

Concept Note: OCIC Youth Policy-Makers Hub

October 2019

Background

Global problems like gender inequality and climate change affect people of all ages everywhere. These complex problems require holistic inter-generational approaches, diverse mindsets, multi-disciplinary methods and multi-sectoral dialogue. Young people have been at the helm of environmental and social justice movements, advocating for those at risk of being left behind in our communities. Thousands of youth across Canada are mobilizing to secure a positive future for all. OCIC recognizes the wealth of knowledge, experience and leadership that youth leaders bring to the international cooperation sector in Ontario, and beyond. We want to help enable the active participation of youth at local, national and international policy-making tables to inform decisions that concern their lives, future and the planet.

The Ontario Council for International Cooperation (OCIC)'s new Youth Policy-Makers Hub (YPH) seeks to build on the success of the Council's Global Changemaker Youth Ambassador program, and participation in national and international meetings like Women Deliver 2019 , and the UN High Level Political Forum (HLPF) 2018. These experiences have yielded important insights about the value of engaging and supporting the participation of Canadian youth and civil society organizations (CSOs) in policy and advocacy processes. We want to continue opening-up inclusive spaces for civic engagement and leadership for diverse youth to share their calls to action with communities across Ontario, Canada and beyond.

OCIC envisions the YPH as a dynamic and generative space including Youth Policy-Makers and Allies; a 'community of practice' focused on policy-making and advocacy efforts towards achieving gender equality and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The YPH is one of the new 'signature' initiatives of [OCIC's Community Engagement and Learning programs](#).

OCIC's Youth Policy-Makers Hub program goals are to:

- increase the awareness and interest of Ontarians, especially youth, in international cooperation and key global issues, including gender equality and the SDGs
- offer opportunities for meaningful youth participation in sub-national, national and international programs, meetings, delegations and policy-making processes.

The YPH goals are aligned with our Global Affairs Canada-funded project Inspiring Global Citizenship Initiative (2019-23) and the following guiding principles.

Guiding Principles

- OCIC's gender transformative approach, which emphasizes intersectionality and policies on [women's rights and gender equality](#), [anti-oppression](#), and [public engagement](#)

- Canada's [Feminist International Assistance Policy's \(FIAP\)](#) feminist and integrated approach to development, which sees gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in a manner that is both targeted and cross-cutting
- The [Istanbul Principles for CSO Development Effectiveness](#)
- Research-informed principles of effective capacity-building and learning and youth engagement.

Approach

Starting in the Fall of 2019 OCIC will send out a call and select up to 15 diverse youth (18-35 years of age). We will also be recruiting 5-10 diverse “allies” (of all ages) representing organizations with policy and advocacy experience and expertise from within our membership and others in the international cooperation sector in Ontario and other relevant sectors and communities. The minimum expected time commitment for each Youth Policy-Maker and Ally will be 12 months. Youth Policy-Maker ‘graduates’ will be strongly encouraged to become an Ally in the next cycle.

Selection Process

Youth Policy-Makers will be selected by a committee composed of OCIC staff and members, policy and advocacy partners, and youth leaders (youth will comprise 50% of the selection committee).

Youth Policy-Maker applicants must meet the following minimum requirements:

- **be between 18-35 years of age and residents of Ontario** by the start of the program, and
- able to attend regular meetings online and in-person and participate in the Hub's activities, including engaging with other Ontario youth online (including social media) and in-person.

While OCIC members are encouraged to apply, OCIC membership is not a requirement at the time of application.

Other than the above minimum requirements, the following selection criteria will be considered:

Selection criteria for Youth Policy-Makers :

- Experience/interest in public/community/youth engagement, education, and advocacy regarding global social and environmental issues (e.g. gender equality, climate action, food security).
- Demonstrated community organizing and leadership experience and/or strong interest in developing these capacities.
- Commitment to learning about and actively participating in policy-making processes.

Criteria for Allies:

- experience and expertise in policy and/or advocacy; public/youth engagement efforts related to gender equality and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
- Interest in learning and sharing their experience and expertise with the other Allies and Policy-Makers within the Hub and others within the international cooperation sector in Ontario through online and in-person knowledge exchange and mobilization activities.
- Commitment to advising OCIC on the development of the Youth Policy-Makers program over a 12-month period.

Below is a tentative timeline for the first year of the YPH:

Ongoing - Participate in monthly meetings and learning activities online and in Toronto (where possible)

YPH representative(s) engage in and attend sub-national, national or international meetings to be determined by the Hub and OCIC (i.e.: meetings with community and municipal leaders, provincial and federal representatives and global meetings like the [UN Commission on the Status of Women](#) CSW64/Beijing+25)

Fall 2019

- Convene consultations with OCIC members and non-members, starting with the pre-OCIC AGM consultation in Toronto (September 18, 2019)
- Open call for OCIC YPH (Youth Policy-Makers and Allies)
- Selection of YPH members (November 2019)

Winter 2019-2020

- Inaugural Youth Policy-Makers meeting (online) (week of December 2, 2019)
- In-person YPH gathering in Toronto (week of January 6, 2020)
- YPH contributes to OCIC International Development Week 2020 activities (February 3-7, 2020)

Spring 2020

- YPH representative(s) attend local, sub-national, national or international meetings (i.e.: meetings with community and municipal leaders, provincial and federal representatives and global meetings like the CSW64/Beijing+25)
- Debrief and sharing of representative(s) learnings from meetings within YPH and with broader OCIC membership

Summer 2020

- Development of a policy/advocacy session to be offered during OCIC's Global Citizens Forum (November 2020)

Fall 2020

- YPH engagement at OCIC's Global Citizens Forum 2020 (November 2020)
- YPH debrief and evaluation

Key Terms

Advocacy are interventions such as speaking, writing or acting in favour of a particular issue or cause, policy or group of people (Government of Canada [Glossary of Terms](#)). All advocacy efforts undertaken and supported by OCIC will be non-partisan.

Allies are policy and advocacy-oriented professionals at different stages in their careers: young leaders, mid-career professionals and senior leaders.

Intersectionality a framework that recognizes the multiple aspects of social categorization and identity that combine, overlap and intersect in our lives and experiences, such as class, race and gender, and that compound and exacerbate oppression and marginalization of an individual or a group. It also challenges us to expand our understanding of gender beyond binaries (woman/man, femininity/masculinity). Adopting an intersectional approach allows us to identify and address complex contexts and formulate strategies to best meet the needs of those intended to benefit from initiatives. [Adapted from the definition of intersectionality in A Feminist Approach to Canada's International Assistance, Inter Pares, 2 Action Canada for Sexual Health and Rights and Oxfam Canada, July 2016.]” ([OCIC's Women's Rights and Gender Equality Policy](#))

Public policy are the laws, policies, or decisions of a government, in Canada or a foreign country ([CRA](#))

Policy-making refers to the formulation of ideas or plans that are used by an organization or government as a basis for making decisions ([Collins Dictionary](#)) “Policy-making must be understood as a political process as much as an analytical or problem solving one.” (Sutton, R. [The Policy Process in Review](#))

Youth are those aged 18-35. Youth must reside in Ontario during program duration. A special focus will be given to those from historically marginalized communities and those who are mis- or under-represented in policy and advocacy spaces.