

PARENT ENGAGEMENT
Questions and Answers About the Parents Reaching Out Grants (PRO)
January 29, 2010

Parents Reaching Out Grants

Q. What is the purpose of the Parents Reaching Out grants?

- A. The Parents Reaching Out (PRO) Grants is a grassroots initiative to support parents in identifying barriers to parent engagement in their own community, and finding local solutions to help more parents get involved.

There are two components to the PRO Grants – school council grants and regional/provincial grants.

PRO Grants for School Councils support school-based projects that focus on engaging parents who may experience challenges in becoming involved in their children's education. These challenges may include recent settlement to Canada, level of language proficiency in English/French, socio-economic difficulties, physical challenges, or difficulty in getting transportation to the school.

The objective of the PRO Grants for Regional/Provincial Projects is to support projects that will enhance parent and community engagement in public education in support of student success in specific regions or at the provincial level. Recipients of the grant are expected to share lessons learned so that their project may be beneficial to parents in other regions. Projects must fall under at least one of the following categories:

- 1) Creating a culture in which parents are partners
- 2) Ensuring schools and school boards are welcoming to all parents and/or
- 3) Providing skill-building opportunities for parents to strengthen their ability to participate fully in the education of their children.

Q. When were the applications due?

- A. All applications for the 2009-2010 funding period were available online beginning May 20, 2009. The deadline for the application was October 16, 2009.

Q. Who could apply for the funding?

- A. Projects are to focus on involving or engaging parents which will ultimately benefit students in provincially funded schools. Priority is given to parent-led projects. Applications are made to one of the following:

PRO School Council Grants- Open to school councils working alone or in partnership with another school/ school council, parent group, or community organization.

PRO Regional/Provincial Grants- Open to parent organizations, school boards/authorities, post-secondary or other non-profit organizations working in partnership with parents.

Q. How many priority schools received approval for PRO Grants?

- A. Beginning last year, as part of Ministry's contribution to the Government's Poverty Reduction Strategy, a portion of the PRO grant initiative was refocused to help School Councils target barriers that are known to be experienced by parents in low socio-economic areas. Specifically, these barriers are childcare, transportation and language.

This year, of the 150 priority schools designated by the Ministry as having the highest needs, 86 applied for a grant, of which 85 were approved for funding. This compares with 39 applications from priority schools in 2008-09, of which 24 were approved.

The increase in both the number of applications from priority schools and the number receiving funding can be attributed to outreach conducted by the Ministry

Q. How many grant proposals were received for the 2009-10 grants?

- A. Response to the Parents Reaching Out grants initiative was impressive: 2026 applications were received for the School Council grants, and 133 applications were received for the Regional Provincial grants. The evaluation of the applications has been completed.

Q. How many grant proposals were funded in 2009-10?

- A. Since 2006, the government has awarded over 5,500 PRO Grants to School Councils and over 200 regional grants. This is a total investment of over \$10.0 million to increase parent involvement.

This year, through additional Ministry outreach such as local presentations, workshops and the translation of the PRO Grants flyer into 18 languages, we have seen an increase in applications – almost 300 more than last year. We are pleased with the results and will continue our outreach efforts.

For 2009-10, a total of 1638 projects were awarded funding totalling \$2.28 million. This includes \$1.29 million to fund 1579 School Council grants, and \$990,000 to fund 59 regional/provincial grants.

The government is funding 300 more projects than last year, which represents an increase of more than \$500,000 to support parent engagement.

Q. How many grant proposals were funded in 2008-09?

- A. In 2008-09, a total of \$1.75 million was awarded to 1317 projects, which included 1276 School Council grants and 41 regional/provincial grants.

Q. When will parents and organizations be notified about whether their grant application has been approved or not?

A. Applicants will receive notification by e-mail through the on-line system that they used in applying for the grants. The Ministry of Education is expecting to notify applicants in February.

Q. How much money is the government spending this year and how much money has been spent overall since the PRO Grants were announced in 2006?

A: Since 2006, the government has awarded over 5,550 PRO Grants to school councils and over 200 regional grants. This is a total investment of over \$10 million to increase parent involvement.

This year, the government is funding over 1,600 projects with grants totalling \$2.28 million for 2009-2010. Of that, \$1.29 million is allocated for school council grants while \$.99 million is for regional/provincial grants.

Q. What is the maximum grant available?

A. The maximum possible amount for the PRO School Council Grant is \$1,000. The maximum possible amount for the PRO Regional Provincial Grant is \$30,000.

Q. What criteria were used to determine which proposals were approved?

A. The ministry follows a careful and equitable process conducted by a team of evaluators who used consistent criteria, approving the grants province-wide through a formal review process. Proposals that received and will be receiving funding have met the following criteria:

School Council proposals must:

- Be sponsored by a school council
- Be consistent with school board policies
- Be aimed at enhancing parent involvement in support of student achievement
- Clearly state what challenges to parent involvement the project will address and how these barriers will be addressed
- Include clear goals and expected results
- Make a convincing case of the importance of the project.
- Include a well developed and feasible plan of activities

Regional/Provincial proposals were evaluated based on criteria such as:

- The project involves parents and the community and supports student success
- The project is led by parents or is carried out in partnership with a parent group
- The project involves parents and can be adapted to other regions
- Applicants show how their project fits into at least one of the three categories
- The project has the potential to reach a large number of parents
- The project meets a need
- The project describes the expected results
- A plan is in place for evaluating the project and its results

Q. What project costs or activities are ineligible for funding?

- A. The following costs did not qualify for funding:
- Activities that have already taken place prior to the application date
 - Permanent staff salaries
 - Purchase of goods and services for which the Ministry of Education currently provides funding
 - On-going operational costs
 - Capital costs
 - Travel outside Ontario
 - Debts or financial losses that result from a project

For school council grants, examples of non-eligible costs include:

- Payment of staff
- Meals
- School signs
- Furniture
- Landscaping
- Student-focused activities/resources
- Laptops
- Transportation for students
- Celebrations and entertainment costs
- Website maintenance
- Prizes
- Voice messaging system

Q. When should projects take place?

- A. Funds received for the School Council Grant should be spent by June 30, 2010. Funds received for the Regional/Provincial Grant should be spent by June 30, 2010.

Q. What sorts of projects have been funded?

- A. Parents, school councils and their partners are encouraged to be innovative in the development of project ideas. Some past projects include, but are not limited to: publishing newsletters in multiple languages, workshops on literacy and numeracy, multicultural school events and information sessions on how parents can help students transition into middle/high school.

Q. How will the money for the grant program flow to school councils?

- A. Funds are transferred to school boards and then to schools and school councils.

Q. I've been informed that some school councils were allowed to submit after the October 16, 2009 deadline. Why were they allowed to submit while our school council was told it couldn't submit because it missed the deadline?

A. Efforts were made to accommodate applicants that had initiated their on-line application prior to the October 16, 2009 deadline. Applicants who had obtained a password and commenced the online application process before the deadline or had submitted a proposal using the wrong application form (i.e. the Regional/Provincial form instead of the School Council form) were allowed to resubmit.

Q. If a proposal is only partly funded, could the school council decide to change the type of activity which they had proposed to initiate?

A. It is anticipated that school councils and organizations will implement such partially funded projects in keeping with the original purpose and requirements of the PRO grant application made. Questions pertaining to the modification of the PRO grant budget should be directed to the appropriate regional office.

Q. I understand that the PRO grant application process for 2010-2011 is moving to the spring. Can you provide the date on which applicants can begin the application process?

A. In response to feedback, the PRO Grant cycle will begin even earlier in 2010. This will allow evaluations to take place over the summer, with approvals to be announced at the beginning of the 2010-2011 school year. Directors, PIC chairs and principals will be notified when the application process for the 2010-2011 PRO grants is announced.

Q. How will these grants make a difference?

A. Research shows a positive link between parent engagement and student achievement. Students are typically more motivated, earn higher grades, have better behaviour and social skills and continue their education at higher levels. We welcome and value the contribution that parents and families make to their child's education, and are working with existing parents' groups to create a welcoming environment for more parents to get involved.

Q. School boards often have to cut programs because they don't have enough money. Isn't this money better spent elsewhere?

A. Parents play a vital role in the development and education of their children and in the success of our schools. Research shows that increased parent involvement contributes very positively to a child's education, and that good schools can be made even better when they have an engaged and active parent community.

Q. If I still have questions, who can I contact?

A. Contact the regional office for your area and speak to the Education Officer who serves as the lead for the parent engagement initiative.

Region	Telephone - Local	Telephone – Toll Free
Barrie	(705) 725-7627	1-800-471-0713
London	(519) 667-1440	1-800-265-4221
Ottawa	(613) 225-9210	1-800-267-1067
North Bay/Sudbury	(705) 474-7210	1-800-461-9570
Thunder Bay	(807) 474-2980	1-800-465-5020 (for area code 807 only)
Toronto	(416) 212-0954	1-800-268-5755