

ACTION AREA: PROMISING YOUNG PEOPLE

Cycle 3 & 4 Granting Highlights - Summer 2016:



Investments in the Promising Young People Action Area will benefit more than **30,000 people** thus far in fiscal 2016-2017. This includes over **8,000 parents, caregivers, and adult allies** who will gain skills to support the children and youth in their lives. It also includes more than **23,000 children and youth** who will develop their social and emotional strengths or engage in their community. Programming for children and youth to improve their social and emotional strengths will come in a variety of sectors, including the arts.

One such initiative that will improve the social and emotional strengths of 400 children and youth facing barriers through the arts is being undertaken by Sistema Toronto. Sistema Toronto runs an evidence-based program that uses music education to help children from marginalized communities in Toronto to realize their full potential. Through music, Sistema Toronto will support children's overall development, self-esteem, empathy, and community engagement.

In the Promising Young People Action area, OTF has invested \$29.4 million in 158 initiatives since the 2015 introduction of the new Investment Strategy; \$7.0 million in 55 initiatives thus far in fiscal 2016-2017.

Alignment with Government Priorities

The Promising Young People Action Area is strategically aligned with the direction of the Ontario government in several areas. Promising Young People Priority Outcome of 'more children and youth having social and emotional strengths' is very much in line with Ontario's Well-Being Strategy for Education. OTF investments in community groups to achieve this outcome leverages the work of the Ministry of Education to promote well-being efforts in schools.

OTF continues to support the work of the Ministry of Children and Youth Services as identified in the Enhanced Youth Action Plan and the Stepping Up report. Our investments in initiatives that meaningfully engage youth provide them the opportunity to thrive and successfully transition into adulthood. As well, OTF supports youth innovation by investing in initiatives that directly recognize and value the voice of youth in creating solutions to community challenges.

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.