



# **Module: Exploring Effective Budgeting**

This module covers how to create a personal budget that fits one's financial starting point and goals. It includes exploring budgeting methods and strategies, learning to track income and expenses, and adjusting a budget to stay on track.

# About CanWork BC

CanWork BC aims to make it easier for youth with disabilities ages 15 to 30 years old to find and keep employment. There are a series of tools and resources for youth, employers, service providers, educators, and caregivers.

CanAssist at the University of Victoria, with the support of the BC Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction, wrote the Provincial Employment Strategy for Youth with Disabilities (ESYD). This strategy informed the tools and resources.

## The Youth Tool

The CanWork BC youth tool is available as an interactive online platform at [portal.canworkbc.ca](http://portal.canworkbc.ca) and through PDF workbooks such as this one. There are five dimensions of content available.

For the full PDF workbook content and accompanying facilitator guides, as well as other CanWork BC tools and resources, go to [canworkbc.ca](http://canworkbc.ca).

# Introduction

This module has three sections to help you build skills to create and stick to a budget. You'll explore:

- Creating a budget that works for you.
- Building skills to stick to a budget.
- Identifying financial support options if you're having trouble budgeting your finances.

Each section will take around 15-30 minutes to complete, and you're welcome to take breaks in between.

Each section has activities that connect money management to your own life to make sure this is useful for you. Be prepared to think about and record your answers in whatever way works best. That could be writing your answers in this workbook or using a different format that works for you like voice recording or typing in a notes app.

At the end of the module, you'll have the chance to put what you've learned into practice with reflection questions. Let's get started!

# Section 1: Creating a Budget

A budget is a system that helps you manage your money by planning where your money goes and keeping track of your income and expenses. It allows you to make informed decisions about your spending and save for important goals. Creating a budget is an important part of your employment journey because it gives you control over your finances, helps you handle changes in your income, and prepares you for what's coming up.

## **In this section, we'll cover:**

- Identifying your financial priorities to create a budget.
- Building strategies to use your budget.
- Exploring financial support options for when they are needed.

By the end of this section, you will have a better understanding of how to create a budget that works for you. Let's get started!

## **Engage and Explore**

### **What is a Budget?**

A budget is a plan for your money. It helps you keep track of what you earn, spend, and save. Think of it as a tool to guide your financial decisions so you can reach your goals.

Budgeting is important because it helps you:

- Know where your money is going.
- Save for things that matter to you.

- Avoid spending more than you earn.

It gives you control and confidence over your finances!

## Ways to Budget

There are different ways to budget. This includes types of budgets and approaches to budgeting. Different things work for different people and figuring out what works well for you is important.

Use the flip cards below to explore common types of budgets. Read the type of budget on the front and click on the card to reveal what it is.

Approach	Description
<b>Fixed budget</b>	Focuses on steady, predictable income and expenses.
<b>Flexible budget</b>	Adapts as your income or spending changes.
<b>Digital budget</b>	Use apps or spreadsheets to track everything automatically.

Great! Now that you've looked at different types of budgets let's explore different ways to allocate your money to them. Use the flip

cards below to explore common approaches to budgeting. Read the approach on the front and click on the card to reveal more about it.

Type	Description
<b>50/30/20</b>	Spend 50% on needs, 30% on wants, and save 20%.
<b>Envelope method</b>	Use envelopes of cash for specific categories such as groceries, rent, or entertainment. Once the envelope is empty, you stop spending in that category.
<b>Zero-based budgeting</b>	Every dollar of income is assigned a purpose. Your income minus your expenses, savings, and investments will equal <b>zero</b> at the end of the month. This means you plan for every dollar. If there's extra money, you allocate it to savings, debt repayment, or other priorities.

Now that you've explored some different ways of budgeting let's take some time to reflect on them.

# Make it Personal

## Setting Financial Priorities

Now that you've explored what a budget is and why it's important, it's time to make it personal. Follow these steps to create a budget that works for you.

Let's start by considering your financial priorities. This means thinking about what's most important to you when it comes to money.

### Tip

Remember, priorities aren't the only thing you should be using your money for. They just mean that's where you should consider budgeting a bit more or where you should direct extra money if you have any.

Use the question and instructions below to identify your financial priorities.

Question 1: Are your bills covered, yes or no?	
<b>Yes:</b> Continue to the next question.	<b>No:</b> Covering your essential expenses is your suggested financial priority.

### **Tips for covering essential expenses:**

- Try focusing on lowering your expenses where possible and increasing your income.
- Try tracking your spending to see if there are any areas where you can cut back.
- Look at different budgeting methods to help you manage your income and expenses.

### **Question 2: Do you have a three to six month security fund, yes or no?**

**Yes:** Continue to the next question.

**No:** Building a security fund is your suggested financial priority.

### **Tips for building a security fund:**

- Aim to save three to six months' worth of essential expenses in a separate, easily accessible account.
- Start small. Setting aside even a small amount regularly can help build your fund over time.
- Consider automating your savings so a portion of your income goes directly into your security fund.



**Question 3: Do you have any high-interest debt, yes or no?**

**Yes:** Paying off any debt with an interest rate of 10% or higher is your suggested financial priority.

**No:** Continue to the next question.

**Tips for paying off high-interest debt:**

- Focus on paying off debts with the highest interest rates first (like credit cards or payday loans).
- Consider the snowball method (paying off the smallest debts first for motivation) or the avalanche method (paying off the highest interest debts first to save money).
- If possible, look into consolidating or refinancing your debt to lower your interest rates.

**Question 4: Is there anything you're saving up for in the coming years, yes or no?**

<p><b>Yes:</b> Prioritizing savings for short- and long-term goals is your suggested financial priority.</p>	<p><b>No:</b> Your other financial priorities are covered! Your suggested priority is investing your money.</p>
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### Tips for prioritizing short- and long-term savings:

- Determine your savings priorities, whether it's education, travel, a car, or a down payment on a home.
- Use separate savings accounts or categories for different goals to stay organized.

### Tips for investing your money:

- Consider investing in a TFSA or RRSP for long-term savings growth.

*This financial priorities activity is largely based on Ellyce Fulmore's, 2022, Financial Priorities Flowchart available through [queerdco.com](https://queerdco.com).*

## Creating a Budget

Now that you have a clearer idea of where to focus your money. Use the steps below to help you create a budget. Follow the steps below and write your answers below or in a notes app or another digital format that works for you.

## 1. Calculate your monthly income

The next step is to figure out how much money you have coming in. Include any sources of income, like paycheques, allowances, side hustles, or government benefits.

### Tip

If you need help calculating your income visit *Section 3* on income and expenses in the *Setting a Financial Foundation* module.

**Think:** The amount of money I have coming in is...

## 2. Track your spending

Look at how much you spend in a typical month to allocate your money to the things you need.

**Tip**

If you need help looking at how much you spend in a month visit *Section 1* on Spending in the *Building Money Management Skills* module.

**Think:** The amount of money I spend in a typical month is...

**3. Set Your budget categories**

Using what you learned, set your budgeting categories and list your expenses under each one to decide how much to allocate to each one. Write your answers in the table below or in a notes app or another digital format that works for you.

**Tip**

Remember, it's okay to adjust as you go. Make sure your expenses don't exceed your income!

*Example:*

Category 1: Groceries
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Regular Grocery Shops</li><li>• Costco</li><li>• Pet Food</li></ul>

### Your Categories

Category 1: Groceries

Category 2: Transportation

**Category 3: Personal spending**

**Category 4: Recreation and entertainment**

**Category 5: Monthly bills**

**Category 6: Savings and debt repayment**

**Category 7: Other**

#### 4. Track your progress

Create a system to track your spending and savings. Use the chart below or a different method that works for you. Consider a budgeting app or reminders to help.

Purchase	Cost	Date	Category	Notes





Spending Categories				Total Spent
<b>Groceries</b> <i>Examples: Grocery stores, meal kits, or pet food.</i>				
<b>Transportation</b> <i>Examples: Fuel, parking, bus cost, or taxis.</i>				
<b>Personal spending</b> <i>Examples: Clothing, personal care, or cosmetics.</i>				
<b>Recreation and Entertainment</b> <i>Example: Eating out, events, or travel.</i>				
<b>Monthly bills</b> <i>Examples: Rent, insurance, or phone bills.</i>				
<b>Savings and debt repayment</b> <i>Examples: Investment contribution or car payment.</i>				
<b>Other (any other expenses)</b>				

Great work making a budget! It can seem daunting at first, but consistency is key. The more you do it the easier it gets.

## Section 2: Developing a Budgeting Strategy

Now that you've created your budget, it's time to focus on sticking to it! The key to making a budget work is consistently following it and adjusting when needed. Sticking to your budget can help you stay on track with your financial goals and avoid overspending. It's not just about the numbers. It's about building habits and setting up systems that make it easier to manage your money day-to-day.

**In this section, we'll cover:**

- Strategies for keeping on top of tracking your money and sticking to your budget.
- Strategies for handling changes like unexpected expenses.
- Strategies for reflecting on your approach and adjusting as needed.

By the end of this section, you will have a better understanding of practical strategies to help you stick to your budget and feel more confident. Let's get started!

### Engage and Explore

#### Committing to Your Budget

Creating a budget is a great start, but keeping up with it is the important part. Building habits and strategies to stay on track with your spending and saving will help you achieve your financial goals.

Let's explore some practical tips to help you stick to the budget you've created.

## Why Do People Struggle to Stick to a Budget?

Before we explore strategies, let's look at some common challenges that cause people to not keep up with their budget. These can include:

- Unexpected expenses that throw off your plan.
- Impulse purchases that lead to overspending.
- Not having a budgeting system that works and stopping tracking income and expenses.

Don't worry – these challenges are normal. Sometimes, expenses will come up or you will spend a little more than planned. It's important to be kind to yourself during these times and use your budget as a tool to help! The strategies below can help you do this and stick to your budget.

## Strategies for Sticking to Your Budget

Check-out the strategies below to learn helpful tips for keeping up with a budget.

Strategy	Description
<b>Set clear goals</b>	Define what you're working toward with your budget. Are you saving for a

	vacation, paying off debt, or building an emergency fund? Clear goals keep you motivated!
<b>Track your spending</b>	Monitor your spending regularly using an app, spreadsheet, or notebook. Tracking helps you stay aware of where your money is going.
<b>Plan for the unexpected</b>	Build a small emergency fund into your budget to cover unexpected expenses, like car repairs or medical bills.
<b>Review and adjust regularly</b>	Life changes, and so can your budget! Review your budget monthly and adjust it to fit your current needs and goals.
<b>Reward yourself</b>	Celebrate your progress! Set small rewards for meeting budget goals to stay motivated and enjoy the process.

Now that you've explored some strategies, take a moment to think...

**Question:** Which of these strategies do you think would work best for you?

**Question:** What are some challenges you've faced with sticking to a budget in the past?

**Question:** How could you use one of these tips to handle unexpected expenses in the future?



## Make it Personal

### Your Budgeting Strategies

Now it's time to put what you've learned into action. This activity will help you identify strategies you'll use to stick to your budget and prepare for challenges that could come up. Follow the steps and write your answers below or in a notes app or another digital format that works for you.

#### 1. Choose your strategies

Start by selecting the strategies you think will work best for you.

Here are some examples to get you started:

- **Set clear goals:** *Write down one or two financial goals your budget will help you achieve.*
- **Track your spending:** *Decide how you'll monitor your spending (e.g., app, spreadsheet, notebook).*
- **Plan for emergencies:** *Set aside a small amount each month for unexpected expenses.*

- **Reward yourself:** *Think about a small, affordable way to celebrate when you stick to your budget.*

**Question:** What are one or two strategies you'll commit to using?

**Question:** How could you use each strategy in your life?

## 2. Anticipate challenges

Think about a scenario that might make it hard to stick to your budget. For example:

- *An unexpected expense, like car repairs or a last-minute trip.*
- *Impulse buying, like shopping for things you don't really need.*
- *Forgetting to track your spending regularly.*

**Question:** What's a scenario that will likely come up that will make it challenging for you to stick to a budget?

**Question:** What will you do to overcome this challenge?

**Tip**

Think, which strategy could help you in this situation?

### 3. Create your action plan

Put it all together! Summarize the strategies you'll use and how you'll handle challenges. Write your answers in the table below or in a notes app or another digital format that works for you.

*Example:*

<b>My Budget Strategy</b>	<b>Challenge It Will Help Me Overcome</b>	<b>How I'll Use It</b>
<b>Tracking spending</b>	Forgetting where my money is going.	Use a budgeting app to automatically track and organize my spending.
<b>Setting clear goals</b>	Prioritizing spending over saving.	Set up an automatic deposit of \$25 a month into my savings account to build a security fund.

**My Strategies:**

My Budget Strategy	Challenge It Will Help Me Overcome	How I'll Use It

## Section 3: Identifying Financial Support Options

Sometimes despite our best efforts to stick to a budget, we face challenges, and it might feel tough or even impossible to do. Whether it's high cost of living, job loss, or unexpected expenses that come up, it can be overwhelming when the funds we have don't cover our expenses. It's important to remember that it's okay to need help, and there are support options you can try and reach out to when you need them.

**In this section, we'll cover:**

- Understanding the different types of financial support available.
- Exploring various reputable support options for when you need them.
- Strategies for accessing support.

By the end of this section, you will have a better understanding of where to turn for help when you need it and feel more confident reaching out to that support. Let's get started!

### Engage and Explore

#### Seeking Financial Support

Sometimes, life throws challenges your way that make it difficult to manage a budget. Whether it's high costs, job loss, or an

unexpected expense, it's okay to ask for help. Knowing where to turn and how to access support can make all the difference. Let's explore the resources and strategies you can use to get the financial help you need.

## Types of Financial Support

There are different types of financial support available depending on your situation. Learn more about them below:

Type	Description
<b>Government programs</b>	These include benefits like unemployment insurance, housing assistance, and income support programs designed to help when times are tough.
<b>Community resources</b>	Nonprofits and local organizations often offer help, like food banks, utility assistance, or financial counseling services.
<b>Credit and debt support</b>	Many organizations can help with debt consolidation, credit

	counseling, or negotiating lower payments with creditors.
<b>Family and friends</b>	Sometimes, reaching out to loved ones can provide temporary help or emotional support when facing financial difficulties.

## Strategies for Accessing Financial Support

When you need help, knowing how to access support is key and these strategies are here to help with that process. Check-out each one to learn more:

<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Do your research</b>	Look up local and online resources to find programs or organizations that align with your needs.
<b>Ask questions</b>	Contact support organizations and ask about eligibility, how to apply, and what documentation you'll need.



<b>Start small</b>	If asking for help feels overwhelming, start with one resource or a trusted individual to begin the process.
<b>Stay organized</b>	Keep track of your applications, follow-ups, and deadlines to make sure you don't miss out on opportunities.

## Looking for Safe Support Options

It's important to make sure that the help you're seeking is safe and trustworthy. Here's some strategies to do that:

<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Look for reviews</b>	Search online reviews or testimonials from others who've used the service.
<b>Verify credentials</b>	Ensure the organization is officially registered and credible.

<b>Avoid scams</b>	Be cautious of any service that requires upfront payment or asks for sensitive personal information unnecessarily.
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## Make it Personal

### Identifying Financial Support Options

Now it's time to take what you've learned about financial support and connect it to your own life. This activity will help you identify the resources and strategies that fit your needs and prepare you to seek help if you ever need it. Follow the steps below and write your answers below or in a notes app or another digital format that works for you.

#### 1. Identify potential resources

Think about the financial challenges you might face and the support options that could help. Consider:

- Government programs
- Community resources
- Trusted family or friends

Record your resources in the table below or another way that works for you. List at least two potential resources you could turn to and how they might help:

*Example:*

Resource Name	Type of Support	How it Can Help
<b>University Food Bank</b>	Community resource	Can provide groceries if tough times come up while I am in school.
<b>BC Access Grant for Students with Disabilities</b>	Government support	Provides additional financial support while I am in university.

Your resources:

Resource Name	Type of Support	How it Can Help


## 2. Plan your next step

Think about the steps you would take to access support if needed using the questions below.

**Question:** What is the first step you would take to reach out to support?

- *Example: Looking up a program or resource online, contacting an organization to ask questions, or talking to someone you trust for advice or guidance.*

**Question:** What would your next step to reach out for support be?

- *Example: Call the local community center to ask about financial counseling services.*

### 3. Overcome challenges

Sometimes it can be hard to ask for help. Identify a challenge you might face when seeking support and how you'll address it by thinking about the questions below.

**Question:** What might stop you from reaching out for help?

- *Example: feeling embarrassed, not knowing where to start.*

**Question:** How will you work past this challenge?

- *Example: remind yourself that asking for help is a strength or ask a trusted person for advice.*



## Reflect and Connect

We've covered a lot in this module, including:

- How to create a budget and set financial priorities.
- Strategies to stick to your budget and manage challenges.
- How to seek out financial support when needed.

Take a moment to think about the questions below and how they relate to your experiences. Think of this as a reflective journal for yourself, which you can refer to later.

Happy reflecting!

**How do you think having a budget can help you reach your financial goals?**

**Which budgeting approach or type sounds most useful to you, and why?**

**What is one small action you could take this week to help you create or stick to a budget?**

**Which strategy will you try to help you stay on budget? How confident do you feel about using this strategy?**



**How does knowing about financial support options help you feel more prepared for unexpected challenges?**

**What resources or support systems can you turn to if you need financial help?**

# Keep Going

There is so much more to learn! Access the full CanWork BC content and learn more about the program at **[canworkbc.ca](https://canworkbc.ca)**.

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