

THE OHTN ENGAGEMENT ACCORD



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A memorandum of understanding between funded individuals/teams and the OHTN to facilitate engagement of HIV and at risk communities throughout the innovation process – from developing and executing ideas to disseminating findings and influencing policy or practice.

The Ministry of Health funds the OHTN to implement and support innovations that informs HIV prevention, care and support services in Ontario and provides evidence to enhance policy and practice.

In accordance with [our values](#), OHTN is committed to working with its grantees to ensure our investments have a positive impact on health services and systems, and on the health and well-being of people with or at risk of HIV. Through our HIV Endgame Program, we aim to answer questions and solve problems that are highly relevant to one or more of the [populations in Ontario most affected by HIV](#). We strive to:

- build productive research-community-policy relationships;
- create a collaborative, supportive environment for innovation and evidence sharing; and
- encourage evidence-based changes in policy, practice and the health system.

The OHTN, the HIV community and the grantees we support share a commitment to: meaningful engagement of community – drawing on community knowledge and perspective, relevant rigorous investigation, academic freedom and accountability for the use of public dollars.

Our funded individuals are expected to publish their findings, present at conferences and identify other effective ways to share evidence with people living with or at risk of HIV and individuals responsible for planning/delivering health services (e.g. cafes scientifiques, videos, think tanks). The OHTN has skills and resources to help awardees identify effective knowledge translation strategies while avoiding unintended negative consequences (e.g. minimizing harm to individuals, communities or the health system that can be caused by the way findings are reported in the media).

The OHTN recognizes its grantees as an invaluable resource, and strongly supports and welcomes their ongoing involvement in efforts to encourage evidence-based policy and practice. With the OHTN Engagement Accord, we set out a vision of how grantees and the OHTN can work more closely together to achieve our common goals. We see the OHTN Engagement Accord as the basis for a mutually beneficial relationship – a memorandum of understanding between the OHTN and grantees – that will enhance impact, improve the well-being of people at risk and provide better support and care for Ontarians living with HIV.

The Ontario HIV Treatment Network (OHTN) is a network of people and organizations committed to bringing people, providers, systems and knowledge together to solve HIV. We work in meaningful partnership with people living with and affected by HIV, respecting and affirming the principles of [the Ontario Accord](#) – a statement of solidarity with people living with HIV. We work collaboratively with the AIDS Bureau and Ontario's HIV sector to achieve the goals of the new Ontario HIV Strategy.

The OHTN's Commitment to Funded Personnel or Project

The OHTN agrees to:

Ensure Community Engagement and Relevance

1. Engage people living with and at risk of HIV in our governance and decision-making processes.
2. Foster community-based, community-driven inquiry through our funding programs, by supporting mentorship and engagement, and by training people within priority populations in evidence-to-implementation processes.
3. Broker data and evidence-sharing that addresses the needs of people living with and at risk of HIV as outlined in [Ontario's HIV/AIDS Strategy](#). Foster collaboration and knowledge-user engagement in planning stages, whenever possible.
4. Strive to ensure that the proportion of funding devoted to innovation for/with specific populations reflects Ontario HIV epidemiology, while continually working with funding partners to minimize gaps.

Ensure Rigour

5. Use transparent, peer-reviewed, and community-informed processes to select outstanding data and evidence-sharing activities with a high potential to address and solve problems and have a measureable impact on the populations most affected by HIV, in the short to medium term (i.e. 2-5 years).
6. Use targeted funding programs to build relevant capacity in priority areas and at-risk communities.
7. Continually evaluate our funding programs to ensure the projects we fund meet the bar for excellence, relevance, and impact.

Promote Collaboration and Partnerships

8. Support collaboration between grantees in priority areas by encouraging dialogue and shared priority setting, and supporting meetings, think tanks and committees.
9. Fund champions (through the HIV Endgame Leaders program) who will mentor others and provide a focal point for collaboration and impact.
10. Create data sharing agreements with the Institute for Clinical and Evaluative Science, Public Health Ontario and other agencies and cohort studies, which facilitate vital HIV data, evidence-sharing, and impact activities, and guide improvements in the HIV prevention, engagement and care cascade in Ontario.
11. Collaborate with CIHR, CANFAR and other funders to ensure the most effective use of limited resources to support innovation across all streams, with a particular focus on work that contributes to improving Ontario's HIV prevention, engagement and care cascade and the enhancement of programs and services for populations living with and at risk of HIV.
12. Work to enhance relationships among grantees, people living with HIV, community-based agencies, health care providers, government policy makers, and educators – to build a culture of reciprocity and shared learning.
13. Support the capacity of community members and other knowledge users to participate in the data, evidence-sharing and impact process through OHTN training and education programs.

Support Knowledge Sharing and Dissemination

14. Strive for excellence in communication among all stakeholders, including within the public media. Make OHTN expertise in knowledge translation and dissemination available to funded teams, to help put evidence into the hands of people or organizations who will use it.

15. Communicate regularly with funded individuals and teams to understand the context for their work and help manage any challenges – including considering requests for changes in the approved project in accordance with OHTN funding policies.
16. Assist in disseminating projects' findings in ways that promote and protect the interests of people with and at risk of HIV (and the communities where they live), and mitigate any potential harm.
17. Assist grantees in advocating for relevant, evidence-based change, and in presenting politically sensitive or controversial findings in ways that enhance constructive dialogue and respect the needs and contexts of the priority populations and communities we serve.
18. Brief Ministry of Health staff about emerging evidence.

The OHTN's Expectations of Funded Personnel or Project

Funded teams and individuals agree to:

Engage the HIV Community

1. Respect and affirm the principles of the [Ontario Accord](#), a statement of solidarity concerning the greater involvement of people living with HIV/AIDS. Encourage input and guidance from people living with HIV and from the communities most affected by HIV. Funded teams and individuals will create opportunities and processes to obtain and integrate community feedback, maintain these opportunities throughout the life of the project when feasible, and engage in collaborative knowledge-sharing processes.
2. Foster a culture of collaboration and mentorship within the grantee's team and within the communities where they work. Encourage mutual learning, mentor newer colleagues, and engaged community members whenever possible.

Ensure Rigour

3. Strive to conduct and complete excellent, innovative and meaningful data, evidence-sharing and impact activities in accordance with the funding guidelines and in keeping with the approved funding proposal.
4. Seek appropriate, written ethics approval of any project involving humans, animals, biohazardous agents, or radioactive materials prior to beginning that project. Ethics review must comply with the policies of the sponsoring institution and, when working with Indigenous communities, with the OCAP principles of Ownership, Control, Access and Possession, and other ethical principles that are specific to Indigenous communities.

Engage in Collaborative Knowledge Sharing Processes

5. Consider OHTN and its networks as potential partners in knowledge dissemination efforts. Consult with OHTN staff about knowledge-sharing plans, even in advance of scheduled reporting or after completion of the funding. OHTN welcomes invitations to work with grantees to disseminate knowledge to people with or at risk of HIV in Ontario, while maximizing benefits and minimizing any harm.
6. Facilitate joint press releases (when deemed beneficial) between OHTN, the grantee's host institution and/or the publishing journal. Notify OHTN of planned publications as soon as possible once a journal acceptance has been received, with a copy of the draft paper and any available details about the planned public schedule or press release plans.
7. Notify OHTN HIV Endgame Funding Program staff when any paper or publication acknowledging

our funding, in whole or in part, has been accepted for publication, no less than 30 days prior to publication. This will allow OHTN staff to contribute appropriately to knowledge dissemination. All embargos will be respected.

8. Collaborate with the OHTN and other stakeholders whenever possible to transform data, evidence-sharing and impact findings into more effective HIV prevention and care programs and policies for Ontario. In this era of funding allocated specifically for HIV Endgame grants, the intended outcome is to have a positive impact on all stakeholders and on policy at the community and system levels (i.e. beyond publication in peer-reviewed journals).
9. Participate in dialogue and collaboration with the OHTN. Consider roles on review committees and other OHTN bodies as requested and as possible given existing commitments.

Be Accountable for Use of Funds

10. Authorize expenditures supporting the project proposal in accordance with OHTN regulations outlined in the OHTN Guidelines for [Use of Grant Funds](#) and the sponsoring institution's policies. No one may initiate or authorize expenditures from an OHTN grant account without the grantee's delegated authority.
11. Complete and submit all required narrative and financial reporting in a timely manner, including required plain language summaries.
12. Initiate requests for no-cost extensions or approval of other major program changes 60 days prior to the scheduled conclusion of the grant and at least 30 days prior to implementing changes.
13. Acknowledge the support of the OHTN in all resulting publications with text recognizing that this work is supported by a grant from "The Ontario HIV Treatment Network (OHTN)."

We agree that the accountabilities outlined above are acceptable and appropriate and that we will strive to meet these expectations.

OHTN Senior Lead, HIV Endgame Program

Nominated Principal Investigator on behalf of the project team

Date

Date