

Ontario
Trillium Foundation



Fondation Trillium
de l'Ontario

An agency of the Government of Ontario
Un organisme du gouvernement de l'Ontario

Writing a Trillium Grant – It's More Than Just Filling in the Blanks Tips from 25 years and countless grants

The Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF) awards some \$136 million in grants each year to more than 1,000 community organizations. That means over the next decade, OTF will invest more than \$1 billion in Ontario's public benefit sector and Gladstone Consulting will do its best to bring as much of that benefit to our clients. But submitting a successful grant application,

especially to OTF, takes more than just filling in the spaces on a form.

Our principal consultant, Gary Gladstone, served on the York Region Grant Review Team for the OTF for 12 years, including 2 as chair. The Gladstone Consulting team has written countless grants to Trillium and other funding bodies over the last 25 years and has obtained over \$6.5M in grants over just the last 5 years. Our success comes from a deep understanding of our clients, their needs and their goals and a deep understanding of OTF.

Here are some initial tips to assist you in submitting successful grant applications, specifically to the Ontario Trillium Foundation.

- 1. Register early.** There is nothing more frustrating than not being able to submit a grant because you didn't register in time. OTF posts the registration and application deadlines online (<http://otf.ca/apply-grant/registration-application-deadlines>) and the deadlines are firm. Register at least four weeks before the deadline. OTF will confirm whether your registration has been accepted within ten days. The earlier you register, the more likely you will have the opportunity to address any issues which might come up in the process.
- 2. Are you eligible? Read first.** Take the time to read the Ontario Trillium Foundation website. There you will find whether your organization is eligible for a grant and if your program fits with OTF's Action Areas.
- 3. Don't overshoot.** Apply for an appropriate amount of funding. Apply for what is needed for the specific project with real consideration for an amount that makes sense based on your annual revenue and expenses. The volunteers and staff reading your application have reviewed many grants. If your organization has only managed \$30,000 in annual revenues, OTF may question whether you can handle a grant of over \$200,000 per year.
 - a. Start small, perhaps with a Seed grant. A successful Seed grant provides required evidence to support a larger Grow application.
 - b. If you must apply for a larger amount, show the OTF in your application how you will effectively manage the larger amount. Have you implemented new systems, processes and controls?



Ontario Trillium Foundation representative Gary Gladstone and Dr. Helena Jacek, MPP present a cheque for \$12,500.

4. **Partnership is positive.** OTF likes to see their investment dollars go farther into the community by your partnering with other community agencies. Showing an effective partnership is a positive element to highlight in your application. Speak to others in your sector and your community about making the whole greater than the sum of its parts. If you work with a community partner
 - a. Include them in the planning of the grant applications so that all partners understand and agree to their roles and responsibilities.
 - b. Explain this partnership in the applications so that OTF understands it, as well.
5. **OTF likes to share the risk.** Where you can, show that you have other donors supporting the program. Trillium wants to know that they're not the only ones taking the risk. Even if a donor is only supporting with a small percentage of the ask, it goes along way. Make sure to show enough detail about the expenses other funding partners are supporting. You don't want to appear to be "double dipping."
6. **Know the rules, don't assume.** The Ontario Trillium Foundation wants to help organizations that help communities. There are many misconceptions about many elements of the programs and you should not make assumptions until you have done your research. An good example is the eligibility of religious institutions. Many believe that such institutions cannot apply for grants. In fact, they can, as long as the grant funds have nothing to do with the religious elements of their organizations, such as youth clubs, community services, or day care. Make sure to clearly specify this in the application.
7. **Your application tells a story.** It lets OTF know who your organization is, its plans for the future, its clients and partners and its goals. Be clear. Be concise. Be appealing.
8. **Be clear and jargon free.** Almost every organization develops its own jargon, a shorthand of terms that everyone involved understands. Don't use it in an Ontario Trillium Foundation application. Not all, if any, of the OTF evaluators will be familiar with your organization or the work you do and they certainly won't know your special terms. Keep it simple. Make sure your grant process includes a step to have a friend (who doesn't know your organization) read your grant before submission. They will help you to make sure the grant will be well understood.
9. **Proof read.** It is surprising how often the text of an application describes one project while the budget includes several others. Make sure your application is consistent and includes all the required attachments and the plans your referenced in the text.

Often, it is the smallest of details that make the difference between a successful grant application and disappointment. These few simple guidelines, and other Best Practices learned from experience, have helped Gladstone Consulting clients obtain \$6.5 Million in grants over the past five years, a substantial amount from the Ontario Trillium Foundation.

Gladstone Consulting is pleased to help your organization submit the best applications possible. We provide a full range of grant services, including

- Grant application courses
- Organization review and recommendations
- Review and revision of your completed grant application
- Complete Ontario Trillium Foundation grant writing and submission
- And more.

We want your organization to access the Ontario Trillium Foundation funds it needed. Let [Gladstone Consulting](#) help you make it happen.