

Supporting the Grassroots Funding Guidelines: Collaborative Activities/ Communication & Outreach



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*The information in this document is subject to change without notice.
Please retrieve the most up-to-date guidelines from ontariosoilcrop.org.*

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Background and Purpose

With a vision of ‘actively seeking, testing and adopting optimal farm production and stewardship practices’, local and regional organizations of the Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association (OSCIA) test, investigate and showcase new methods of crop and soil management. The local grassroots organizations that comprise OSCIA provide a critical service to the sustainability of Ontario agriculture by initiating and supporting applied research and knowledge transfer activities.

Cultivating grassroots engagement and expanding the impact of applied research initiatives are key elements for OSCIA. It is recognized that these activities strengthen local SCIA and improve the broader agricultural community. Funding for Grassroots Growth initiatives is provided by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness (OMAFRA) through the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership (Sustainable CAP). Sustainable CAP is a five-year (2023-2028), \$3.5-billion investment by federal-provincial and territorial governments to strengthen competitiveness, innovation, and resiliency of the agriculture, agri-food and agri-based products sector. This includes \$1 billion in federal programs and activities and a \$2.5 billion commitment that is cost-shared 60 per cent federally and 40 per cent provincially/territorially for programs that are designed and delivered by the provinces and territories.

Three funding streams are available to support grassroots activities. The funding will support:

1. Communication & Outreach (formerly known as Regional Communication Grants)
2. Collaborative Activities (formerly known as Tier One Grants), and
3. Grassroots Research (formerly known as Tier Two Grants).

This guideline document provides details on the Communication and Outreach and the Collaborative Activities Grants only. The Grassroots Research Grants have been fully allocated for the 2023-2028 funding agreement. If you are interested in learning more about the projects being funded, please contact research@ontariosoilcrop.org.

Activities must be in support of one or more of the following:

- Soil conservation/health.
- New technology developments.
- New crop production and development
- Climate change mitigation practices.
- Environmental protection.

The available funding will support a variety of activities within these categories. Successful project applications will ensure that:

- Projects capture the interests of members, encourage grassroots innovation, educate, and build awareness.
- Funding is fully accountable to the requirements of our funding partner as outlined in this Guidelines document.

- Wherever possible, the grants support projects that build on unique OSCIA interests, and its role in Ontario agriculture.
- Activities are focused and aligned with stated OSCIA research priorities (specifically for Collaborative Activities – In-field Trials and Grassroots Research).

This funding is available exclusively to OSCIA local and regional associations. If you have an idea for a project, please contact your local or regional Soil and Crop Improvement Association to discuss your idea. Applications can only be submitted through the local or regional association and must be authorized by an approved signing authority (local/regional secretary or president). Applications must be submitted to the provincial office for consideration at least three weeks before the planned communication and outreach activity occurs.

The purpose of the funding is to evaluate, demonstrate, and communicate new crop production technology to Ontario stakeholders. This is to be achieved from the perspectives of production, innovation, economic and environment, with the overall objective to improve the sustainability of crop production in Ontario and to extend the information and experiences to Ontario stakeholders.

Local associations and regions invest significant volunteer time towards these initiatives, and often source other funds and in-kind support for the projects. Volunteer hours, as well as in-kind contributions and funding support should be documented to illustrate to the funding partners the return on investment.

Please familiarize yourself with these guidelines for the specific financial support available to your local/regional association before completing an application. All application and claim forms can be found online [here](#). Project ideas and frequently asked questions are also available on our website. Applications are encouraged to be submitted as soon as possible, but at least three weeks prior to the activity.

Should you have further questions/concerns please do not hesitate to contact us at grassrootsgrants@ontariosoilcrop.org.

Communication and Outreach Grant

The Communication and Outreach Grant will provide each regional SCIA with up to \$6,000 annually to support the activities of the Regional Communication Coordinator (RCC). The funding can be used to support ongoing communications and facilitation of activities to encourage communication and knowledge sharing among OSCIA members and event attendees.

The Grant will help support local and regional associations and increase membership by providing meaningful activities and events for members. The funding can be used to:

- Organize, promote, and attend activities such as field days, tours, as well as administrative support for single-year in-field trials and demonstrations.
- Share results from these activities via reports, articles, videos, podcasts, webinars, and presentations.
- Support updating event landing pages, communicating events and activities to their regional members, social media, and reporting on activities at the local and regional level through various media and platforms.
- Opportunities to directly engage youth in the Association. This may involve seeking ways to engage future rural leaders by building bridges with crop/environmental clubs at local academic institutions or with 4H or Junior Farmer groups.

The Communication and Outreach Grant approval and claims are administered by the provincial OSCIA office. The Regional President may request in writing an advance of up to \$2,000 as a base allocation to begin the fiscal year and assist with ongoing communication efforts. This funding must be used to support eligible activities, and associated expenses must be submitted through a Communication and Outreach Grant claim.

Claim submissions are required a minimum of twice per year: September 30 and March 31. A forecast will be required by February 20 to confirm funds anticipated to be spent in March of that year. Claims are encouraged to be submitted frequently and can be submitted throughout the year. The claim form for the Communication and Outreach Grant can be accessed [here](#).

Eligible Expenses

The following activities and expenses are eligible for support through the Communication and Outreach Grant:

- RCC time for planning, organizing, promoting and assisting at regional and local events, including events that increase youth engagement in local Associations;
- RCC support attendance at OSCIA knowledge transfer events to write articles and provide opportunities for increased communication and outreach through knowledge transfer activities;
- RCC time spent developing new or updating an existing Regional Landing Page and/or a Regional Website, featuring and sharing leading technology transfer produced for local

members. This includes posting upcoming events, local contact information and membership/support information;

- Activities such as podcasts, videos, and webinars to evaluate, demonstrate, and communicate new crop production technology and sustainability practices to members and other stakeholders. These should include aspects of production, innovation, economic and environment, with the overall objective to improve the sustainability of crop production in Ontario and to extend the information and experiences to Ontario farmers;
- Costs associated with printing The Innovator newsletter or membership materials;
- Labour, mileage, and services and supplies. Mileage rates must comply with the allowances set by the Province and included in the transfer payment agreement. Contact grassrootsgrants@ontariosoilcrop.org for details.

Ineligible Expenses

- The grant cannot be used in combination with an OSCIA Collaborative Activities or Grassroots Research grant (i.e., expenses claimed for other projects cannot be claimed under this grant).
- Any cost that was, in OSCIA's opinion, unreasonably incurred or is not necessary for the successful completion of the approved activities (i.e., attending meetings outside of the region).

Conditions

- Regular update reports on the projects will be required including publication of reports on the OSCIA web page, articles in The Innovator, social media activity as well as presentations at meetings. This will ensure that research/event outcomes and experiences are extended province-wide.
- A report on the regional communication and outreach activity is required annually and must be sent to the provincial OSCIA office before January 15 of the following year for inclusion in the OSCIA Annual Report. Guidance on the report structure will be sent to each Region.
- All project-related publications – whether written, oral or visual – must include a statement indicating that the “views expressed in the publication are the views of the Recipient and do not necessarily reflect those of the Province or of Canada”.
- All print and digital materials, such as event agendas, reports and promotional material prepared as part of the project must provide public recognition of the contribution of OMAFA and AAFC by including the following statement: “This project is funded in part from the Governments of Canada and Ontario under the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership (Sustainable CAP), a five-year, federal-provincial-territorial initiative.”
- All public-facing communication materials must be pre-approved by OSCIA (and satisfy the interests of the Province and of Canada) before release. Instructions concerning logo placement and digital logo files will be sent to applicants when the project proposal approval occurs. Logo placement and funding acknowledgement must be followed to ensure funding compliance. If appropriate, Sustainable CAP, the Federal, Provincial and

OSCIA's logos will be prominently placed and equally prominent in size on all public-facing communication materials. Allow a minimum of two weeks for the approval process.

- Expense claims must include a listing of expenditures and a detailed invoice (s). If an advance payment was received, please ensure it is clearly noted on the claim form. Although proof of payment is not required at the time of submitting the claim, it must be readily available and provided within five business days upon request from the provincial office.

Collaborative Activities Grant

Collaborative Activities Grants are available to local and regional Soil and Crop Improvement Associations to support events and activities that focus on providing opportunities to transfer knowledge and share experiences with new technologies, production practices and sustainability.

Each local/region can apply for up to \$2,500 to support eligible activities each year. Local/regional associations are encouraged to collaborate on activities and combine funding opportunities towards shared activities/projects.

Local/regional associations must submit a detailed application to access a Collaborative Activities grant from the provincial OSCIA office. This guarantees the funds will be available if the project is completed and the claim is submitted on time. Funding is limited and will be allocated on a first come, first served basis. The application and claim forms, along with steps for making a claim, can be accessed [here](#).

Eligible Activities and Expenses

- Collaborative activities may include but are not limited to field days, guest speakers, educational workshops, bus tours, and one-year in-field trials or demonstrations designed to provide guidance on innovative equipment or management techniques.
- Activities that support youth engagement in local and regional activities and events.
- Expenses associated with event supplies (posters, handouts) and field supplies (i.e., sampling and measurement tools).
- Site and event set-up including but not limited to signage, facility rental (including tables, chairs and portable toilets), event-related transportation (buses, wagons).
- Rental of equipment necessary to carry out knowledge transfer and research activities (i.e., field equipment to establish plots or hold demonstrations, audio/visual equipment, scientific monitoring equipment).
- Subject matter expert speakers for organized events (e.g., soil health).
- Professional services for knowledge transfer (journalists, event coordinators, videographers, and advertising)
- Services to modify third party machinery/equipment to be used for knowledge transfer and research activities.
- Speaker payments and presenter gifts.
- Labour, services, mileage, and supplies.

Ineligible Expenses

- Postage, refreshments or meals.
- Donations to other organizations or sponsorships of other initiatives.
- Door prizes.

- The grant cannot be used in combination with an OSCIA Communication & Outreach grant or Grassroots Research grant (i.e., expenses claimed for other projects cannot be claimed under this grant).
- Routine equipment maintenance or normal farm activities (e.g., tile drainage, reforestation, land clearing).
- Payments for reduced crop yield associated with experimental treatments.
- Routine association business (i.e., hall rentals for AGM, support for the association secretary/treasurer).
- Funds spent prior to grant approval may not be eligible for reimbursement.
- Costs incurred before April 1st of each grant funding year.
- Any cost that was, in OSCIA's opinion, unreasonably incurred or is not necessary for the successful completion of the approved activities.

Conditions

- Project costs and in-kind contributions must be tracked as part of the reporting requirements. Time invested by individuals outside of their regular association tasks, such as planning bus trips or special events, may be eligible for reimbursement.
- Each collaborative activity must have a communication strategy. The strategy may include flyers, social media posts, or email. An in-field trial strategy should include where the results will be shared. The communication strategy must include a report for publication on the OSCIA web page (page two of the claim form). The communication strategy should provide opportunities for demonstration/event outcomes and learning experiences to be shared and extended province wide. Additional information sharing opportunities could involve but are not limited to the following:
 - An article in The Innovator
 - A feature story for inclusion in media outlets.
 - Reports and presentations through appropriate OSCIA meetings and newsletters.
- All project-related publications – whether written, oral or visual – must include a statement indicating that the “views expressed in the publication are the views of the Recipient and do not necessarily reflect those of the Province or of Canada”.
- All print and digital materials, such as event agendas, reports or promotional material prepared as part of the project must provide public recognition of the contribution of OMAFA and AAFC by including the following statement: “This project is funded in part from the Governments of Canada and Ontario under the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership (Sustainable CAP), a five-year, federal-provincial-territorial initiative.”
- All public-facing communication materials must be approved by OSCIA (and satisfy the interests of the Province and Canada) before release. Instructions concerning logo placement and digital logo files will be sent to applicants when the project proposal approval occurs. Logo placement and funding acknowledgement must be followed to

ensure funding compliance. If appropriate, Sustainable CAP, the Federal, Provincial and OSCIA's logos will be prominently placed and equally prominent in size on all public-facing communication materials. Allow a minimum of two weeks for the approval process.

- Applicants are encouraged to leverage funds and in-kind contributions to increase the reach of activities and to benefit from networking in the county/district and/or region.
- One application is required per project. If multiple associations are collaborating on the same activity, all collaborators must clearly identify a lead contact. To receive reimbursement, each participating SCIA must submit a claim form with proof of payment for expenses incurred. This can simply consist of an invoice from the leading SCIA to the partnering SCIA's.
- Expense claims must include a listing of expenditures and detailed invoices. Although proof of payment is not required at the time of submitting the claim, it must be readily available and provided within five business days upon request from the provincial office.
- Records must be kept for seven years after the close of the program so that the actual costs and expenses are available for audit as required.

Additional Conditions: One-year field trials/demonstrations

The following requirements are in addition to those listed above.

- The communication strategy for each field trial application must include plans for media releases, site signage, reporting at local/regional meetings, and an on-site field day for at least one of the project sites.
- The grant cannot be used in combination with an OSCIA Grassroots Research Grant.
- Collaboration with an OMAFA Specialist, and/or a researcher is strongly recommended.
- All applications must provide the following details in the application:
 - Project title
 - Objective
 - Background
 - Locations
 - Communication and outreach project type and timelines
 - Linkages with other organizations
 - Responsible person(s)