FinS) Program. This program currently provides students and teachers with a unique and immersive learning opportunity to raise rainbow trout in their schools. Additionally, this program enables participants to learn first hand about Alberta's fish, fisheries management practices, aquatic ecosystems health and threats, among other related topics.

Over a five-month period (January through May), students and teachers maintain aquarium systems and monitor fish health and the development of 65 rainbow trout. Students directly participate in fish care and raise the fish from egg to fry, closely following terms of their Fish Research Licence and the FinS Technical Manual. Students are encouraged to make the connections between fish and their local environment by stocking their school raised-fish into a provincially approved water body. The interactive involvement in the program leads students to consider and identify the potential impacts of their actions on their local environments.

FinS aligns with learning objectives identified in Alberta Education's Program of Studies at every grade level (K-12). The program also provides a platform for direct delivery of AEP priority education and messaging related to topics including but not limited to biodiversity, water, water quality, ecosystem role and values, aquatic invasive species, species at risk, whirling disease, climate change, responsible recreation and environmental stewardship.

### PROGRAM GOAL

FinS will help to foster an awareness and appreciation of Alberta's fish species, and demonstrate the importance of supporting healthy aquatic ecosystems. Throughout the program, students and teachers will work together to:

- Maintain a healthy aquarium environment for trout, from egg to fry, providing all requirements of a natural aquatic habitat;
- Release rainbow trout fry into an approved provincial waterbody;
- Study and investigate trout life cycles and stages, habitats, needs and adaptations;
- Learn about Alberta's fish and threats to their survival;
- Develop an awareness of human impacts and actions on aquatic ecosystems.

### ELIGIBILITY AND REQUIREMENTS

Schools applying to the FinS program require must meet the following requirements:

- School must be within Alberta;
- Two school coordinators (staff applicants); at least one of whom is a teacher or other permanent role (e.g. librarian, assistant principal, etc.). If application is accepted both applicants will be referred to as School Coordinators;
- Consent from the school principal (signature required); and
- Remain in good standing with FinS (past participants only); and
- The school agrees to take financial responsibility of purchasing start up (~\$1,500) and maintaining aquarium equipment, field trip costs and other associated costs; and
- Advise the FinS Coordinator of any media involvement in your project; and
- Signed Application form acknowledging important program dates and guidelines.

FinS is a time intensive program. School Coordinators have diverse responsibilities throughout the FinS program, outlined under the following section titled **Structure and Roles**. Be sure that you read and fully understand these responsibilities prior to submitting your Application Form.

Your classroom aquarium and trout will require daily monitoring and care while trout are present regardless of school closures and holidays. Submission of critical program documents and reports are required components of the program, starting prior to egg delivery in January and ending following your FinS Fish release event. If School Coordinators fail to meet key deadlines, their standing in the program will be impacted and they may not be eligible to participate in the FinS program in subsequent years.

### STRUCTURE AND ROLES

FinS is coordinated from BHS in Calgary. The FinS Project Team includes school coordinators, students and AEP staff from across the province, including fisheries biologists, fisheries technicians, and education & engagement specialists. Everyone has key roles to play to ensure fish health as well as maintaining, planning and reporting on all aspects of the program.

## FINS PROGRAM TEAM

The Fins Program Team is responsible for all elements of the program, including planning, development of program and training resources, troubleshooting and program delivery.

- The FinS Coordinator and provincial fisheries biologists will coordinate fish egg delivery for the program as well as release event dates, and locations in advance.

## SCHOOL COORDINATORS

The two applicants from each participating school must be designated as School Coordinators on the program application. Both School Coordinators are responsible for the project and meeting program requirements, including:

- setting up and maintaining the aquarium;
- coordinating egg pick-up/delivery;
- coordinating egg delivery supplies is sent back to BHS;
- maintaining a healthy aquarium environment;
- maintaining care of fish;
- participating in release event training during April/May; Water testing resources will be provided to schools with annual supplies.
- coordinating the class/school's participation and transportation for the release of their fish into a provincially-approved water body;
- delivery of fish release event, as per training and program plan provided by the FinS Coordinator, into a provincially-approved water body;
- submitting required program documents; and
- Meeting the terms of a Fish Research Licence.
- At least one school coordinator per project is required to attend a mandatory training session in order to deliver their school's fish release event.

## PROGRAM DETAILS

Project applications are due no later than September 30 (see section: Important Dates). New and returning program participants must fill out an application form on an annual basis.

Approval by the FinS Coordinator is required in advance in the event that one of the past participating School Coordinators wishes to transfer their current participation status to a new teacher within the same school. Please contact the FinS Coordinator before the application deadline to make this request.

## FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

New program participants are required to purchase the required aquarium equipment and any necessary replacement parts thereafter. The cost of a new aquarium system is approximately \$1500. The full equipment list will be provided to schools upon their acceptance into the program.

Returning participants may use existing systems; however, upgrades may be required. Upgrade requirements will be determined based on equipment failures, success rates and/or other factors. This will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. Any equipment upgrade purchases will be the responsibility of the school. Annual program supplies will be provided at no cost to participating schools.

Schools are welcome to seek sponsorship for their school's project at their own discretion.



## Fee Structure

### SCHOOL COMMITMENT INCLUDES:



#### START-UP

- Aquarium system acquisition (specifications provided, approximate cost \$1500)



#### SUPPLIES

- Disinfectants (vinegar & bleach)
- Equipment maintenance and replacement
- Replacement aquarium gravel



#### SERVICES

- Release event fees, including bussing
- Return shipping of egg delivery equipment

### PROGRAM COMMITMENT INCLUDES:



#### SUPPLIES

- Annual aquarium consumables
  - filter media
  - fish food
  - water conditioners
  - water quality tests
- Fish Research Licences
- Trout eggs and egg delivery equipment



#### SERVICES

- Access to online FinS Education portal: educational and training resources, troubleshooting support
- Program coordination, including biologist approval to raise and release fish
- Shipping fees for annual supplies & trout eggs

Participating schools are required to cover any and all other financial costs associated with the program, including but not limited to equipment and document returns, bussing, and fish release events.

## EGG DELIVERY

School Coordinators are expected to coordinate egg delivery arrangements with the FinS coordinator in advance. In some cases, eggs are shipped to a pre-selected AEP office, and are to be picked up the same day by the School Coordinators. Egg delivery details will be arranged and communicated in December/January.

Approximately sixty-five eggs are delivered to each project. Fish Research Licences will be mailed either

before or with your eggs. School Coordinators must sign both and retain one copy for their records. A signed, digital copy must be returned to the FinS coordinator.

At the time of egg delivery, the Egg Delivery Sheet must be completed with detailed information about the water quality and egg condition. This form will be delivered with your eggs and must be returned to the FinS Coordinator along with a signed copy of the Fish Research Licence and egg delivery supplies (e.g. thermos, cooler and ice packs). See section: Important Dates.

### **TROUBLE SHOOTING AND MAINTENANCE**

FinS projects must be monitored daily regardless of holidays or school closures, as per the [FinS Technical Manual](#).

School coordinators will have access to an online FinS Education Portal, where they can access training resources, as well as connect with the FinS team to assist with troubleshooting issues beyond what is listed in the FinS Technical Manual.

For preventative measures, participants must ensure that maintenance or custodial staff are aware of the project so units are not accidentally unplugged. It is also recommended that School Coordinators have an emergency plan in the event that the aquarium loses power as a result of a power outage.

Fish health is dependent upon many factors and some mortality is expected to occur. If a project has an extensive mortality rate (>80%) for two consecutive years, a review will be conducted to determine possible solutions. This review may require documented information that School Coordinators must maintain throughout the project.

### **RELEASE OF FISH**

The FinS team and school coordinators are expected to coordinate the time, date and location of release of the fish at the end of the project (mid-May to early June). The School Coordinators will deliver the release event. At least one school coordinator from

each FinS project is required to attend FinS Release Event Training, offered virtually in April – May. In the event that a school does not maintain surviving fry, School Coordinators must advise the FinS Coordinator.

An AEP employee must make final approval of the release site, a provincial water body. This information will be documented on the FinS Final Project Report form.

Following the release event, the aquarium system and all program equipment must be disinfected as outlined in the FinS Technical. The Final Project Report Form must be completed and submitted to the FinS Coordinator (see section: Important Dates for deadlines).

### **PLANNING FOR NEXT YEAR**

Schools wishing to continue participating in the FinS program must apply annually by submitting an Application Form. Deadline for submission is September 30.

Participants that do not wish to continue participating in the program for the following season are required to fill out a Withdrawal Form and submit it to the FinS Team as soon as possible.

The FinS Team will contact all past participants before the application deadline as a reminder to send in their application forms.

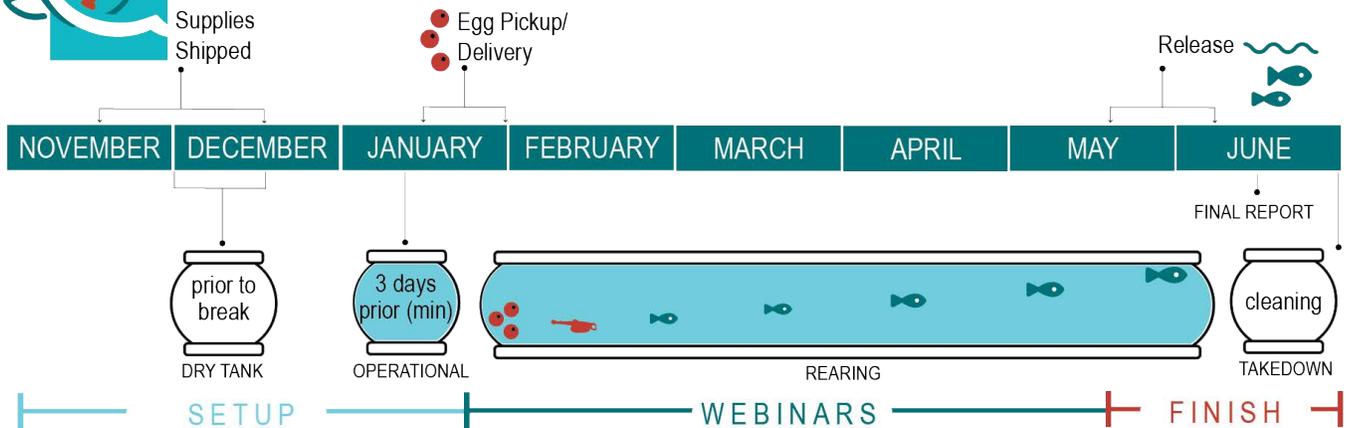
### **CONTACT INFORMATION**

FinS Education Portal:  
<https://talkaep.alberta.ca/fish-in-schools>

Bow Habitat Station Website:  
<http://bowhabitat.alberta.ca/>

FinS Email  
[Fins.program@gov.ab.ca](mailto:Fins.program@gov.ab.ca)

# FinS Timelines



The following dates are a general timeline only and subject to change.

<b>September</b>	Last day to submit Application form or Suspension & Withdrawal Form.
<b>Mid October</b>	All applying schools will be notified of their application status.
<b>October to November</b>	Annual supplies are shipped. Teacher training for the FinS program, recommended for new schools, optional for returning schools.
<b>December, before winter break</b>	Complete set up of FinS Aquarium System, without water, to ensure all equipment is present.
<b>January, after winter break</b>	Complete set up of FinS Aquarium System, with water flowering. Water must flow for at least 3 days prior to releasing FinS eggs into aquarium.
<b>Mid January</b>	Eggs delivered to schools –third/fourth week of January.
<b>End of February</b>	Egg delivery forms/FRL/delivery equipment return due
<b>April-May</b>	Teacher training for FinS release events, required.
<b>Mid-May to Early June</b>	FinS release events
<b>End of June</b>	Final Project Report form due