
System Innovations Grant Application Questions

The grant application gives Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF) staff the information needed to assess your collaborative and proposed strategy.

OTF staff and the Grant Review Committee will assess your collaborative's readiness to do this work, the alignment of your strategy to a YOF Priority Outcome and its potential impact on selected YOF youth, the priority populations that are benefiting from the project.

How to Apply

Learn more about the [System Innovations stream](#) and how to apply.

TAB 1: GENERAL INFORMATION

Contact Information

1. For this project, please confirm the key contact's information:

- Project contact name
- Project contact title/role
- Project contact phone number
- Project contact email

2. Are you the signing authority for the organization? (Check one only)

- YES NO

[IF NO]: Please provide contact information for the person with signing authority.

- Signing authority's name
- Signing authority's title/role
- Signing authority's phone number
- Signing authority's email

General Information

3. What is the name of the project?

4. Our project will: (Check all that apply)

- Lay the groundwork needed to strengthen a system of services or opportunities for YOF youth.
- Implement strategies to strengthen a system of services or opportunities for YOF youth.

[If Groundwork ONLY selected]:

- Please know that collaboratives have two years to complete groundwork.
- Any Project Plans and Budgets that exceed a two-year term will not be assessed.

[If Implementation ONLY selected]:

- If selected, it will be assumed that the collaborative has completed the groundwork phase.
- This should be reflected in the **groundwork table** and there should be no groundwork activities in the Project Plan or Budget.

[If BOTH groundwork and implementation selected]:

- Please know that collaboratives have up to two years to complete groundwork phase.
- It should be clear in your Project Plan and Budget that your groundwork will be completed within the first two years of the project.
- The remaining duration of the grant needs to focus on the implementation phase.

“YOF youth” refers to those young people you selected (beneficiaries) to impact through your collaborative’s work.

Assess your readiness and check one or both options. Is there groundwork to be done? Is your collaborative ready to begin implementing strategies for systems change? If you are uncertain about what we mean by “groundwork” or “implementing strategies” to **strengthen a system of services**, please contact yof@otf.ca and learn more about [what we fund](#) or book a coaching call with YOF Program Manager. If your collaborative has already laid the groundwork, consider focusing this project on systems-strengthening work - implementation only.

5. Please confirm that you are applying as a collaborative. (Check one only)

- YES NO

A [collaborative](#) is a group of two or more organizations - each with specific roles and responsibilities - that submit an application to achieve a common goal where there is mutual benefit, shared decision-making and accountability to each collaborative member. The lead organization of a collaborative must be an OTF-eligible organization.

[IF NO]: System Innovations grants invest in systems change work led by collaboratives only. Your project is not eligible.

[IF YES]: I acknowledge that a formal agreement with our collaborative partners is in place. (Check one only)

- YES NO

While you do not need to submit the collaborative agreement with your application, we may ask to review the agreement during the application review stage.

6. Will the project activities take place in Ontario? (Check one only)

- YES NO

Only activities that take place in Ontario are eligible for YOF funding.

[IF NO]: All System Innovations grant activities must take place in Ontario.

7. Anticipated start date (Select from calendar)

8. What is the requested grant term? (Check one only)

- 2 years
 3 years
 4 years
 5 years

This is the total number of years you will receive funding if your application is approved. If you selected Groundwork only, the grant term is 2 years.

TAB 2: LEAD ORGANIZATION AND COLLABORATIVE

About the Lead Organization

9. Why are you the right organization to lead the collaborative and this project?
(350 words max.)

Describe how your organization is situated within the system you aim to improve. Describe how you are connected to the communities you are seeking to serve through this work. Share your experience working strategically and collaboratively with stakeholders for systems change. Describe your organization's experience working with selected YOF youth and your understanding of the issues they face.

10. As the lead organization in your collaborative, your organization is:
(Check all that apply)

- Black-led
- Indigenous-led

Learn more about how YOF understands the [leadership, mandate and structure of Black-led or Indigenous-led organizations](#).

About the Collaborative

11. Complete the Partners Table [OPEN]

Organization, Group or Community Leader	Please indicate if your organization or group is Black-led or Indigenous-led. To the degree that you are comfortable and able, share lived experiences and knowledge that are relevant to this project.	Contact Person Name	Title	Phone Number	Email	Has this organization, group or individual agreed to be a collaborative member on this project? Yes/No	Has the lead worked with this partner on other projects before? Yes/No	Role and contribution to this project.

12. Why is this the right collaborative to lead this project? (350 words max.)

Describe how collaborative members are situated within the system you aim to improve. Describe their collective experience working with, and for, the selected YOF youth. Tell us about the relationships, knowledge, experiences, and skills that you are bringing as a collective and how these will enrich your systems change work.

13. Members of your collaborative are: (Check all that apply)

- Black-led organizations
- Indigenous-led organizations

Learn more about how YOF understands the [leadership, mandate and structure of Black-led or Indigenous-led organizations](#).

[IF Indigenous-led or Black-led selected]:

How many of the collaborative members are:

- Black-led organizations?
- Indigenous-led organizations?

Learn more about how YOF understands the [leadership, mandate and structure of Black-led or Indigenous-led organizations](#).

14. Describe the role of young people in the collaborative and in this project. If YOF youth have not been involved to date, describe how you will engage and sustain their participation in this project (350 words max).

Consider how you will engage the selected YOF youth as partners in this change process. The meaningful engagement of young people is required for a System Innovations grant.

15. How will you ensure the full participation of youth as equal partners in moving the proposed systems change work?

Please indicate the internal reflective work that you and your partners will commit to doing that will create the mechanism for youth to be equal partners in the system change work. What values, commitments and processes will you put in place for their contribution?

16. List any stakeholders not yet involved that would strengthen the project's potential to improve/build the system and achieve planned results. How will you engage stakeholders not yet involved?

If there are collaborative members missing that you consider essential to the work, describe how this collaborative will secure their engagement.

17. Share one or two examples of how existing partners have worked together. What work did you do together? What was the collaborative trying to achieve? How did this past experience prepare the collaborative for this project?

TAB 3: STRATEGIZING FOR SYSTEMS CHANGE

Describing the System

18. At a high-level, identify the system your collaborative is focused on improving.
(Check one only)

- Education
- Justice
- Child welfare
- Language and Culture
- Health
- Employment
- Youth Social Infrastructure (mechanisms that enable youth engagement and leadership)
- Social Security (social assistance, housing, financial assistance, etc.)
- Immigration and Settlement
- Social Services
- Other

19. What part of the system is your collaborative focusing on? Describe the key issues and/or challenges that your selected YOF youth face in accessing and interacting with this system. Why is the system (as it exists today) unable to fully meet the needs of your specific youth beneficiaries? (500 words max.)

Issues and challenges could be related to policy frameworks, ideologies, service design, integration of service delivery, etc.

Are there any deeply held ideas or assumptions that shape how services are organized? Tell us why you believe the system requires strengthening. What are the current gaps in the system? What are the risks of not addressing the issues/challenges identified? Where available, reference youth voices, research and data that speak to the issues you have described.

20. As you look to the future, what is the aspired state your collaborative is working towards? Given the issues and impacts on youth, describe the vision that your collaborative has for how the system could work to better serve your selected YOF youth beneficiaries? (350 words max.)

21. Project description

Complete the following sentence about your project (50 words max.):

Our collaborative will (strengthen) a (name the system you are strengthening) for (selected YOF youth) in (geographic area). We will (describe the change you want to make to the system).

Describing your Strategy

22. Given what you know about the system and how it is experienced by your selected YOF youth beneficiaries today, what will the collaborative do to strengthen the system? Summarize your overall strategy for making systems change.

Ensure the strategy and approach responds to the issues you have identified. We recognize that collaboratives will enter this process in different stages of readiness. What steps do you envision taking to prepare for and to make systems change? Where available, reference groundwork documents that can include theories of change and action plans.

23. Groundwork Table [OPEN]

Identify project deliverables by completing the Groundwork Table. If your request is approved, all of these will be included as required deliverables in your Grant Contract. Updates/results of this work will be requested as a part of your annual reporting requirements.

We expect that collaboratives will be in different stages of readiness to implement strategies for systems change. Please ensure that the groundwork has been set. This includes having a collaborative that is reflective of communities served, includes youth in meaningful ways, and is equipped to lead systems change in ways that are culturally responsive and youth centered.

Here are the key deliverables you will address using the Groundwork Table:

- Collaborative's Governance Model
- Youth Governance Model
- Summary of Research and Evidence
- Summary of Youth Experiences and Needs
- Theory of Change
- Action Plan

24. Describe the concrete steps your collaborative will take to lay the groundwork for systems change OR if the groundwork has already been laid, describe the steps your collaborative took during this phase of the work. (350 words max.)

[IF YOU CHOSE IMPLEMENTATION ONLY]: Describe the concrete steps your collaborative will take to implement your strategy for systems change. (350 words max.)

25. Describe any factors or conditions that may hinder your efforts to make these system changes. How will your collaborative work to advance change given the factors and conditions described? (350 words max.)

We understand that systems change is hard work. We appreciate the challenges involved in shifting mindset, practice, and the allocation of resources at a collective level. Use this space to describe these challenges. Share your perspective on the limits of what may be possible to change, given the context in which you are working. This is also an opportunity to reflect on the collaborative's readiness to lead the groundwork for systems change.

26. Upload any groundwork documents or any links to relevant documents/research on the system, its issues and steps forward.

You may upload as many as three (3) links to documents, pictures or diagrams that will provide greater explanation of your project. Please include a short description for each picture.

Project Location

27. Please select the census divisions to indicate more specific regions where your project activities will take place. (Select at least one)

- | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Algoma | <input type="checkbox"/> County of Lanark | <input type="checkbox"/> Kawartha Lakes | <input type="checkbox"/> Regional Municipality of Peel |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chatham-Kent | <input type="checkbox"/> County of Lennox & Addington | <input type="checkbox"/> Kenora | <input type="checkbox"/> Regional Municipality of Waterloo |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cochrane | <input type="checkbox"/> County of Middlesex | <input type="checkbox"/> Manitoulin | <input type="checkbox"/> Regional Municipality of York |
| <input type="checkbox"/> County of Brant | <input type="checkbox"/> County of Northumberland | <input type="checkbox"/> Muskoka | <input type="checkbox"/> Sudbury |
| <input type="checkbox"/> County of Bruce | <input type="checkbox"/> County of Oxford | <input type="checkbox"/> Nipissing | <input type="checkbox"/> Thunder Bay |
| <input type="checkbox"/> County of Dufferin | <input type="checkbox"/> County of Perth | <input type="checkbox"/> Ottawa | <input type="checkbox"/> Timiskaming |
| <input type="checkbox"/> County of Elgin | <input type="checkbox"/> County of Renfrew | <input type="checkbox"/> Parry Sound | <input type="checkbox"/> Toronto |
| <input type="checkbox"/> County of Frontenac | <input type="checkbox"/> County of Simcoe | <input type="checkbox"/> Peterborough | <input type="checkbox"/> United Counties of Leeds & Grenville |
| <input type="checkbox"/> County of Grey | <input type="checkbox"/> County of Wellington | <input type="checkbox"/> Prince Edward County | <input type="checkbox"/> United Counties of Prescott & Russell |
| <input type="checkbox"/> County of Haliburton | <input type="checkbox"/> Essex County | <input type="checkbox"/> Rainy River | <input type="checkbox"/> United Counties of Stormont, Dundas, and Glengarry |
| <input type="checkbox"/> County of Hastings | <input type="checkbox"/> Greater Sudbury | <input type="checkbox"/> Regional Municipality of Durham | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> County of Huron | <input type="checkbox"/> Haldimand-Norfolk | <input type="checkbox"/> Regional Municipality of Halton | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> County of Lambton | <input type="checkbox"/> Hamilton | <input type="checkbox"/> Regional Municipality of Niagara | |

28. Please select the community size that is the primary focus of your system change work. (Select one)

- Rural or Small Communities (20,000 or less)
- Mid-size Communities (20,001 - 100,000)
- Urban Centres and Metropolitan Suburbs (100,001+)

TAB 4: PROJECT IMPACT

Describing the Outcome and Beneficiaries

29. Select the YOF Priority Outcome that most aligns with the expected benefit to YOF youth as a result of system improvements. (Check one only)

- Empowering girls and/or young women to lead, including women's economic empowerment initiatives
- Supporting Indigenous, Black, and/or newcomer youth to enter the labour market and transition to sustainable career pathways
- Supporting youth in and/or leaving care and/or involved in the justice system to navigate and access resources for wellbeing
- Addressing racism and its impacts on youth in urban, rural, and/or Northern communities
- Creating safe spaces for Indigenous and/or Black youth to build strong community and cultural connections

YOF youth refers to those young people you selected to serve through your project.

Ask yourself: "If we are successful in strengthening the system, which outcome best describes the benefit our selected YOF youth beneficiaries will experience?"

Example: You chose the outcome that focuses on supporting youth who are leaving care to navigate and access resources for wellbeing. Your systems change work will focus on designing and supporting culturally anchored models and will be responsive to the interests and needs of Black youth transitioning from care. This model will be embedded in at least 10 organizations across the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). Your goal is also to build a GTA-wide network of Black focused wellbeing resources that youth can access. In this case, you would select one primary beneficiary: Black youth.

Example: You chose the outcome that focuses on creating safe spaces for community and cultural connections. Your systems change work will focus on building a holistic and culturally relevant community-based support network for Indigenous youth from remote First Nations attending school in Thunder Bay. In this case, you would select two primary beneficiaries: Indigenous youth and youth living in rural or remote communities.

When selecting Indigenous youth (First Nations, Métis or Inuit), youth can be from urban, rural and on reserve communities.

30. Identify the population(s) that are the primary beneficiaries of your systems change work using the list below. (Select at least one)

- Indigenous youth (i.e. First Nations, Métis or Inuit)
- Black youth
- Racialized youth
- Newcomer youth
- Francophone youth
- Two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and/or questioning, intersex, asexual (2SLGBTQIA+) youth
- Youth living with disabilities or special needs between the ages of 12 to 29
- Youth living in rural or remote communities
- Youth in conflict or at risk of being in conflict with the law
- Youth in care or leaving care
- Youth in low-income situations or from low-income families
- Youth who are homeless or at risk of being homeless
- Youth at-risk of dropping out or have dropped out of school
- Youth living with mental health needs and/or addictions between the ages of 12 to 29
- Youth who are not engaged and/or at risk of not being engaged with education, employment and training programs

[IF Indigenous is selected] (Select at least one)

- First Nations
- Métis
- Inuit

31. What is the age range of youth who will benefit from systems improvements?
(Select at least one)

- 12 to 14 years
- 15 to 19 years
- 20 to 25 years
- 12 to 29 years for youth living with disabilities and/or special needs
- 12 to 29 years for youth living with mental health needs and/or addictions

Describing the Impact

All YOF grantees are required to use YOF standard evaluation tools so we can share a much larger story of change across Ontario. We invite the collaborative to explore, and budget for, evaluation and learning that would benefit the project.

32. How will your collaborative work to advance the selected YOF Priority Outcome?
(350 words max).

33. Describe your impact. (250 words max. per change box)

Use the next four questions to describe those concrete and achievable changes your collaborative will make through this project. We recognize that collaboratives will be in different stages of readiness and we ask that you identify changes that reflect your entry point into this work.

If there is groundwork to be done, describe the changes that you expect to see as a result of the more immediate groundwork and future implementation work. If the groundwork is done, describe the changes you expect to make through the implementation phase of the work. Consider expected changes to partner organizations, the collaborative itself, young people, and the system as a whole.

- Describe the main changes in organizations connected to the system, including collaborative members (250 words max.)
- Describe the main changes in the collaborative (250 words max.)
- Describe the main changes in how the system functions (250 words max.)
- Describe the main changes in how young people experience the system (250 words max.)

34. As part of the System Innovations Stream, YOF requires all grantees to host one knowledge sharing event. If your project is approved for funding, check to confirm that you agree to host one knowledge sharing event during the grant term. (Check one only)

- YES NO

TAB 5: PROCESS

Project Plan

35. Please click the button below to complete the Project Plan.

Your Project Plan should demonstrate the steps you will take to achieve all the project deliverables you selected in the Groundwork Table. In cases where the middle-years of your project depend on the outcomes or findings from early stage work, describe the processes you will follow in place of a detailed listing of activities. For example, if an early stage activity is the completion of a needs assessment, while you will not know what the specific needs are today, use the Project Plan to describe the process you will use to respond to the findings from the needs assessment. If on the other hand, most of the groundwork has been laid for systems change, use the Project Plan to share in greater detail the activities and steps you will follow to strengthen the system.

Use the plan to also:

- Describe the role of partners, including young people, in completing key activities
- Demonstrate a logical sequence and staging of activities

Budget

36. Open Budget Instructions and Examples

37. Open Budget Worksheet

Use this worksheet to list all expenses related to this project for the number of years you are applying for. This is the total amount of money you are requesting from OTF. Please do NOT include requests from other funders in this amount. The Budget Worksheet should be consistent with the activities/resources listed in the Project Plan.

Please avoid any quotation marks (“...”) in the Budget fields (including Notes) as the system will not save your work if these are detected.

Take note: Total request amount is generated as a result of the information provided in your budget worksheet.

38. How much funding are you requesting from OTF?

Declarations

39. I confirm:

- I have read the Budget Instructions and Examples.
- I have completed the Budget Worksheet.
- I understand that two (2) written quotes are required for goods and/or services individually valued above \$10,000. OTF may request them these quotes at any time during the assessment or if approved for a grant.
- I understand that project activities that take place outside of Ontario are not eligible. I confirm that we have not requested funds to support any project activities that will take place outside of Ontario.
- I understand the importance of avoiding any conflicts of interest (or the appearance thereof) when obtaining quotes for goods and/or services.

When you are requesting OTF funds for goods and/or services individually valued above \$10,000, OTF asks your organization to show that it sought the best value for money. The amount requested must be reasonable and supported by competitive bids. OTF requires two or more written quotes for purchases of individual goods and/or services individually valued above \$10,000.

Grant Application Assessment Criteria

OTF staff and Grant Review Committee members will use this assessment criteria to assess your grant application.

Assessment Area 1: Eligibility	
The collaborative has selected one organization to be the lead.	YES NO
The collaborative has a formal agreement with collaborative partners in place.	
The lead organization is based in Ontario.	
All project activities are based in Ontario.	
The lead and collaborative reflect the communities and populations served.	
The process and strategy of the proposed system change work is feasible.	
The total requested amount does not exceed the annual total for the number of years requested.	
Groundwork activities will be completed within a two-year framework.	
The lead organization must meet OTF's Financial Need and Health of Applicants Policy	
The collaborative is focused on improving systems for selected YOF youth through system change and not program/service delivery.	
Assessment Area 2: People	
The right people are in place to lay the groundwork for systems change and/or to implement systems change that leads to the YOF Priority Outcome for YOF youth.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> The lead organization has the capacity and community knowledge to steward the collaborative. <input type="checkbox"/> The size and composition of the collaborative are appropriate given the stage of work, the selected system, issues identified, chosen YOF youth, and proposed approach to system change. <input type="checkbox"/> YOF youth affected by the system have a clear and meaningful role in the project. <input type="checkbox"/> The collaborative has the capacity and legitimacy to effectively steward the process and achieve the project deliverables. 	30%

Assessment Area 3: Strategy and Impact	
The strategy is appropriate for laying the groundwork for systems change and/or making systems change that leads to the YOF Priority Outcome for YOF youth.	
Setting the Context	20%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> The collaborative understands the system, its issues, and impacts on YOF youth. <input type="checkbox"/> There is clear alignment between the system issues identified, selected YOF youth, and selected YOF Priority Outcome. <input type="checkbox"/> The collaborative understands the context, opportunities, and barriers to making system change. 	
Strategizing for System Change	25%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> The collaborative has demonstrated that the groundwork has been set already or will be set through this project. <input type="checkbox"/> The collaborative has clearly described the steps they will take to lay the groundwork and/or make systems change. <input type="checkbox"/> The proposed steps are designed to meet the needs and interests of selected YOF youth. <input type="checkbox"/> The collaborative has made a coherent case for systems change work given the long-term impact at individual, organizational, collaborative, and system levels. 	
Assessment Area 4: Process	
The processes to be employed are appropriate for laying the groundwork and/or leading system change.	
Setting the Context	25%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> The collaborative has clearly defined project deliverables. <input type="checkbox"/> The collaborative has described a feasible approach to achieve project deliverables. <input type="checkbox"/> The description of activities, project plan, and budget are aligned. 	