

ACTION AREA: ACTIVE PEOPLE

Cycle 5 and 6 Granting Highlights: Winter 2017



In the two most recent cycles, granting in the [Active People](#) Action Area totalled \$4.139 million accounting for 10% of OTF investments. These investments are expected to foster active healthy lifestyles for more than **7,300 Ontarians** of all ages and abilities. There are two notable trends in recent Active People grants, both targeting the health and well-being of children and youth. They are: comprehensive community-wide strategies to increase physical literacy levels, and increasing physical activity rates and building confidence, resilience and independence through unstructured risky/adventure play.

Physical literacy provides the confidence, skills and motivation to be active throughout an individual's life. This is embodied by an OTF investment in [Sportlink - the Greater Sudbury Sport Council](#) that will use physical literacy as the foundation to increase activity levels and sport participation within the City of Greater Sudbury. Sportlink, along with a collaborative of multi-sector partners, will train and mentor 1,600 community staff and 200 volunteers to assess and deliver evidence-based, high quality physical literacy programs in four sectors: education, sport and recreation, health and early childhood education.

OTF has invested \$24.775 million in 160 initiatives in the Active People Action Area since the 2015 introduction of its Investment Strategy; \$8.712 million in 45 initiatives in fiscal year 2016-2017.

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 recently launched 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 actually 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. As a result, 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

Cycle 5 and 6 Granting Highlights: Winter 2017



Since the 2015 introduction of the OTF Investment Strategy, OTF has invested \$37.5 million in 193 initiatives in the [Promising Young People](#) Action Area. In fiscal 2016-2017, \$15.136 million has been invested in 90 initiatives, benefitting more than **50,000 Ontarians**.

In the last two granting cycles, 22% of the total grants awarded, amounting to \$8.1 million, impact the Promising Young People action area. Funded initiatives will support more than 50,000 children and youth across Ontario. Initiatives that surfaced as the strongest focused on low income, LGBTTTQ+, Indigenous and newcomer children and youth. The majority of these initiatives concentrate on developing the social emotional strengths of children and youth by supporting strong and healthy relationships, connecting children to nature, incorporating mentorship with caring adults, and providing in-school and after-school programming.

One of these notable initiatives is the '[Girlz Unplugged](#)' program of the YMCA of Muskoka. Girlz Unplugged will provide over 300 girls in grades 5 to 7 with a confidence and self-esteem skill building program. This 12-week evidence-based program will run in 17 elementary schools across Muskoka. The goals of the program are to increase connection to oneself, others and community, and develop confidence, critical thinking, resilience, and pro-social relationships.

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

Cycle 5 and 6 Granting Highlights: Winter 2017



Through the Ontario Trillium Foundation's (OTF) strategic investments in 2016-2017, we will invest in 77 initiatives totalling \$15.859 million that will enhance the economic wellbeing of **62,085 people** who are economically vulnerable. Over the last two granting cycles, OTF invested \$7.782 million in the Prosperous People Action Area, impacting the lives of 10,000 individuals. Of these, 5,000 will have met their basic needs and have access to services, 2,620 will increase their financial independence and over 2,100 individuals will have entrepreneurial training resulting in 395 starting their own enterprises.

There have been a number of innovative approaches that supported employment for people with disabilities and various business process models, from idea to start-up. A notable initiative is the Regional Business Hub with [Muskoka Futures](#) for rural entrepreneurs to start up and scale their businesses. Small businesses are the driver of the economy across Canada, particularly in rural communities. Through this program, Muskoka Futures will consolidate access to business services through physical and virtual spaces, offer programs and services to include specific business process models, and increase access to coaches and mentors. External evidence indicates that less formal interactions such as co-working and "collisions" with advisors play a key role in business growth. The Hub model will invite coaches, mentors and other business service providers (public and private sector) to be present. Businesses will also be invited to work from the Hub, or simply drop in, and may interact with the coaches/mentors/providers in attendance. Accessing coaching and professional services expertise is proven to significantly improve a business' success and growth. Muskoka Futures will provide each business up to 50% reimbursement on the first 25 hours of coaching accessed through their program. Businesses gain first-hand experience with expertise and see the return on investment.

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 focussed 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

Cycle 5 and 6 Granting Highlights: Winter 2017



In its most recent granting cycle, OTF invested 9% of available funds to support initiatives in the [Green People](#) Action Area of the [Grow](#) investment stream. Grants recommended for approval were fairly evenly split across the two Green People [Priority Outcomes](#), and addressed all five of the Green People [Grant Results](#). These investments will collectively impact the lives of over **19,600** Ontarians.

Notable this cycle are efforts to apply science and evidence-based approaches to advance conservation and restoration planning. This is exemplified by a project of the [Lake Scugog Stewards](#), which are undertaking a local, citizen-driven exploration of the environmental changes occurring in Lake Scugog in order to identify the causes of an alarming decline in Walleye, an ecologically and economically important fish species. By applying evidence-based practices to assess a wide variety of aspects of the lake, in varying habitats, throughout all four seasons of the year, the organization will develop the first complete picture of ongoing stressors in Lake Scugog and the threats to Walleye. This will enable the development and implementation of the most appropriate and sustainable conservation and restoration activities, by fisheries managers and the community and lakeside dwellers. Such approaches are critical to ensuring that the results of conservation and restoration activities are effective and long-lasting.

Since the 2015 launch of OTF's investment strategy, OTF has invested \$21.56 million into 121 initiatives in the Green People Action Area; \$10.47 million has been invested in 56 initiatives in fiscal 2016-2017.

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 Ontario's 2016 Budget. Our investments also aligns 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 action 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

Cycle 5 and 6 Granting Highlights: Winter 2017



Investments in the [Inspired People](#) Action Area have benefitted more than **302,736 people** in fiscal 2016-2017. In this Action Area, OTF has invested \$23.8 million in 190 initiatives since the 2015 introduction of its Investment Strategy; \$7.8 million in 67 initiatives in fiscal 2016-2017.

The Inspired People Action Area accounts for 13% of investments in granting cycles 5 and 6, with an estimated impact on **275,247** people, the broadest reach of all six of OTF Action Areas. Of that investment, 42% will fund the transfer of skills and knowledge to the next generation of artistic leaders, 47% will fund increasing access to arts-based learning and compelling artistic, cultural and heritage experiences and 11% will fund the preservation and animation of cultural heritage.

A notable example of an investment in the transfer of skills and knowledge to the next generation of artistic leaders is being led by [imagineNATIVE](#), an organization dedicated to Indigenous media arts and artists. Through this two-year investment, imagineNATIVE will grow its professional development opportunities for First Nations, Metis and Inuit (FNMI) screen content creators by offering year-round panels, workshops, residencies, commissions, networking events, masterclasses and labs. By increasing FNMI artists' access to Indigenous-focused resources, skills and training at all stages of their careers, imagineNATIVE will fill a void in the current landscape for Indigenous-specific professional development initiatives in media arts.

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 intercultural 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

Cycle 5 and 6 Granting Highlights: Winter 2017



The [Connected People](#) Action Area was introduced in 2015 as part of OTF's Investment Strategy. Since then, the Foundation has invested approximately \$37 million in 249 initiatives that reduce social isolation or improve community by harnessing our diversity. The 2016-2017 fiscal year has seen an investment of \$18 million through the 99 grants made in this area, which will impact **50,000 Ontarians**.

In the last two granting cycles, the total granting in the Connected People action area is at \$10.923 million which accounts for **27% of our investments and will impact 26,000**

Ontarians. A continuing theme is the widespread focus on addressing the causes and impacts of social isolation. There is a strong recognition of the impact of social isolation on an aging demographic and a growing newcomer population, among others. The increasing role of engaged and organized community members in building strong neighbourhoods is also emerging as a theme in this action area. This can be seen in the implementation of a number Sustainable Neighbourhood Action Plans.

One example is the NeighborPLAN project which scales up the Active Neighbourhoods Canada project in three new neighbourhoods in the Peterborough area. NeighborPLAN applies a tested model of deep community engagement and intersectional capacity building to strengthen social and physical infrastructure in a sustainable way. Another excellent example is the [Oriole Food Space](#), which is a partnership between the North York Harvest Food Bank, Flemingdon Health Centre, and Working Women Community Centre. This project brings together diverse groups to shape their community and reduce social isolation by using food as a platform for engagement and social action on issues related to food security and poverty.

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 3-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 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 the Connected People Action Area are: diverse groups work better together to shape community; and reduced social isolation.