



2009-10 Strategic Research Fund CALL FOR PROPOSALS AND APPLICATION TEMPLATES

The Strategic Research Fund:

- Supports a **program of research** to gather available evidence and create new evidence to address knowledge needs related to services for children and youth;
- Encourages evidence-informed policy and practice by creating and using **research syntheses** that bring together the available evidence to explain what works;
- Tackles pressing **research gaps** identified through research synthesis as well as through program, policy and service experience; and
- Evolves to meet **emerging information needs**. The specific focus of each research call will align with current and future needs of the child and youth services sector.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE STRATEGIC RESEARCH FUND ?

The Strategic Research Fund is designed to create research to contribute to the development of evidence-informed programs and services for children and youth. The Fund supports synthesis reviews and directed research projects. The synthesis reviews gather available knowledge and summarizes the key information to make the findings accessible and usable by decision makers and service providers. To address the range of activities the ministry supports, the research results may include policy and program recommendations, factors relevant to implementing change or practice guidelines for assessment or intervention. The purpose of the Strategic Research Fund grants is to support research that will benefit the child and youth service sector and the academic community by creating access to data, policy priorities and relevant results for those who can utilize them in their daily work.

Synthesis reviews are a priority for the Strategic Research Fund. While future calls will include directed research projects, the current call exclusively requests synthesis reviews.



important for determining recommendations and next steps.

All funded projects **must** include a KME plan that includes a description of KME activities throughout the project's lifespan and is endorsed by the ministry. The ministry will dedicate staff to support researchers and their projects by providing information on relevant ministry activities and resources. Wherever possible the KME plan should include active knowledge exchange across key stakeholders. For example, KME activities could include multiple dissemination pathways, such as tailored reports, organizing a forum or initiating a community of practice to discuss the findings and implications.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON THE STRATEGIC RESEARCH FUND

In May 2008, the Ministry of Children and Youth Services (MCYS) released its multi-year strategic framework, ***Realizing Potential: Our Children, Our Youth, Our Future (Realizing Potential)***. The development of the framework was led by the ministry's senior management team with input from staff.

MCYS is unique in that it is focused on a population (children and youth aged 0-18) rather than a specific service sector. The children and youth services "sector" is comprised of a number of sub-sectors focused on specific cohorts (e.g. the early years) and/or addressing specific needs (e.g. mental health). From a program perspective, the ministry is responsible for:

- Licensed child care;
- Early identification and intervention services for young children and their families;
- The Ontario Child Benefit – an income support program for low-income families;
- Services for children and youth with special needs, including Autism Spectrum Disorder;
- Child and youth mental health supports;
- Opportunities and supports for young people living in high needs communities, including summer jobs programs;
- Protection services for children who are, or are at risk of, abuse or neglect; and
- Community and custodial programs for youth aged 12 to 18 in, or at risk of, conflict with the law.

An important function of the framework is to establish a shared language and set of objectives that span these services. The goal is to more effectively operate as a unified enterprise that capitalizes on opportunities to integrate services, maximize resources and develop new solutions to issues facing children and youth in Ontario.

The majority of MCYS services are delivered by community agencies under contract with the ministry. However, the ministry maintains a significant role in service delivery and directly operates eight secure custody/detention facilities, 64 probation offices and



two child and youth mental health centres. Corporately, the ministry is responsible for policy development, program design, program management, communications and outreach, financial planning, controllership, strategic planning and research. As such, the ministry seeks to ensure that the service system is efficient and effective. As ***Realizing Potential*** is a ministry framework, it must be meaningful to and resonate with each of these functions of the organization. The knowledge gained through the Strategic Research Fund research will support the implementation of the strategic framework.

Realizing Potential is premised on the vision of building an Ontario “*where all children and youth have the best opportunity to succeed and reach their full potential.*” In order to achieve this vision the ministry has identified “better outcomes” and “a better service experience” as key client-focused goals. The ministry has also identified three core service delivery goals. Together, these goals influence both **what** we are working to achieve at the level of individual young people (*better outcomes*) and **how** we work with our partners to deliver services in support of these individual outcomes (*enhanced service experience*).

- Two goals focus on specific client level outcomes:
 1. Every Child and Youth is Resilient
 2. Every Child and Youth Graduates from Secondary School
- Three goals relate to service delivery:
 3. Every Child and Youth Has a Voice
 4. Every Child and Youth Receives Personalized Services
 5. Everyone Involved in Service Delivery Contributes Towards Achieving Common Outcomes

CURRENT CALL FOR PROPOSALS

In developing ***Realizing Potential*** the ministry made a commitment to strive for continuous improvement and innovation. As a result, the framework features a number of concepts that are new to the child and youth services sector and/or are emergent in the research literature.

In order to address these knowledge needs, the ministry has initiated a program of research dedicated to specific topics that are central to the implementation of the framework. The topics in the current call for proposals include:

1. Service Experience;
2. Personalized Services;
3. Achieving Outcomes; and
4. Residential Services.



The current information gaps will be met through an evolutionary process that will see research questions and topics grow in complexity over time. The ministry is seeking a series of synthesis reviews through the current call. All materials produced with support from the strategic research fund should be clearly written in plain language and suitable for a diverse community audience to make the results useful and relevant in the service sectors.

Applicants may submit proposals for one, some or all of the topics. Separate proposals must be submitted for each project. Researchers and professionals who develop a proposal are eligible to apply for a grant under the Strategic Research Fund. Each project proposal will undergo a review process and will be assessed by peer-reviewers and ministry staff with respect to its scientific merit, relevance to the research questions (as identified in the category descriptions), costs and timelines.

COMPLETING THE PROPOSAL APPLICATION

Applicants are required to use the attached template to outline each proposal being submitted. **Please note that one proposal must be submitted for each project.** Proposals for each project will be reviewed independently based upon its independent merits.

The application template requires information about the primary project applicant, including organization and contact information. Applicants who are applying on behalf of their employer or organization must submit a signed letter of support from the head of their organization authorizing the application.

The current call for proposals requests synthesis reviews. Applicants are required to provide:

- A brief description of their proposed methodology and disciplinary perspective (e.g. economics, psychology, health promotion, etc.);
- A discussion of the sources of information to be used, methods of accessing these sources, inclusion and exclusion criteria, approaches to analyzing and interpreting the information gathered and plans for communicating the results;
- Proposed timelines;
- A detailed budget that outlines justification and costs in the areas of salaries and stipends, materials and supplies, computing and related costs, and any other anticipated expenditures (including proposed KME activities); and
- A description of the link between their proposed project, the topic of inquiry and the ministry's strategic priorities.



An information and orientation session will be held by teleconference on Monday, March 1st, 2010. Please register in advance by contacting Shannon Fenton at shannon.fenton@ontario.ca.

SUBMITTING YOUR PROPOSAL APPLICATION

Proposals should be submitted by email to Shannon Fenton, Manager, Research and Outcome Measurement Branch, at shannon.fenton@ontario.ca.

Proposals will be accepted until Monday, April 12, 2010 at 5:00 p.m.

IMPORTANT DATES

Closing date for applications	April 12, 2010
Peer-Review Panel to evaluate proposals	April-May, 2010
Successful proposals announced; funds dispersed	June 2010

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Please contact Shannon Fenton at shannon.fenton@ontario.ca or 416-325-6030 if you have questions or need to discuss your submission. Please note that your **e-mailed application must be received by: 5 p.m. on April 12, 2010.**

A one-time grant will be provided to successful applicants. The ministry, in its sole discretion, may adjust the amount of funding to be provided.

SYNTHESIS REVIEW TOPICS

The following pages contain a description of the synthesis review topics, background information and the specific areas of inquiry. This information should guide the preparation of research proposals. All applications should be submitted using the templates on pages 15-17 of this document.

1. Service Experience

The ministry's strategic framework identifies an improved service *experience* as a primary organizational objective. This issue is reflected in feedback from clients. In raising concerns with ministry-funded services, young people and their families place a strong emphasis on how they interface with programs. Here, they tend to focus on the experience of service delivery (e.g. how they are treated, their personal administrative burden, etc.) as opposed to simply the receiving of services.

From an experiential lens, the strategic framework highlights the following conditions for effective services, that clients:

- Are supported with respect and dignity;
- Have opportunities to shape services;
- Are empowered to understand and where possible make choices about the services available to them;
- Only have to tell their story once;
- Are able to easily and seamlessly navigate between services and providers; and
- Have means for resolving concerns and complaints.

While the framework emphasizes front line service transactions it also acknowledges that the ways in which clients interface and engage with services is shaped by decisions in all levels of the service sector and the ministry. This objective is more clearly reflected through the strategic goal of designing and providing *personalized* services. Of particular interest is the ways that the service system, as a whole, can be mobilized to improve the ways that young people and their families experience services.

The knowledge generated will be shared across the service sectors to stimulate a broad discussion on the topic. It will be used to explore what influences the transaction between the end user and the service provider. It is important for the ministry and service providers to understand whether and how each link in the "value chain" (from the ministry to service providers to clients) impacts the ways that clients interface with services.

Description	<i>This review will explore the front line service experiences of clients and the role of direct service providers and community partners.</i>
Areas of Inquiry	<p>This initial project is intended to help focus and advance the discourse on the topic of service experience. Priorities include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Assessing overall conceptual frameworks for considering service experience;2. Detailing service transactions in the children and youth services sector; and3. Identifying levers for improving clients' experiences in engaging with services. <p>As the purpose of this research is to stimulate discussion, the successful proposal will include a knowledge mobilization plan that involves discussions with service providers, ministry staff and the ministry's senior management team.</p>



2. Personalized Services

The lives of Ontario's children, youth and families have grown in complexity. In response, expectations on the children and youth services sector to address these issues have increased. The province's high level of cultural and social diversity make it challenging for the sector to deliver effective, outcomes-focused services that address the dynamic needs of individual's in our contemporary society.

Services for children and youth have not yet fully adapted to these changing dynamics. The sector is still organized around specific *programs* rather than the individual needs of clients. Feedback from MCYS clients indicates that they feel as though they are "wrapping their lives around specific programs." It is the ministry's vision to provide an integrated system of services that wrap around clients' lives.

To better understand and address this issue, the ministry has identified a move toward "personalizing" services as one of its five strategic goals. The ministry has developed a preliminary definition of the concept of personalization as the capacity to tailor services to meet clients' needs, preferences (including cultural) and circumstances.

The ministry has identified three broad principles for the provision of personalized services:

1. The needs, preferences and circumstances of children and youth are placed at the "heart" of service decisions;
2. Young people and their families are active and informed participants in decision-making; and
3. Service delivery is adapted to fit with clients' daily lives.

To address client's concerns and facilitate improvements across the service sector, it is necessary to understand how the principles of personalized service could be applied to the delivery of all services. Ultimately, the ministry envisions a service sector oriented towards client outcomes rather than programs. Of all the goals identified in ***Realizing Potential***, this one remains the most in need of evidence to be more clearly operationalized.



<p>Description</p>	<p><i>The ministry is committed to "personalized" services that are tailored to individuals, responsive to changing life circumstances and supportive of young people reaching their potential. This review will explore personalized services from a system perspective.</i></p>
<p>Areas of Inquiry</p>	<p>In light of the ministry's definition of "personalized" service, conduct a synthesis review that aims to build a common understanding of and capacity to deliver personalized services. Identify operational definitions for personalized services that have been adopted by other jurisdictions or other sectors.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What are the essential components? - What are the challenges to providing personalized services? - What outcomes have occurred as a result of personalizing services (for clients, service sector structure, service providers, etc.)? <p>Describe and analyze promising examples from programs/sectors that are implementing a "personalized" services approach. Examples should be included that do not hinge on the distribution of resources (e.g. personalized budgets).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How are personalized services delivered across the range of social services (at a system level), service providers (at the service level), and presenting issues/needs (at the individual client level)? - How are personalized services delivered to clients at different ages, stages of development, level of ability, location (urban/ rural), service involvement (e.g., type of service received, receiving multiple services), etc? <p>A key to delivering personalized services is collaboration across service providers and service sectors. Describe and analyze tools, protocols and other mechanisms for collaboration that have been implemented to support the delivery of personalized services.</p>



3. Achieving Outcomes

Since its creation in 2003, the ministry has been guided by the commitment that every young person should be better off as a result of the services we provide. A foundation of ***Realizing Potential*** involves moving towards more systematic and effective tracking of outcomes for children and youth: *Everyone involved in service delivery contributes to achieving common outcomes*. As such, our focus has shifted away from outputs towards the achievement of better outcomes.

To meet this goal, steps are needed to maximize resources to support outcomes that will place children and youth on pathways for lifelong success. Part of this focus involves considering whether our programs are fully aligned towards influencing key outcomes either individually or as a part of a broader continuum of support.

The ministry's program areas and service sectors are diverse in their focus and client populations. As a result, they also diverge with respect to the specific types of outcomes they are working to achieve, the language they use to refer to these outcomes, and the methods they may use to assess or measure outcomes. Program areas also differ in their state of readiness for outcome measurement and tracking – where some are testing and implementing customized assessment tools, others have not yet operationalized program outcomes for measurement.

This call for proposals will help to shape a framework for introducing outcome measurement and tracking across the service sector. The areas of inquiry will inform current outcome measurement initiatives and guide future efforts. More specifically, these research syntheses will allow the identification of appropriate methods to introduce outcomes, including drivers to implementation, common challenges and successful means of overcoming them, ways in which common language and outcomes are established, methods to use outcomes as accountability mechanisms, and ways that program outcomes are used to support policy and program development.



Description	<p><i>One of the ministry's strategic goals is that "everyone involved in service delivery contributes to achieving common outcomes". This review will address this goal by exploring how outcomes are conceptualized, employed and communicated across the service sector and in other jurisdictions.</i></p>
Areas of Inquiry	<p>Review the available literature and materials produced by other jurisdictions to develop standard definitions and language for the measurement of outcomes in social services, based on the unique needs and priorities of the child and youth service system. The definitions should enable program areas to move towards identifying common outcomes, while representing the uniqueness of their areas. The proposed approach should also specify the types of outcomes to be measured and why.</p>
	<p>Conduct a jurisdictional review, involving service sector stakeholders and the broader research community, addressing the most appropriate methods to introduce outcome measurement and reporting, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The ways in which outcomes are established; – The drivers to implementation; – The common challenges and successful means of overcoming them; – The governance models that support a collaborative approach to service delivery and decision-making (e.g. Children's Trusts in the United Kingdom); – The methods to use outcomes as accountability mechanisms and links to funding; and – The methods for using outcomes to support policy and program development.
	<p>Identify measurable, short-term and long-term outcomes for children and youth in each of the ministry's program areas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – What short-term outcomes are common to more than one MCYS program area and do those common outcomes predict long-term outcomes? – How might outcomes differ or how should they be tailored to be relevant for specific program areas or service groups (e.g. long-term educational outcomes for young people with development disabilities)?



Description *One of the ministry's strategic goals is that "everyone involved in service delivery contributes to achieving common outcomes". This review will address this goal by exploring how those outcomes are conceptualized, employed and communicated across the service sector and in other jurisdictions.*

Areas of Inquiry	<p>Collaboration is particularly critical when clients are transitioning across programs or through developmental stages. Review the available evidence on how service systems have effectively supported individuals during significant transitions, including an examination of governance models , decision-making processes and case management methods. Reviews should focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Crown wards transitioning from one educational institution to another (e.g. after they have moved, from elementary to secondary school, or from secondary school to post-secondary education); – Children with special needs transitioning to adult situations (e.g. job placements or group living arrangements); – Youth involved with Youth Justice Services transitioning back to community settings including, school, volunteer positions and employment; or – Other significant transitions that impact children and youth in other jurisdictions or sectors (e.g. health, immigration, etc.).
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4. Residential Services

Children and youth are significantly impacted by the environment in which they live. For children and youth receiving residential services (e.g. foster care, group care, open and secure custody, residential mental health, special needs and other residential services), provision of services also means providing a home. In such cases, the impact of their service experience is magnified.

To support residential service providers, the ministry is looking for evidence that can provide insight into practices for effective delivery of services in residential settings that promote positive child and youth outcomes. Each of the areas of inquiry identified for synthesis reviews under this call for proposals could be undertaken with the additional consideration of the needs of residential service recipients. The consideration of the needs of the sector and the specific client population could be applied to the development of the proposal's methodology and the analysis plan. Proposals should consider the experiences of other jurisdictions, other service sectors (e.g. health, services for adults, etc.) and the existing research literature.



Description	<p><i>Residential Services</i> <i>Children and youth are significantly impacted by the environment in which they live. These reviews will provide insight into the practices that support effective delivery of services in residential settings and promote positive child and youth outcomes.</i></p>
Areas of Inquiry/ Considerations	<p>Possible inquiry examples (this is not meant to be a comprehensive list of the possible approaches)</p> <p>Service Experience: Identify and analyze promising practices and components of service delivery such as assessments and placement decision-making for providing positive service experiences to clients receiving residential services (foster care, secured residences, open custody, group homes, etc.)</p> <p>Personalized Services: Using the existing research literature and examples from other jurisdictions, identify the opportunities and challenges related to providing “personalized residential services” tailored to the needs of the children or youth as they transition between and across program areas (i.e. child welfare, youth justice, child and youth mental health and special needs services).</p> <p>Achieving Outcomes: Using the existing research literature and examples from other jurisdictions, identify the outcome measures that could be used to monitor the effectiveness of specific residential programs or services (e.g. child welfare, youth justice, mental health or special needs services) and the common outcomes that could be monitored across these settings.</p>



WHAT RESEARCH ACTIVITIES DOES THE STRATEGIC RESEARCH FUND SUPPORT?

MCYS recognizes the diverse range of research evidence that can contribute to decision-making and daily practice and will support projects such as:

- Literature reviews;
- Research and practice syntheses;
- Meta-analyses;
- Qualitative, quantitative and quasi-experimental research studies; and
- Case studies and comparisons.

Strategic Research Funds may be used to:

1. Provide support for synthesis projects and directed research projects;
2. Finance research projects that meet the current and emerging needs of the child and youth services sector, without duplicating support that is available from other sources (e.g. Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council [SSHRC] or Canadian Health Services Research Foundation [CHSRF]); or
3. Leverage funding from other sources by tailoring strategically relevant research and synthesis projects that are already in progress to the Ontario context.

The current call exclusively requests proposals for synthesis reviews.

WHEN CAN YOU APPLY TO THE STRATEGIC RESEARCH FUND?

The Strategic Research Fund will hold targeted research calls at regular intervals each calendar year. Projects are eligible for varying amounts of funding based on the complexity and number of research questions identified, the duration of the project and the type of research. The research design and project budget are to be proposed by the applicant in response to the specific areas of inquiry outlined in the call for proposals. Projected funded through the Strategic Research Fund have typically been 6-12 months in duration.

KNOWLEDGE MOBILIZATION AND EXCHANGE (KME) THROUGH THE STRATEGIC RESEARCH FUND

The results of these projects are intended to benefit the whole service sector as well as the research community. In order to benefit the service sector and the academic community, the ministry encourages the researchers to submit their findings for publication and presentation and to disseminate their results as broadly as possible. Research and synthesis projects should involve service providers, MCYS staff and decision-makers throughout the process. Sustained interaction with these stakeholders helps ensure that the research results are relevant, accessible and usable. Interaction also facilitates researchers' access to data and other resources and is particularly


STRATEGIC RESEARCH FUND APPLICATION TEMPLATE
PART 1: COVER PAGE
Project Summary:

Please provide a 250-word summary of your synthesis review in plain language (e.g. layman's terms) that explains its relevance to the research questions, the main objectives and your research approach.

Applicant Information

Name:	
Title:	
Organization:	
Street Address:	
City, Province,	
Telephone:	
Fax:	
E-Mail:	

Primary Contact Name (if different from Applicant):

Telephone:	
Fax:	
E-mail:	

Estimated Cost:

Include the total research cost, as well as annual estimates for multi-year projects.

\$



PART 2: METHODOLOGY

Research and Knowledge Mobilization and Exchange Approach

2.a	<p>Background Information/Literature Review (maximum 2,000 words)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The literature review should demonstrate your understanding of current research literature related to the research questions.
2.b	<p>Project Team</p> <p>The proposal should list all members of the project team. For each team member provide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relevant training and experience related the project; and Key project roles and responsibilities.
2.c	<p>Detailed Research Plan and Methodology (maximum 2,000 words)</p> <p>Your plan and methodology should cover all of the following applicable areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inclusion and exclusion criteria; Access to data sources (e.g. in the case of analysis of case files or administrative data) and measures to be taken to safeguard privacy/confidentiality of personal or confidential information; Research Design; and Instrumentation, including psychometrics of all measures and appropriateness for the population being investigated.
2.d	<p>Project timelines with due dates for all key deliverables</p>
2.e	<p>Describe the knowledge mobilization and exchange plan (maximum 500 words):</p> <p>The plan should include information such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The role of any cross-disciplinary advisory groups and their members; The types of knowledge mobilization and exchange tools and activities; and Plans for active dissemination to MCYS corporate, regional staff and service partners.



PART 3: ESTIMATED COSTS

Budget Estimates and Budget Justification

3.a An estimate of the level of costs under each general category.

Category	\$
Salaries and stipends (by team member and title)	
Materials and Supplies (specify)	
Computing and Related Costs (specify)	
Other expenditures (specify)	
TOTAL	

4.b Please provide justification for each budget element.

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