



Youth Action Fund Guidelines

Overview of the Fund

The Youth Action Fund (YAF), as informed by our Strategic Plan, offers grants to grassroots initiatives working with youth who are underserved by the education system and overrepresented in the justice and child welfare systems. The development of this fund was guided by a series of consultations with experts and advocates in the field.

More specifically, the Youth Action Fund grants are for grassroots initiatives to develop and lead projects where they:

- Elevate priorities and voices of youth with lived experiences in the identified systems
- Promote equitable and accountable institutions and systems
- Advocate for evidence-based policy
- Support initiatives working on, or, advocating for early intervention
- Support initiatives that are informed by youth, families, and communities

Eligibility

Initiatives must be:

- Led and informed by young people supporting youth leadership (30 inclusive and under)
- Based in Ontario (all group members and expenses must be in the province)
- Group should be a Charity, Nonprofit, or a Grassroots Group (for-profit entities are not eligible for funding)
- Based within the communities they are serving and/or with a proven history of working with the communities they identify
- Distant programming with First Nations must be welcomed by invitation and/or in partnership with the youth and supported by their community-based allies

Grant Amount

The Youth Action Fund provides operating and project grants to organizations and initiatives working in Ontario. Groups can request up to \$100,000 per year for up to three years for a maximum total of \$300,000.

Eligible Expenses

You can apply for funding to cover:

- Salaries, honoraria, stipends
- Transportation, food, childcare and other expenses that make project activities

- accessible to young people and other stakeholders
- Project materials and small equipment/technology directly related to the project's administrative costs

Ineligible Expenses

As a general rule, we are unable to fund:

- Fundraising campaigns
- Microgrant projects
- Capital projects
- Direct financial support to for-profit enterprises
- Endowments
- Sponsorship of events and conferences
- Ongoing operating expenses unrelated to the proposed project
- Projects involving partisan political activities
- Projects involving strictly religious purposes or activities
- Projects outside of Ontario

Note: Please contact us if you're not sure whether the expenses you anticipate would be eligible for funding or not.

Application Launch: May 7, 2024

Application Deadline: June 25, 2024 by 5PM EST

Information Session:

If you have any questions regarding the Youth Action Fund, please register for a webinar below:

- [June 4 at 12:30PM](#)

To Apply

1. Review the Youth Action Fund Guidelines to see if your group meets the eligibility criteria.
2. Create an account on Foundant, our [grant management portal](#), to access the application form.

Applicants with Limited Internet Access

Applications are submitted in writing through our [online portal](#); however, if submitting your application through the online portal is not a possibility due to inadequate internet access, please see below for a link to the application in Word.

[Here](#) is the link to the Word version of the application.

Please share the completed application to info@laidlawfdn.org.

Oral Submissions

We recognize the significance of oral transmission of stories, histories, lessons and other knowledge to sustain identities for Indigenous communities. In keeping with this, we accept oral submissions. Please get in touch with us to request an oral application process.

COVID-19

Applicants are encouraged to ensure that all Covid-19 safety measures are followed. Please reach out to Laidlaw staff if you have any questions.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What types of initiatives can be funded?

Youth Action Fund grants a variety of projects, e.g., community-based research, policy & advocacy work, and programs. Examples of grantees can be found [here](#).

How many Youth Action Fund grants does the Foundation intend to make through the current call for applications?

This depends on the number of eligible applications and the budget that potential grantees need to do this work. On average and during an open call year, over 100 applications are received and around 10 projects are funded.

How much can we request?

You can apply for up to \$100,000 per year for a maximum of three years for a maximum total of \$300,000.

We need funding to support our core activities, not a project. Can we apply to the Youth Action Fund?

No. We do not provide core funding. However, we fund core operating costs associated with a project if they are directly related to the project.

Do we need to submit audited financial statements?

No. We do not require financial statements to apply to the Youth Action Fund.

Does an organization need to be youth-led to be eligible?

No. However, the project itself needs to be entirely led by youth (30 and under), this can be done by youth staff, youth advisors, youth board members, *etc.* Youth who make up the group leads will essentially undertake a project on behalf of the

organization.

We are a social enterprise / a for-profit business, can we get funded?

No. We do not fund for-profit entities. Additionally, we do not fund initiatives that come with a cost to the participants or activities that could generate profit (e.g., markets with vendors, event fee, program fee, fee for services, etc.)

We're asking for funds to have our own microgrants program. Could this get funded?

No. We are unable to fund projects that give out microgrants to other participants, as well as fundraising campaigns, capital expenses, for-profit activities and business/social enterprises, endowments, sponsorship of events and conferences, partisan political activities, religious activities, and projects outside of Ontario.

We are a grassroots group, can we apply to receive funds directly?

No. Currently, the Foundation requires non-incorporated grassroots groups to partner with a registered charitable organization to act as a trustee and provide organizational mentorship and administrative support. The Organizational Mentor will receive funds to distribute to the grassroots group. Depending on capacity, one charity can be an OM for one or multiple groups. While we strongly recommend having a partnership agreement between the group and the Organizational Mentor, this is not required to apply.

What is the usual percentage for admin fees, especially if working with an Organizational Mentor? Do we have to factor admin costs into our budget proposal?

The admin fee for grassroots groups generally goes towards the OM and we don't encourage more than 10% of the budget to be allocated to this line item, which you would factor into your budget proposal. For charities, and nonprofits not working with an OM, the admin budget line can be between 10-15%.

Our project benefits Black and/or Indigenous youth but little to no one in our group shares these racial identities, would our application be competitive?

No. We do not fund projects where the "by and for" is not a structural component of the group. Echoing South African disability activists, Laidlaw espouses the "Nothing about us, without us" slogan. Black, Indigenous, and racialized youth know how best to support their own communities. We are not interested in funding projects that parachute into communities and perpetuate a saviour complex.

Which projects will get priority?

Black and Indigenous youth-led groups will be prioritized over non-Black-led and non-Indigenous-led organizations.

Read the Foundation for Black Communities' definition of a B3 organization (Black-focused, Black-led, and Black-serving) [here](#). Find The Circle's definition of Indigenous-benefiting, Indigenous-informed, Indigenous Partnerships and Indigenous-led [here](#).

Can we pay ourselves through this grant?

Yes, please! As long as salaries and honoraria only go to youth and no one above 30 gets paid. We strongly recommend paying youth staff at least a living wage within your area. You can find rates as calculated by [Living Wage Ontario](#). Applicants can opt to do salaries or hourly wages for staff and honoraria for participants - whichever method works best for your group.

Am I able to accept a grant if I'm currently on ODSP?

Folks can keep their ODSP benefit while gainfully employed. Earnings are capped at \$1,000 per month on top of what you receive from ODSP. In 2022, the ODSP earning cap increased from \$200 to \$1000 per month. For every dollar earned past the \$1,000 cap, ODSP claws back \$0.75. After the \$1,000/month cap, you are entitled to \$10,000 in-kind compensation annually. Visit ontario.ca/page/ontario-disability-support-program. If you have questions regarding programming and ODSP, contact the Program Director.

Will letters of support increase the strength of our application?

We don't require letters of support, however, providing recent youth testimonials vouching for the initiative could increase the validity of your application. We are more interested in youth validation over institutional validation so providing letters of support from adults/school boards/institutions does not necessarily strengthen applications.

We understand that the Foundation will not fund capital expenditures. Is computer equipment considered to be capital expenditures?

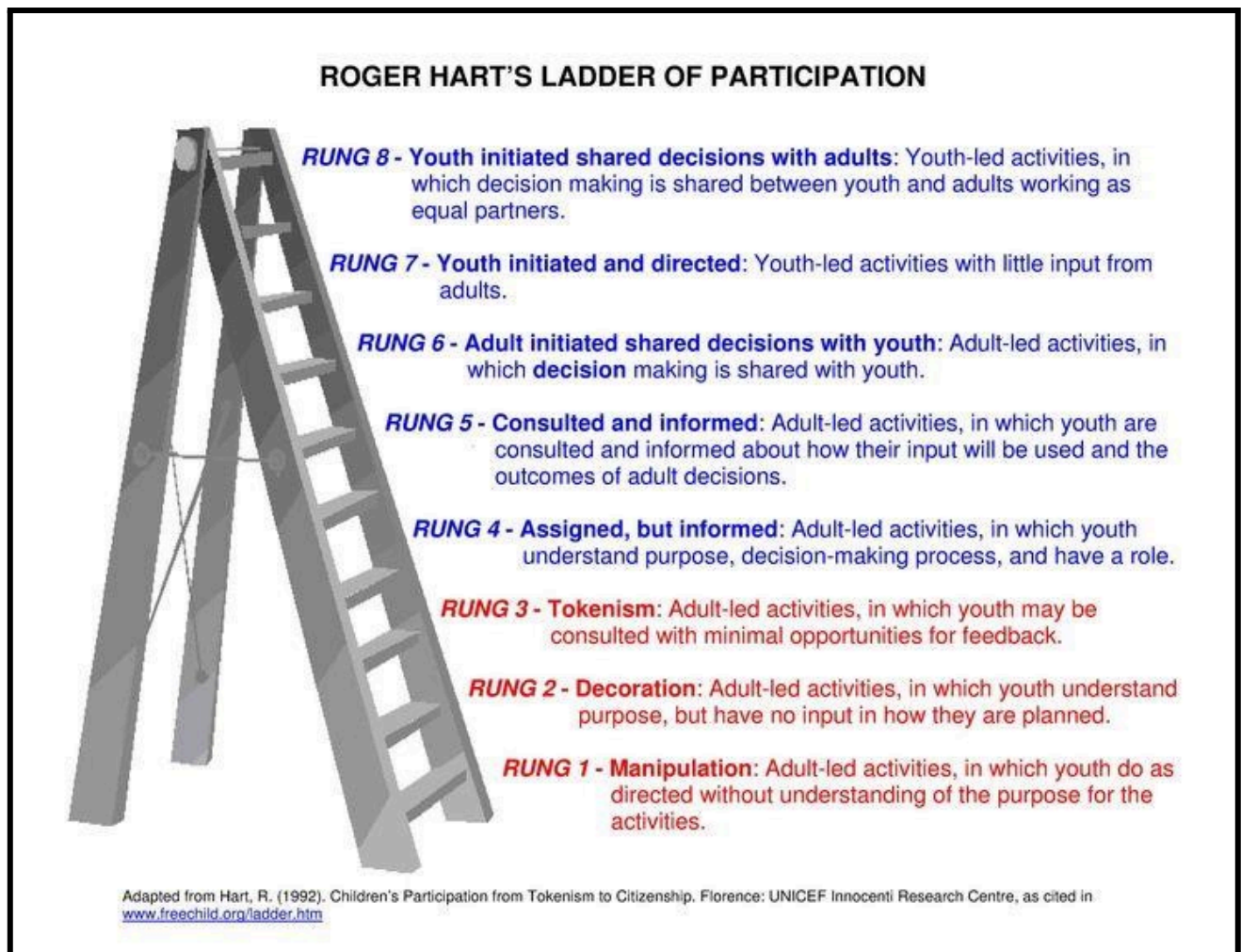
We will not fund capital expenditures for immovable assets (*i.e.*, buildings, furniture, infrastructure, land, *etc.*). Small equipment including tech equipment relevant to the project could be included in the budget.

What do you mean by youth-led initiatives?

Laidlaw funds projects that are envisioned, developed, led, and implemented by young people (30 and under, at time of application). The image below presents eight levels of youth participation that start from manipulation and tokenism at the lower rungs, to full participation at the top. Youth Action Fund focuses on groups within Rung 7, meaning little to no input from adults - *e.g.*, only paying salaries and honoraria for youth (30 and under), no projects that are adult-directed or ideated and where youth only implement

or participate, no projects that don't have enough Black and Indigenous youth with lived experiences of the system(s).

E.g., A mentorship program where youth will benefit from one-on-one coaching with mentors who will get an honoraria but the mentors are over 30 would not be seen as youth-led as the dynamics become top-down knowledge transfer from adult-to-youth.



What are some common mistakes applicants make when submitting proposals?

Here is a non-exhaustive list of general mistakes people tend to make when applying:

- Forgetting to mention group leads' lived experience of the system(s), ages, and racial identity
- Parachuting into a community and perpetuating saviourism
- Passion doesn't come through or has been diluted
- Project plan & budget don't match or have line breakdown or enough details
- Alignment to the system(s) is not strong enough

- Project isn't youth-led but just youth-serving
- Not reading the FAQs, guidelines, and eligibility criteria
- Group leads / youth writing application don't attend the info session

We got funding from Laidlaw before, does this affect our new grant application?

Applications are evaluated on merits. Previous Laidlaw funding has no bearing on new applications unless you are a current grantee, and you're seeking support for the same project and activities. If that's the case, you'll need to communicate clearly how your new application will build on your learnings from the previous project.

N.B.: If it comes down to a decision between a project/organization that is currently being funded vs. one that isn't, reviewers might opt for the one that has not yet gotten a Laidlaw grant.

What do you mean by the justice, child welfare, and education systems?

While justice could be understood as social justice, child welfare as the wellbeing of children, and education as learning - YAF seeks initiatives operating specifically within, or, as an alternative to the legal/criminal, foster care, and education systems. For all three systems, we understand that while some work within institutions, others will seek to offer alternative systems.

We understand how youth can have lived experiences in the criminal and child welfare systems. Can you explain what you mean by education?

Projects focusing on education should be by and for Black and Indigenous young people having lived experience with the education system, *e.g.*, being pushed out of the system, being at higher risk of, or already impacted by, streaming, suspensions, detentions, expulsions, lack of access to post-secondary education, *etc.*

N.B.: YAF seeks projects by and for young people impacted by the education system rather than broader projects seeking to educate or raise awareness.

Can our project focus on multiple regions or does it have to be only one?

Yes. Projects can focus on an individual or multiple regions, neighborhoods, and/or cities within Ontario. All activities and expenses must be conducted in Ontario. Laidlaw is a province-wide funder and cannot fund initiatives outside of ON, partial activities in a different province or region, nor salaries for staff outside of the province.

How do we submit an application?

Submit an application online through [Foundant](#), the Foundation's online grant management portal. If you have limited access to the internet, you can contact us and

request an oral application process or submission via email.

When using the portal, can we leave the application unfinished and return to it later?

Yes. Your application will remain in draft form until you hit submit. You can return to your draft application at any time. Try not to leave the application in draft until the last minute as the system times out.

On deadline day, can we submit our application past deadline time?

No. [Foundant](#) times out as soon as the deadline time hits (e.g. 5PM). If you don't submit before the time, your application will stay in draft and not go through evaluation. There is usually a 30-mins grace period built into the system (e.g., 5:30PM) and due to the volume of applications, making exceptions to submit after the deadline will not be possible.

What happens after we submit an application?

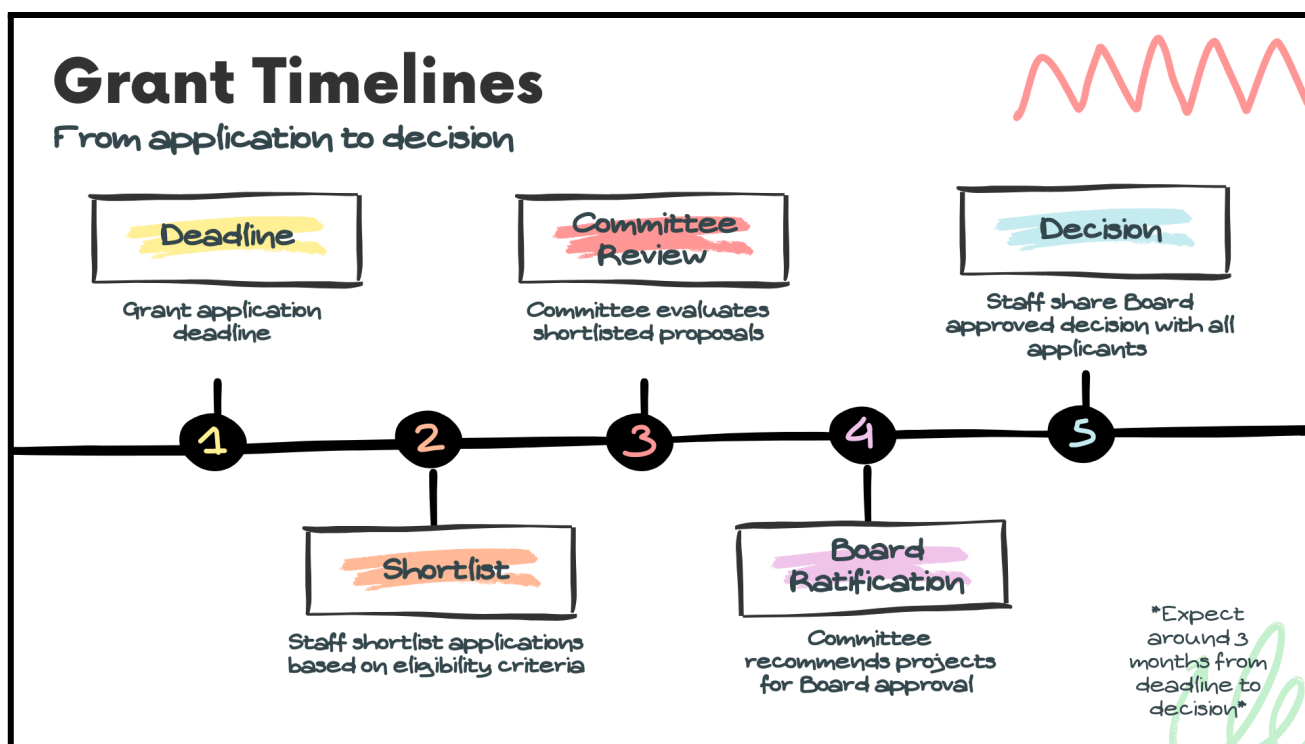
- You will receive an email confirming receipt of application.
- Laidlaw staff review each application for eligibility.
- Strong eligible applications that align well with the Youth Action Fund priorities will be shared with the Granting Committee (GC).
- If we and/or the Granting Committee have follow-up questions about your application, we will reach out.
- The GC reviews shortlisted applications and then meets to consider them. Together, they decide which projects to recommend for funding.
- The GC recommends projects to the Foundation's Board for ratification.
- Following the Board's ratification, we will contact you to share decisions made.

How do I learn about the outcome of my application?

After a decision is reached on your application, you will receive an email notification. We do not release results by phone unless you went through an offline application process.

How long will it take to find out the outcome of my application?

In general, expect 3 months from deadline to decision. Applications go through a series of evaluation:



Our grant application has been approved – what happens next?

Congratulations! You will be asked to review and sign an agreement, which may have special conditions attached that are specific to your grant. Generally, the first installment is paid soon after the receipt of the signed agreement and the remaining installments are paid according to the payment schedule drawn up to suit your particular project.

What is a payment schedule?

A payment schedule outlines dates and grant amounts made to your group by the Foundation for the approved budget. It is developed by taking into consideration the information provided in the work plan, and often also in consultation with the grantee.

Our application did not get accepted. Is there somewhere I can get feedback?

You can contact us directly. We will provide you with feedback on your application based on Granting Committee deliberations.

What happens if COVID-19 impacts my project?

YAF grantees are encouraged to see which activities could be conducted virtually *i.e.*, over Zoom or other similar platforms. We also approve budget reallocations to allow for the purchase of equipment for online communication, where possible.

What adjustments will the Foundation make during the pandemic?

Laidlaw adjusted monitoring of grants and program delivery to reduce additional stress. Funds should still align with the focus of the grant, however, flexibility will be extended for budget reallocation, project deliverables, granting deadlines, and project start dates. If you need to change project plans or make other adjustments to your grant, please reach out to us to discuss.

We have some more questions. Who can I contact?

For more information, please contact the Director of Grants & Community Initiatives, Aldeli Albán Reyna, at aalbanreyna@laidlawfdn.org.