



TORONTO
FOUNDATION

Volunteer
Toronto

Power of Us Microgrant Program Applicant Guide

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Be a catalyst for community connection! The Power of Us microgrant program provides \$1000 to resident-led groups, grassroots organizations, and informal collectives across the City of Toronto towards projects that help build social connections and increase civic participation. The funded initiatives seek to create opportunities to activate neighbourhoods, animate public spaces, or bridge connections between people to increase a sense of belonging in our communities and address the growing challenge of social isolation.

Toronto Foundation has partnered with Volunteer Toronto to coordinate this program.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Research from the 2023 Toronto's Vital Signs report points to three alarming trends:

- Participation in groups and activities is down by approximately 30% versus before the pandemic.
- Toronto ranks as among the loneliest places in the country. About 925,000 adults in Toronto (37%) felt lonely on at least three or four days in the last week in 2023—higher than the rest of the country (28%).
- Between 2018 and 2022, the volunteer rate in Toronto fell from 37% to 25%. Considering the average volunteering levels, this equates to a loss of approximately 36 million volunteer hours or 20,000 full-time positions.

We believe increasing participation in group activities can curb the rising tide of social isolation and loneliness. Engaging in your community with others can increase your

wellbeing, expand your social support network, and have a positive impact on society as a whole.

POSSIBLE PROJECT IDEAS

- Tea party for newcomers
- Community garden
- Neighbourhood block party
- Park clean-up
- Skills sharing workshop
- Neighbourhood walking tour or bike ride
- Community sports tournament or demo (eg. karate in the park)
- Toy/food drive
- Public space beautification
- Healing circle

These are just some ideas but welcome any that meet the program objectives.

CONDITIONS & ELIGIBILITY

- Individuals are eligible to apply but must be associated with a group of at least three or more individuals
- Groups can be newly formed but must include the minimum number of individuals
- Organizations CANNOT be businesses, registered nonprofits or charities
- Project activities must take place within the City of Toronto
- Projects must be completed within 6 months of receiving the grant; they can be either one-time events or a series of activities within that period
- Projects that are event based cannot be entirely virtual as this program seeks to encourage in-person connections; hybrid events are acceptable
- Any service offered or event created must be free for participants
- Activities cannot be used to generate any revenue
- Applicants must be 18 years of age or older and reside in the City of Toronto

HOW WILL MY APPLICATION BE REVIEWED?

1. Your application will initially be screened by Toronto Foundation and Volunteer Toronto staff to ensure it meets the eligibility requirements.
2. Eligible applications will then be reviewed by a Selection Committee comprised of community leaders and local journalists.
3. Review criteria for applications will consider the following:
 - a. Geographic distribution of the projects across the city and range of project types
 - b. To what extent does the project help to foster greater social connection and civic participation?
 - c. Will the project be of interest to the target group it is intended for?
 - d. Does the project bring together a diverse group of people or serve to strengthen ties within a particular community?
 - e. Does the applicant group have a reasonable plan to carry out the project?
 - f. Is the intended use of the funds appropriate for the scale and scope of the project?

WHAT HAPPENS IF I RECEIVE A GRANT?

Successful applicants will be notified in February 2024 and grantees will have 6 months to complete their projects. Once projects are completed, grantees will submit either a brief report or participate in a follow-up call to learn about what was achieved. Grantee stories will also be featured as part of a social media campaign.

PROGRAM TIMELINE

November 15, 2023 – Applications open

December 15, 2023 – Applications close

February 2024 – Grant recipients are notified

March 2024 – Funds are distributed, and projects can begin

September 2024 – Project completion date

October 2024 – Project reports due

CONTACT INFORMATION

Phylicia Davis-Wesseling, Community Relations Officer – grants@torontofoundation.ca

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

Applicant Information:

1. What is the name of your group or organization?
2. What is the purpose and/or mission of your group or organization?
3. Please list the names and contact information of the three individuals taking part in this project.

Project Information:

4. Please describe your idea and what you are seeking to accomplish through the Power of Us microgrant program.
5. What neighborhood will your project take place in? For a full list and description of Toronto neighbourhood boundaries, please refer to [this](#).
6. Who is the target audience for your project?
7. How do you believe this project will foster greater social connection and civic participation among the target audience?
8. What is your plan to carry out this project? Successful applicants will receive their funds in early March 2024 and projects are expected to be completed within 6 months. Please describe briefly a list of activities you anticipate completing to ensure the success of the project.
9. How do you plan to use the funds? A simple breakdown of major costs is sufficient. Funds can be used to offset any expenses that were needed to deliver the project.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Are faith-based groups eligible to apply?

Yes, if the project is open to all and not intended for religious activities.

I'm a member of an online group, can I apply?

Yes, if the group can be identified and includes at least 3 individuals committed to working together towards the project. Projects that are event based cannot be entirely virtual, however hybrid events are acceptable.

Does our group need to have an organizational bank account to receive funds?

No, funds can be transferred to an individual's bank account.

Are there any restrictions on how the funds can be spent?

No, funds will be given up front with no conditions and receipts will not be required. The budget submitted within the application should include reasonable expenses for the nature of the project.

Can I form a group with my friends/family and submit an application?

Yes, if there are at least three individuals carrying out the project.

I am under 18 years of age, can I apply?

Members of the group may be under the age restriction however the lead applicant must be at least 18 years old.

ABOUT US

Toronto Foundation exists to create a more fair and just society where everyone can thrive by mobilizing those with resources and the will to partner with others.

Volunteer Toronto's mission is to increase the positive impact that volunteering has on the City of Toronto through innovative initiatives that inspire, inform, and connect volunteers and the organizations that need them.

This program is generously supported by the following organizations:

United Way Greater Toronto

Centre for Addiction and Mental Health

Toronto Zoo Wildlife Conservancy

Northcrest Developments

Environics Institute