

ACTION AREA: ACTIVE PEOPLE

Seed Cycle Granting Highlights: Spring 2017



In the 2017 Seed granting cycle, there were 26 grants made in the [Active People](#) Action Area totalling \$1.35 million and accounting for 12% of OTF investments. There are two notable trends in these projects: feasibility and research for the building or renovation of recreational space including bicycle parks, trails and community centres, and research and development of new programs to improve access for people with barriers to participation including those with autism, youth who are at risk, older adults, and low-income families. These trends are embodied by the following projects. [Firebird Community Cycle](#) in Barrie received \$21,700 to pilot The Phoenix Project that will engage 100 at-risk youth and youth

with mental illness to build and maintain bicycles for recreation and transportation by recycling and rebuilding donated and salvaged bicycles. The Town of Kirkland Lake received \$45,000 to study the feasibility of converting a former pool complex into a multi-use community fitness and recreational facility.

OTF has invested \$26.5 million in 193 projects in the Active People Action Area since the 2015 introduction of its Investment Strategy. For the 2017 Seed cycle, OTF invested \$1.35 million in 26 projects.

Alignment with Government Priorities:

The Active People Action Area is strategically aligned with multiple government priorities and strategies including the Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport's Sport Plan - Game ON (2015), the Ontario Ministry of Health's Healthy Kids Strategy (2015), the Ontario's Ministry of Education's Daily Physical Activity Policy, the Framework for Recreation in Canada (2014), The Canadian Sport Policy 2.0 (2012), and Canada's Active 20/20 Physical Activity Strategy. OTF is working with Ontario ministries and numerous community stakeholders to develop a comprehensive Physical Literacy Strategy for Ontario.

Background:

The Ontario Trillium Foundation's Active People Action Area was developed to combat the significant social and health challenges arising from Ontario's epidemic levels of physical inactivity. For the first time in recorded history, younger generations of Canadians are expected to live shorter lives than their parents due to obesity and chronic diseases, including Type 2 diabetes, stroke, cardiovascular disease and various cancers. The estimated annual cost of diabetes in Ontario is \$7.7 billion; cases of diabetes in the province are projected to rise by 48% from 2015 to 2025. Obesity and lack of physical activity are responsible for nearly 95% of Type 2 diabetes cases.

Research shows that active lifestyles in children lead to healthy growth, improved school performance and social development. Further benefits include reduced risk of chronic disease and improved mental health in the general population. Active people are more productive, more connected in their communities, and more likely to avoid illness and injury throughout their lives. Although the benefits are well known, there is a significant gap between how people perceive their behavior and the benefits they are realizing from their physical activity. Although 55% of Canadians self-report that they are physically active, only 15% of Canadian adults and 5% of children engage in enough physical activity to derive health benefits. Furthermore, Ontario's estimated recreation infrastructure deficit is greater than \$5 billion, creating a substantial and ongoing demand for OTF capital investments.

More needs to be done to foster lifelong physical activity in Ontario, making it easy, enjoyable, and relevant for everyone. Thus, OTF has focused on two Priority Outcomes: higher quality programming and infrastructure to support physical activity; and more people become active.

ACTION AREA: PROMISING YOUNG PEOPLE

Seed Cycle Granting Highlights: Spring 2017



2017 Seed projects continue to support youth facing barriers, including newcomer, racialized, youth in care, LGBTTQ+, and low income youth, amongst others. For this Seed granting cycle, notable projects not only achieved one of the Priority Outcomes of 'more children and youth have social emotional strengths' and 'more youth are meaningfully engaged in the community', but they also addressed unique challenges faced by Indigenous youth as well as children and youth with disabilities or special needs.

OTF has invested over \$40 million in 242 projects in in the [Promising Young People](#) Action Area since the 2015 introduction of its Investment Strategy. For the 2017 Seed cycle, OTF invested \$2,315,200 in 41 projects, accounting for 20% of total investments.

Two of these notable initiatives are testing out innovative approaches. The first is a project of the Nishnawbe Aski Nation and that engages First Nation youth from [Dennis Franklin Cromarty High School](#), Matawa Learning Centre and Ka Na Chi Hih youth treatment centre in the design and development of a prototype modular greenhouse unit. The greenhouse unit has the potential to create new opportunities for sustainable local food production in remote Northern First Nations, thereby harnessing youth innovation in creating solutions for the Northern food crisis. Youth will work with Roots to Harvest to grow and prepare food and learn how to use the greenhouse as a food production facility. The prototype will be suited for the far north and will be used as a teaching facility. The second project is a partnership of First Nations and Developmental Services organizations that will provide culturally-sensitive assessments and skills training to families and help them support the emotional and social strengths of Indigenous children and youth with developmental disabilities. This project of APTUS Treatment Centre will address the challenges faced in Curve Lake First Nation, Alderville First Nation, and Mississaugas of Scugog First Nation, where they report significantly higher rates of children and youth with developmental disabilities and yet limited access to assessments or support. If successful, this test project would be a cost-effective route to supplementing services, assessments and family-based respite skill training in both First Nations and rural communities.

Alignment with Government Priorities

The Promising Young People Action Area is strategically aligned with the direction of the Ontario government. Our investments align with the Ontario Ministry of Children and Youth Services' Enhanced Youth Action Plan by supporting youth of all ages to be meaningfully engaged and successfully transition into adulthood. We continue to invest in young people taking on leadership roles as volunteers in their communities and support youth innovation by investing in initiatives where youth shape and create solutions to challenges that matter to them and their communities.

Through investments in social and emotional strengths of children and youth, OTF leverages the Ontario Well-Being Strategy for Education and supports the work of the Ministry of Education to promote well-being efforts in schools. The Promising Young People Action Area is also aligned with some of the priorities of Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy, especially around 'achieving excellence and ensuring equity: realizing our kids' potential.'

Background

Evidence shows that to become healthy and productive adults, children and youth need specific skill sets, relationships and experiences to support their transition to different life stages. Children and youth with strong social and emotional skills are more likely to have fewer behavioural problems, experience less emotional distress (e.g. anxiety and depression), and exhibit pro-social behaviours. Youth who are engaged, and those with strong emotional and social skills, experience improved outcomes in education, health, income, and employment. They are more physically active, exhibit fewer risky behaviours, are more likely to finish high school, and are more connected to family, friends, and community.

Apart from these well-documented positive outcomes, social emotional learning initiatives have also been shown to produce a significant economic return of \$11 per dollar invested. Schools today are therefore looking beyond

academics to integrate social emotional learning in the classroom, and employers are changing hiring processes, focusing more on the social and emotional competencies of candidates. There is also growing recognition that youth who volunteer and take on leadership roles further sharpen their social and emotional skills. Currently in Ontario, though 58% of youth volunteer, many still face challenges to meaningful participation in their communities. The Promising Young People Action Area is designed to foster the positive development of Ontario's children and youth so that they have a better chance for success in life. This is consistent with the research and priorities established by the Government of Ontario. OTF investments focus on two Priority Outcomes: more children and youth have emotional and social strengths, and more youth are meaningfully engaged in the community

ACTION AREA: PROSPEROUS PEOPLE

Seed Cycle Granting Highlights: Spring 2017



In the 2017 Seed cycle, there were 42 grants made in the [Prosperous People](#) Action Area totalling \$2.412,500 million, accounting for 21% of OTF investments. Many of these investments explore new economic development approaches to improving lives for vulnerable people such as newcomers, Indigenous people, people with physical disabilities and women, as well as projects to increase their independence through financial literacy and increasing their financial assets. Financial issues impact many low-income Ontarians by affecting their health, housing stability and overall quality of life.

Two projects funded are particularly interesting since they are testing new technologies to increase financial independence for people who are vulnerable. [WoodGreen](#) now provides tax clinics, financial coaching/problem-solving services, and financial training to more than 6,000 low-income individuals a year, and processing over \$6 million in returns annually. The objective of this seed grant is to investigate how WoodGreen can effectively provide financial services to isolated and immobile community members such as the elderly, people in hospitals, long-term care facilities, individuals with mental health challenges, physical disabilities, using remote technologies and coordinated service approaches. [National Capital FreeNet](#), a nonprofit alternative to commercial internet service providers, working with the Association of Community Reform Now, Canada, will help 80 low-income residents in Ottawa learn how to apply online for two important but under-utilized low-income benefit programs: the Canada Learning Bond and the Ontario Electricity Support Program. Increased access to these programs will directly improve their financial situation, while teaching them transferable digital literacy skills and increasing their financial independence.

OTF has invested close to \$36.5 million in 221 projects in the Prosperous People Action Area since the 2015 introduction of its Investment Strategy. For the 2017 Seed cycle, OTF invested \$2.412,500 million in 42 projects.

Alignment with Government Priorities

The Prosperous People Action Area is strategically aligned to several government mandates and priorities. These include the Province of Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy (2014- 2019); The Ministry of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure Youth Entrepreneurship Partnership program (2015); Ontario's Youth Job Strategy (2015); Financial Empowerment Initiatives (2016); Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities (2016); The Social Enterprise Strategy for Ontario (2015); Ontario's long Term Affordable Housing Strategy (2010); and the Private Sector and Mentorship Initiative through the Ontario Ministry of Child and Youth Services' Enhanced Youth Action Plan (2015).

Background

The landscape of poverty and employment in Ontario is vast, multifaceted, and complex. Living standards in Ontario today lag far behind that of Canada as a whole. Over 1.5 million people are living in poverty. One in 13 Ontarians are unemployed, and 50% of them are youth aged 15 to 24. Since 2009, Ontario has seen increases of 50% in involuntary part-time employment and 75% in long-term unemployment. The quality of employment has declined and the growth of precarious work arrangements are leaving children, youth and families in poverty. While Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy is making steady progress to reduce child poverty by 25% by the year 2025, child and family poverty persists. About 1 in 5 children overall in Ontario are living in poverty, including 44% of children of single mothers. In 2014, 375,000 Ontarians, a third of whom are children, used food banks each month. To address these realities, OTF has focused on two Priority Outcomes: increased economic stability and increased economic opportunity. Evidence shows that economic security improves when the risks of poverty are reduced and economic opportunities are enhanced, especially for those who are most vulnerable. When people's basic needs are met, they are in a better position to succeed. Improved access to food, housing, counselling, and other community supports can reduce or eliminate barriers to economic wellbeing. Ensuring people have the knowledge, skills, and tools for greater financial independence and are better able to find meaningful livelihoods, also leads to increased economic wellbeing.

ACTION AREA: GREEN PEOPLE

Seed Cycle Granting Highlights: Spring 2017



In the 2017 Seed granting cycle, OTF invested 8% of available funds to support initiatives in the [Green People](#) Action Area of the [Seed](#) Investment Stream. Projects addressed all five of the Green People [Grant Results](#), with the majority helping to achieve the [Priority Outcome](#) of “People reduce their impacts on the environment”.

Two projects supported this cycle explore innovative approaches to reducing the impact of housing development and neighbourhood construction on the environment. Recognizing the significant waste and debris created by residential housing development, [Habitat for Humanity Halton/Mississauga](#) will explore ways developers can recycle and repurpose thousands of tons of build waste with participating community partners, instead of sending over 50 tons to landfills in Halton and Peel. The [Toronto Environmental Alliance](#) will work with local residents across the city to engage construction companies in their neighbourhoods on issues of local air pollution, with the aim of reducing emissions of particulate matter and other pollutants of concern. Both projects have the potential to develop scalable programs that can be more widely adopted to benefit the environment.

OTF has invested over \$23 million in 150 projects in the Green People Action Area since the 2015 introduction of its Investment Strategy. For the 2017 Seed cycle, OTF invested \$951,300 in 17 projects.

Alignment with Government Priorities:

As one of the largest funders of the public benefit sector in Ontario, OTF aims to advance a strategy that engages individuals and sectors in efforts to conserve our biodiversity and ensure we use our environment responsibly. Our investments support several action areas identified in Ontario's Climate Change Action Plan (2016) and complement efforts to build a greener Ontario announced in recent Budgets. Our investments also align strongly with directions laid out in other relevant strategies such as Ontario's Biodiversity Strategy (2011), Ontario's Great Lakes Strategy (2012) and Ontario's Invasive Species Strategy (2012). By working together, we can help realize a cleaner, greener future for all Ontarians.

Background:

OTF's Green People Action Area recognizes that a healthy environment is critical to the wellbeing and long-term prosperity of our communities. Ontario is home to a rich biodiversity, with over 250,000 lakes, 18% of Canada's forests and over 30,000 known species. This biodiversity has an intrinsic value and is a fundamental driver of our economy. There is also a growing body of evidence regarding the importance of nature to our physical and mental wellbeing. As stewards of our natural resources, Ontarians have a responsibility to ensure that future generations benefit from all that our environment provides.

Addressing Ontario's environmental challenges is complex and long-term. Ontario has one of the largest ecological footprints in the world and habitat continues to be lost at an alarming rate. Ontario has conserved only 11.2% of its terrestrial habitats and this drops to just over 4% in Southern Ontario. Fortunately, progress is being made. The 2015 State of Ontario's Biodiversity Report highlights several areas of improvement, but stresses that continued and accelerated action is required if we are to protect all that sustains us. Guided by the Canadian Index of Wellbeing (CIW) indicators, Living Planet Index and Ecological Footprint, OTF's Green People Action Area aims to promote this by engaging individuals and sectors in efforts to conserve and restore our ecosystems and reducing the impact we have on our environment.

ACTION AREA: INSPIRED PEOPLE

Seed Cycle Granting Highlights: Spring 2017



The Inspired People Action Area accounts for 13% of investments in this Seed cycle. Of that investment, 15% will fund the transfer of skills and knowledge to the next generation of artistic leaders, 45% will fund increasing access to arts based learning and compelling artistic, cultural and heritage experiences, 6% will fund engagement in community-based arts creation, and 34% will fund the preservation and animation of cultural heritage.

OTF has invested more than \$25 million in 216 projects in the Inspired People Action Area since the 2015 introduction of its Investment Strategy. For the 2017 Seed cycle, OTF invested \$1,303,900 in 25 projects.

A notable example of an investment in increasing access to arts-based learning is being led by the Conseil des Arts de Nipissing Ouest (CANO), an organization dedicated to Francophone arts engagement in West Nipissing. Through an 11-month investment of \$68,000, CANO will test new models of youth arts and culture programming in West Nipissing. A notable example of an investment in the preservation and animation of cultural heritage is being led by the Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO). Through a 12-month investment of \$75,000, MNO will conduct Metis Mamawapowuk, an oral history project with Métis Elders aimed at gathering stories of people, history, language and way of life for future generations.

Alignment with Government Priorities:

The Inspired People Action Area is aligned with the Ontario Government's recently launched Culture Strategy and Arts Policy Framework because it enables people to benefit by experiencing, participating and engaging with culture, heritage and the arts. Evidence-based investments in this Action Area will support Ontario's Culture Strategy through improved and expanded cultural infrastructure, building the skills and talents of next generation artists, fostering creativity in our schools and telling our stories that value our diversity.

Background:

The Inspired People Action Area is built on the recognition that culture, heritage and the arts have intrinsic value. We are hard-wired as human beings to experience creative acts, become authors of our own self-expression and combine such experiences into lived engagement as we find our place within society.

Even though Ontarians enjoy an abundance of culture, heritage and arts offerings, the time spent on such activities declined by 12% between 1994 and 2010 according to the Canadian Index of Wellbeing (CIW). Communities benefit from a strong cultural infrastructure, however 72% of arts organizations report insufficient access to facilities and specialized equipment. There is an urgent need to develop young audiences for the future. However, only 62% of elementary schools in the Greater Toronto Area have music teachers, and the numbers drop steeply for eastern Ontario (32%) and northern Ontario (26%). In 33% of Ontario elementary schools, students do not have opportunities to work with artists, perform in a musical group, or play an instrument. Community arts programs are limited.

Evidence from the field shows that arts-based learning models, such as "Learning Through the Arts" and "ArtSmarts," have many positive impacts on the intellectual and social development of young people. Students engaged through arts creation methodologies develop critical thinking, higher self-esteem and leadership. Research also shows significant benefits to the health and wellbeing of seniors participating in arts and heritage activities. As well, community-based arts and heritage initiatives engender inter-cultural understanding, belonging and civic pride.

It is for these reasons that OTF is focusing its investments in this Action Area on two priority outcomes: better quality programming and infrastructure to experience culture, heritage and the arts, and more people connect with culture, heritage and the arts.

ACTION AREA: CONNECTED PEOPLE

Seed Cycle Granting Highlights: Spring 2017



A notable Seed grant in this cycle is for an 11-month project to learn directly from the members of the LGBTTQ+ community in North Bay, regarding their perspectives on how best to deliver services in an inclusive and safe manner. This \$72,500 grant to the North Bay and District Multicultural Centre, will provide data to support service-provider organizations to deliver services and programs across rural, remote and small populations where the risk of being outed may be a barrier to accessing services. Another is a \$40,000 investment in an 11-month program to learn how intergenerational programming and digital storytelling can bridge generational gaps in Toronto's Korean Canadian community and provide social support to seniors facing isolation.

OTF has invested more than \$39.9 million in 310 projects in the [Connected People](#) Action Area since the 2015 introduction of its Investment Strategy. For the 2017 Seed cycle, OTF invested \$3,079,300 in 53 projects.

Alignment with Government Priorities

OTF's Connected People Action Area is strategically aligned with a variety of government mandates and priorities. These include the Province of Ontario's Action Plan for Seniors (2015); The Ministry of Citizenship & Immigration's Newcomer Settlement Program and Ontario Immigration Strategy; the Strategic Framework and Action Plan for Expanding Community Hubs in Ontario (2015), and the Ministry of Community and Social Services' mandate to build communities that are resilient, inclusive and sustained by the economic and civic contributions of all Ontarians.

This Action Area is also aligned with the mandate of the Anti-Racism Directorate, specifically A Better Way Forward: Ontario's three-Year Anti-Racism Strategic Plan (2017), which is part of the government's commitment to fight systemic racism and create fair and equitable outcomes for Black, Indigenous and other racialized people. Connected People is also aligned with the Ministry of Children and Youth Services' Ontario Black Youth Action Plan (2017) to help reduce disparities for Black children, youth and families.

Background

OTF's Connected People Action Area is built around creating a strong sense of belonging and reducing social isolation. When individuals feel a greater sense of belonging and have strong connections to the people around them, they are more likely to reach out, participate in, and actively engage in their community's economic, social, cultural, and political institutions. People who have adequate social relationships are at a 50% lower risk of death than those who do not. Social isolation now exceeds obesity and physical inactivity as a risk factor for mortality. In addition to that, the long term positive effects of social connectedness on long-term health are now seen to be equal to those of quitting smoking. However, since 2008, the Canadian Index of Wellbeing (CIW) reports that our trust in others has declined by 15%, and the number of Ontarians with strong social networks has declined by 24%. About a third of Ontario's population was born outside of Canada, and 15% of Ontarians are above the age of 65. Our diversity of identities, origin, age, etc. is a vibrant source of ideas and approaches for building and maintaining the social infrastructure that makes communities stronger and more integrated. When everyone feels at home, and plays a meaningful role in their community, we have better health outcomes, fresh ideas and approaches to community needs. This is why our two priority outcomes for this Action Area are: 'diverse groups work better together to shape community', and 'reduced social isolation'.