



UNIVERSITY OF
TORONTO

Access Strategy &
Partnerships Office

2026 APPLICATION GUIDE & PROPOSAL TEMPLATE FORM



Access Programs University Fund (APUF)



About this guide

This guide provides a detailed, step-by-step review of the APUF application form. It is designed to serve as a practical reference as you prepare your proposal, offering prompts and guiding questions.

The Access Programs University Fund (APUF) operates through a two-step application process:

1. Consultation with the Access Strategy & Partnerships Office (ASPO) to discuss your proposal.
 - Schedule through the APUF Consultation Bookings link on the [APUF website](#).
2. Submission of a full online application package on the [APUF website](#) upon invitation to apply.

Questions should be directed to ASPO at access@utoronto.ca.

Initiative Overview

1. Initiative Title

2. Application Stream (select one)

- Access to Post-secondary Education
- Indigenous Access Stream (IAS)

3. Proposal Type

- Replicate, expand, or adapt a program or project with a track record of success
- Build a new access program or project

4. Funding Duration

- 1-year
- 2-year

5. Initiative Focus

Note: Post-secondary pathways include undergraduate, graduate and professional studies.

- Outreach & Engagement:** increase awareness and understanding of post-secondary pathways
- Access & Transition:** promote successful academic and social transitions to post-secondary
- Retention & Persistence:** support learners to complete and graduate from postsecondary programs

6. Academic Program Level

- Undergraduate
 - o First entry (e.g. Bachelor of Science degree)
 - o Second entry professional programs (e.g. MD, JD)
- Graduate studies
 - o Professional Masters
 - o Research Masters
 - o Doctoral programs

7. Executive Summary

(350 words)

Provide an executive summary of the initiative.

Initiative Lead(s)

To list multiple leads, please use a semicolon between names/titles/emails for entries #8 - #10.

8. Name

9. Title/Position

10. Email address

11. Academic Unit

Check list provided in form.

12. College, Department, Centre, Institute or Other

13. Division(s), Internal and External Partners participating in the proposed initiative

List all collaborating departments and divisions, as well as any student groups and external partners who are involved in this initiative.

If you have partnership agreements in place with any of your partners, please identify and kindly share them with us at access@utoronto.ca.

14. Biographies of Leads and Primary Collaborators

Include up to one paragraph for each of the leads and primary collaborators in the proposed project that states their position, the role they will have in your initiative, and their relevant experience.

Detailed Description

The APUF grant is intended to support pathways and opportunities for post-secondary education for traditionally underrepresented learners, through the development of a new initiative or scaling existing programs. Where possible, the initiatives frame access as a longitudinal process that is part of broader system change. Reflect on whether your initiative responds to goals related to access to postsecondary education in the short (0 – 2 years), medium (2-4 years) or long-term (5 years or more).

APUF Initiative Goals:

All proposals should align with at least one of the following goals:

- Expanding, replicating, adapting or scaling an existing **access** program (e.g., partnering with other U of T access programs, expanding community/school partners; increasing number of participants)
- Developing a new initiative/program that focuses on creating intentional pathways to post-secondary education
- Building relationships and fostering collaboration including with divisional access and outreach offices and across the University to ensure strategic alignment with collective access goals
- Building relationships and fostering collaboration and partnerships with communities including but not limited to agencies, school boards, Indigenous communities (e.g., band offices, regional offices/organizations, justice circles/programs, and community councils) **for the purposes of supporting access to post-secondary education**

- Supporting experiential learning opportunities for University of Toronto students through engagement with diverse communities and potential students **for the purposes of supporting access to post-secondary education**

In addition to the general selection criteria, **Indigenous Access Stream** proposals must align with these selection criteria:

- Develop through Indigenous co-design & meaningful participation
- Include Indigenous knowledge, leadership & community partnership
- Foster belonging and culturally grounded & holistic supports for Indigenous learners

15. Rationale (1000 words)

- Describe the reasons for undertaking this initiative and the goals you hope to achieve.
- Identify any structural barriers that may be impeding educational access that will be addressed by your initiative.
- Identify the conceptual and/or theoretical frameworks that inform your approach (e.g., literature, practice guidelines, methodologies, etc.)

Considerations:

- What specific gaps in access to postsecondary are you addressing?
 - How do you know this is a barrier or gap?
 - How will this initiative tangibly address this barrier or fill this gap?
- How does your initiative align with unit, divisional, and/or institutional goals related to:
 - access to postsecondary for Indigenous learners, and
 - equity, diversity and inclusion
- ASPO's [Resource Library](#) contains links to reports, publications, toolkits, guides, data and statistics relevant to access programs.

16. Indigenous Participation & Co-design (250 words)

How were Indigenous community partners (i.e., Indigenous staff, faculty and students, Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and communities) meaningfully involved in the development of the goals and desired outcomes for the initiative? (if not applicable, enter n/a)

Considerations:

- How does your initiative center Indigenous knowledge, world views and practices?
- How does your initiative reflect reciprocity, shared decision-making, and the fair sharing of resources (including appropriate recognition and compensation for their time, expertise, and ongoing commitments)?
- How do you plan on developing and/or sustaining relationships with Indigenous community members and/or partners?
- How will you ensure the initiative is mutually beneficial for the learners, communities and the University?

17. Deliverables (250 words)

- Describe the expected activities and outputs of the initiative.
- After activities are complete, what do you anticipate will be the result of your initiative?

18. Impact

(250 words)

How will participants see your initiative as a benefit to them on their educational or professional trajectory (e.g., post-secondary, employment, entrepreneurship, etc.)?

Considerations:

- What is the end goal from the participant perspective?
- What is the plan for sustaining connections with participants after the program?

19. Participant Outreach, Engagement and Support

(250 words)

- a. What is your approach or strategy for engaging prospective participants?
- b. Identify which geographic region(s) you will focus on, and be as specific as possible about which schools, neighbourhoods or communities you plan to engage.
- c. How will you support participants leading up to, during and after the initiative?
- d. If U of T students will be involved in supporting the participants (e.g., as mentors or advisors), how will you train and support them?

Considerations:

- Is your initiative is needed or welcomed in the region(s)?
- Does your initiative duplicate or build upon other similar initiatives?
- How will you determine appropriate wrap-around supports/services for your participants based on their unique strengths, needs and potential barriers?
 - What stage(s) are your participants at with respect to their educational trajectory?
 - Examples of supports: mentoring, skills development workshops such as writing and math, sessions on navigating the university, admissions, and financial aid processes, TCards, library access, transportation costs, internet access, food, books, school supplies, etc.
 - What types of culturally grounded activities or supports (e.g., relational, story-based approaches, land-based learning, engagement with an Elder, mentorship, etc.) will you embed in your program?
 - How will you incorporate flexible models of delivery and engagement (e.g., hybrid, virtual) to improve accessibility, particularly for geographically distant students?
 - How might you engage parents/guardians, relatives, and community members?

20. Impact Assessment and/or Evaluation

(250 words)

- a. How will you define and measure the impact of this initiative?
- b. What principles or approaches will you apply in your assessment and/or evaluation?

Considerations:

- What kind of evaluation lends itself to your initiative? See [Program Evaluation Manual for Programs related to Access and Retention](#) published by Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO) as reference.
- Evaluation could include insights, learnings, improved community relations, sustainability and feasibility of initiative, impact on scholarly activity, impact on practice, etc.

- Who will be involved in the evaluation (e.g., an evaluator, U of T faculty or students, Indigenous community partners)?

21. Initiative Timeline

Provide a clear timeline, including major milestones. Create a timeline in table format in either Excel or Word. Convert to PDF to upload.

Considerations:

- How does this timeline align with that of the schools and communities you plan to engage with (e.g., PA days and other school schedules, pow wow season and other cultural days of significance, etc.)?

22. Sustainability

(250 words)

What are your plans for sustaining the initiative, or aspects of the initiative, beyond the APUF funding limits?

Considerations:

- How is your faculty intending to support the initiative?
- Do you have dedicated staff to ensure the work continues?
- What additional funding sources or partner collaborations will you explore?

23. Bibliography

(250 words)

Include a short bibliography related to the development of the proposal.

Budget

24. Budget Form

Upload a PDF version of the APUF chart of funds and itemized expenses ([APUF 2026-27 Budget Form](#)). Refer to the [APUF 2026-27 Budget Guidelines](#) as you develop your budget and complete the budget form.

25. Rationale for Requested Funds

(250 words)

Provide a summary of the rationale for the amount and duration of funds requested. Include as much information as possible on the major expenditures.

Considerations:

- Reflect understanding of the true costs (e.g. time, salaries, stipends, consumables, etc.).
- If applicable, include any changes you expect to see from year 1 to year 2.

26. Existing Resources

(250 words)

Describe any existing university resources/in-kind support you will leverage in support of the initiative. This can include staffing, personnel, equipment, and internal or external funding currently secured for this initiative.

Considerations:

- How might you leverage connections between access programs?
- Identify any partnerships or collaborations, including supports from other programs at U of T and the external community.

27. APUF Funds Requested

Enter the amount(s), up to \$100,000 per year, rounded to the nearest dollar.

Year 1: \$

Year 2: \$

Divisional Support

A letter of support from the sponsoring division's leadership (e.g., Dean, Principal, Chair, Director) is required.

- We request that you discuss your proposed initiative with divisional leadership and relevant access outreach and/or programming office(s) to ensure that they are aware of your plans to apply.
- Consider how your proposed initiative aligns with other access programs and/or activities within your division to ensure alignment with strategic and operational access goals in advance of scheduling a meeting.

28. Sponsoring Academic Division/Unit Head(s)

Minimum: 1

Name of sponsoring academic division/unit head:

Email address of sponsoring academic division/unit head(s):

29. Letters of Support from the Sponsoring Academic Division/Unit

- Proposals are required to outline plans for sustaining the initiative once APUF funds have concluded. Therefore, this letter of support ensures that there is engagement from the sponsoring Division to consider the initiative for ongoing funding (if applicable) upon the completion of the APUF grant.
- Letters must be signed by the Dean of Division/Unit and/or Principal, Chair or Director of Division. Give yourself at minimum four weeks to obtain signatures.

Letter of support #1 (upload pdf)

Letter of support #2 (if applicable)

Checklist before submitting your application

- Arrange a consultation with the Access Strategy & Partnerships Office to discuss your proposal.
- Transfer your answers from the Application Guide & Proposal Template Guide to the online application form.
- Attach an initiative timeline.
- Attach a completed project budget referring to the APUF 2026-27 Budget Guideline.
- Attach a signed letter of support(s) from the sponsoring academic division/unit.