

# **Ontario Autism Program: Workforce Capacity Fund Application Guidelines**

August 2021

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# 1. Background on the Ontario Autism Program

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In December 2019, the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (“the ministry”) announced key elements of the needs-based, sustainable and family-centred Ontario Autism Program (OAP). In the needs-based OAP, all children/youth up to age 18 with a written diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder (ASD) from a qualified professional are eligible to register for the OAP.

Aligned with the recommendations of the Ontario Autism Program Advisory Panel, the OAP will offer a range of services and interventions designed to respond to the individual needs of children and youth on the autism spectrum, and their families.

## Core Clinical Services

Starting in March 2021, Ontario began to roll out Core Clinical Services, a key program pathway in the needs-based OAP. Under this program pathway, the government will provide funding directly to families so that they can purchase the eligible services of their choice.

OAP core clinical services and supports include:

- applied behaviour analysis
- speech-language pathology
- occupational therapy
- mental health services, including counselling and/or psychotherapy
- technology at the recommendation of a regulated health professional or Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA)

Learn more about Core Clinical Services on the ministry’s website: [Ontario Autism Program: guidelines for core clinical services and supports | Ontario.ca](#)

## 2. Introducing the OAP Workforce Capacity Fund

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The needs-based OAP is changing the way many autism services are delivered in Ontario. With more funding going directly to families for OAP Core Clinical Services, the demand for clinicians is expected to rise, and the sector will need to adapt to offer a broader range of flexible and individualized services in an open market. This transition may pose unique challenges for providers across Ontario, particularly those serving Northern, rural, remote, and First Nations communities, as well as francophone families.

To respond to these challenges, the ministry is launching the OAP Workforce Capacity Fund (“the Fund”), a grant program for children’s service providers and their community partners.

The Fund will provide 12-month grants through the following streams:

- 1. Service Provider Expansion Stream:** provides direct financial support to help children’s service providers expand their internal capacity to deliver OAP Core Clinical Services to more children.
- 2. Sector Innovation Stream:** supports organizations or groups of organizations to develop and test innovative responses to OAP Core Clinical Services workforce and service system challenges. Projects funded through this stream must target an entire community, region(s), or the province as a whole.

The OAP Workforce Capacity Fund is part of a broader plan to build autism services capacity in Ontario. [Read more about the ministry’s plan.](#)

### 2.1 What we hope to achieve

The vision of the Fund is to grow and develop the OAP Core Clinical Service market so that families in the OAP can purchase the services they need, where and when they need them.

Overall, the Fund has three broad objectives:

- 1. Workforce:** build, retain, and grow the OAP Core Clinical Services workforce.
- 2. Organizations:** increase the skills and knowledge of service provider organizations to operate within a consumer-driven market.
- 3. Markets:** increase market presence of OAP Core Clinical Services and strengthen service delivery models that improve service access for families.

What success looks like:

- A diverse range of Core Clinical Service providers are available across the province.

- Core Clinical Service providers have viable and sustainable business models that respond to need.
- Core Clinical Service providers are able to recruit and retain high-quality clinicians.
- Clinicians have increased skills, confidence and motivation to deliver quality OAP Core Clinical Services.
- Students and jobseekers are aware of OAP Core Clinical Services employment opportunities.
- New partnerships and collaborative approaches are established.
- New, more productive service delivery models are established.
- Indigenous and francophone families, and those living in Northern, rural and remote areas have access to local, culturally appropriate services.

## 2.2 Priority Applications

The ministry recognizes that there are capacity needs across Ontario and will accept applications focused on any region or sociodemographic group. However, the ministry is particularly interested in receiving applications focused on Northern, rural, remote, Indigenous and/or francophone families in the OAP, given the unique challenges faced by these families.

# 3. Grant Timing and Size

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## 3.1 How long is the grant term?

Grants will be awarded for a 12-month period.

The ministry will seek applications for the OAP Workforce Capacity Fund in three rounds: Summer 2021, Summer 2022, and Summer 2023. For each application round, the ministry will be looking for 12-month projects or activities.

Organizations can submit one application per stream, per year. The ministry will not extend any grants beyond the 12-month period, however, organizations that wish to continue their projects beyond 12-months can reapply for funding in the next application round.

## 3.2 How much funding is available?

Eligible organizations can apply for 12-month grants in the following ranges:

	Minimum	Maximum
<b>Service Provider Expansion Stream</b>	\$25,000	\$200,000
<b>Sector Innovation Stream</b>	\$25,000	\$300,000

Funding will flow monthly in 12 installments. The ministry will consider alternative payment schedules where appropriate.

You can find more details on the specific expenses you can include in your grant budget in the application forms.

## 4. Eligible Organizations and Projects

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### 4.1 Service Provider Expansion Stream

The Service Provider Expansion Stream provides financial support to help children's service providers expand their internal capacity to deliver OAP Core Clinical Services to more children.

The purpose of this stream is to rapidly and sustainably increase workforce supply and organizational readiness for the effective delivery of OAP Core Clinical Services.

#### Who can apply?

The ministry will consider applications from **children's service providers** (public and private) who intend to provide any Core Clinical Service (applied behaviour analysis, speech-language pathology, occupational therapy, and/or mental health services) for OAP clients in 2021-22 and beyond.

In addition, eligible organizations must:

- Be Ontario-based;
- Have legal status (e.g., federally or provincially incorporated);
- Not be in default of the terms and conditions of any grant or loan agreement with any ministry or agency of the Government of Ontario; and,

- Have or are able to obtain at least \$2 million commercial general liability insurance coverage, before the legal service agreement is executed.

### What can funding be used for?

Funding from the Service Provider Expansion Stream can only be used for activities that directly increase the organization's ability to deliver OAP Core Clinical Services.

Only the following activities are eligible:

- Staff training;
- Hiring additional clinical or non-clinical staff;
- Increasing hours for clinical or non-clinical staff employed by the organization;
- Purchasing clinical supervision;
- Purchasing technology that directly supports virtual service delivery;
- Service provider travel within Ontario to serve more children living in rural and remote communities.

## 4.2 Sector Innovation Stream

The Sector Innovation Stream supports organizations or groups of organizations to develop and test innovative responses to OAP Core Clinical Services workforce and service system challenges. Projects funded through this stream must target an entire community, region(s), or the province as a whole.

The purpose of this stream is to build capacity for OAP Core Clinical Services through high-impact innovations that could be scaled to areas across the province.

### Who can apply?

The following organizations are eligible to apply for funding:

- **Children's service providers** (public and private);
- **Indigenous-led organizations**<sup>1</sup> including, but not limited to:

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<sup>1</sup> An Indigenous-led organization is an organization that serves an Indigenous community and whose governance reflects the composition of that community.

- not-for-profit and for-profit corporations, registered charities, and other public bodies that are Indigenous-led; and,
- Indigenous communities (inclusive of First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities);
- **Post-secondary institutions**, in partnership with children’s service providers;
- **Professional associations and regulatory colleges**, in partnership with children’s service providers; and,
- **Not-for-profit organizations and community groups**, in partnership with children’s service providers.

In addition, eligible organizations must:

- Be Ontario-based;
- Have legal status (e.g., organizations established by or under legislation; federally or provincially incorporated; band councils established under the Indian Act; or other Indigenous-led organizations that are incorporated);
- Not be in default of the terms and conditions of any grant or loan agreement with any ministry or agency of the Government of Ontario; and,
- Have or are able to obtain at least \$2 million commercial general liability insurance coverage, before the legal service agreement is executed.

## **Groups of Organizations / Consortia**

For the Sector Innovation Stream, the ministry strongly encourages applications from groups of organizations / consortia.

For projects led by a consortium, one organization must be appointed as the ‘lead organization.’ The lead organization will prepare the application form and, if successful, enter into a service agreement with the ministry and manage all aspects of the grant, including administration of the service agreement and reporting.

Applications must identify all members of the consortium and their role on the project. Note that while the lead organization must meet all eligibility criteria, they are free to partner with any organization.

## **What can funding be used for?**

Funding from the Sector Innovation Stream can be used for a broad range of projects. To be eligible, the project must meet the following criteria:

- Involves developing and testing an innovative solution;

- Responds to a broad workforce or service system challenge related to OAP Core Clinical Services;
- Contributes towards at least one of the Fund's three objectives (see Section 2.1); and,
- Targets an entire community, region(s), or the province as a whole.

Examples of eligible projects could include, but are not limited to:

- Non-wage related activities to support recruitment and retention in rural and remote communities (e.g., field work placements).
- Professional development training and communities of practice.
- Initiatives to improve cultural and language competency.
- Activities to help service providers develop business plans and market readiness strategies.
- Activities to help service providers use data and technology to inform decision making, service provision, system planning and performance measurement.
- Pilots for new service delivery approaches to increase access to Core Clinical Services, including technology.
- Initiatives to support service planning and coordination among service providers.
- Activities to establish collaborative partnerships to prepare communities and regions for the new OAP service delivery model.

## 5. Ineligible Activities

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The OAP Workforce Capacity Fund aims to support activities that develop the OAP Core Clinical Services market. It is not about creating new autism or clinical service programs or building up other program pathways in the OAP.

The following activities are ineligible and will not be funded:

- Activities that focus on other OAP pathways (e.g., Foundational Family Services, Early Years programs, Urgent Response Services) or other existing special needs service programs.
- The creation and/or delivery of new clinical service programs, outside of the framework of the OAP.

In addition, funding cannot be used for wage enhancements, bonuses, new benefits, or other compensation increases for existing staff members.

## 6. Evaluation Criteria

The ministry will evaluate all eligible applications against a consistent set of criteria. Given the diversity of potential projects, this will be a qualitative review, and will not contain any numerical scoring or weighting.

The specific evaluation criteria for each stream are as follows:

Category	Service Provider Expansion Stream	Sector Innovation Stream
<b>Organizational Capacity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ The applicant has relevant organizational knowledge, skills and experience.</li> <li>✓ The applicant has demonstrated a commitment to supporting the delivery of OAP Core Clinical Services in 2021 and 2022.</li> </ul>	
<b>Consortium Capacity</b>	<i>Not Applicable.</i>	<p>If the application is from a consortium:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ The applicant has identified all consortium members and their roles.</li> <li>✓ The consortium has a reasonable plan to work together to achieve project goals.</li> </ul>
<b>Project Description</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ The applicant has clearly defined the focus of the activities they would like to undertake, and related outputs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ The applicant has clearly defined their project and specific deliverables that they will achieve within the grant period.</li> <li>✓ The project involves developing and testing an innovative solution.</li> <li>✓ The applicant has provided clear and compelling evidence on the need for this project, in order to respond to a workforce or service system challenge to deliver OAP Core Clinical Services.</li> </ul>

Category	Service Provider Expansion Stream	Sector Innovation Stream
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ The project will contribute to one or more of the Fund’s three objectives (see Section 2.1 for list).</li> </ul>
<b>Impact</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ The applicant has demonstrated how grant funding will directly result in their ability to serve more children in the OAP.</li> <li>✓ The ministry will also consider other direct results from grant funding (e.g., improvements to service quality and service outcomes, increase in family choice, enhanced efficiency, lower service costs for families).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ The project will have a collective positive impact for a community, region(s), or the province as a whole.</li> </ul>
<b>Sustainability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ The applicant can sustain their organization’s increased capacity beyond the grant funding period.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Outcomes from the project can be sustained beyond the grant funding period.</li> </ul>
<b>Priority Applications</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ If applicable, the applicant has explained how their proposed activities will benefit Northern, rural, remote, Indigenous and/or francophone families.</li> </ul>	
<b>Implementation Plan</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ The applicant is ready to move quickly to implement activities in 2021-22 and has a viable workplan and timelines to deliver results within one year.</li> <li>✓ The applicant has an appropriate strategy to manage risks that could affect the successful delivery of the project.</li> </ul>	
<b>Evaluation Plan</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ The applicant has a sound plan to track progress and measure the success of this project.</li> </ul>	
<b>Budget</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ The budget is cost-effective and proportional to the scale and complexity of the proposed activities. Applicants are expected to seek reasonable opportunities to reduce costs where possible and maximize the impact of all available funding in order to achieve good value-for-money.</li> </ul>	

# 7. Application Process

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## 7.1 Before Applying

Before applying, the ministry encourages organizations to review the entire Application Guidelines.

Organizations should also review:

- the Applicant Checklist
- The ministry's [guidelines for OAP core clinical services](#)
- The ministry's data on workforce capacity:
  - [Results of the Special Needs Workforce Survey](#)

## 7.2 Steps in the Process

The application process will include the following steps and timelines:

### Step 1: Application

Applicants complete and submit the OAP Workforce Capacity Fund application form.



### Step 2: Evaluation

An interdisciplinary ministry team will review and evaluate all applications. During the evaluation phase, the ministry may follow-up with some applicants to request further information or clarification about their projects.



### Step 3: Notification

The ministry will notify all applicants about the outcome of their application. Approval may be conditional upon the applicant making changes to their proposed project or budget.



### Step 4: Service Agreement and Funding

Successful applicants must negotiate and enter into a service agreement with the ministry to receive funding. If the successful applicant and the ministry are unable to agree to terms in a service agreement, funding will not be provided.

Funds will flow to the grant recipient only once this agreement is signed by both parties. Project implementation can begin as soon as the service agreement is signed.

## 7.3 How to Apply

Applicants must email their completed application form to [OAP\\_CFA@ontario.ca](mailto:OAP_CFA@ontario.ca) with the subject line: “Workforce Capacity Fund - [Name of Applicant Organization]”.

The deadline to apply is **September 19, 2021 at 11:59pm EST**. The ministry will not accept applicants submitted after this deadline.

Applicants can apply in English or French.

## 8. Additional Information

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### 8.1 Reporting

Funding recipients must report-back to the ministry on the progress of their projects and use of funding:

- An interim progress report will be due mid-way through implementation;
- A final evaluation report will be due after completing the project.

The ministry will provide templates and timelines for reporting as part of the service agreement.

### 8.2 Risk Assessment

During the application process, the ministry will assess each applicant's organizational risk by looking at factors such as the organization's financial position and governance structures. To support this assessment, applicants will need to submit audited financial statements as part of their application package.

Organizations that are identified as high risk may still receive funding, but they will be subject to additional reporting requirements.

## 9. Questions

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If you have questions about the OAP Workforce Capacity Fund, or your organization's eligibility, please contact [OAP\\_CFA@ontario.ca](mailto:OAP_CFA@ontario.ca)