

## Ontario Active School Travel (OAST) Fund: Keys to Success for Recipient Communities

This document is based upon the findings of program evaluation work involving surveys and interviews with nine representatives from OAST Fund recipient communities. The salient themes and advice from the expert interviewees identified nine keys to success for OAST Fund recipient communities:

Key to Success	Expert Advice
Know and Be Known by Stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partnerships take time to build and maintain but can lead to long-term benefits within a community.</li> <li>Partners may have different agendas or different constraints, and these may lead to a less nimble environment. Appreciate these differences and know what you're getting into when you engage with existing or potential partners.</li> <li>Map the roles and responsibilities of AST stakeholders. When you know who the key players are, it becomes easier to identify which channels to move through and who to contact to bring about change.</li> <li>Be the local AST expert so that whenever issues related to AST arise within your community, your organization can be brought in for comment or as a consultant to address issues.</li> </ul>
Identify "Asks" from Key Stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tap into the expertise of your stakeholders. An individual with experience can complete a task in a fraction of the time.</li> <li>Identify gatekeepers for project tasks (e.g., school board ethics for data collection, municipal permits for sidewalk stencils), and see if there are ways that partners can assist with moving these tasks forward.</li> </ul>
Foster Innovative Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>While it is important to be strategic with inviting partners for your AST project, be open to new relationships and relationships evolving as the project unfolds. Sometimes champions will come from unexpected departments or organizations.</li> </ul>
Establish Municipal Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dedicate time to fostering relationships with municipalities. Ensure that municipalities are on board during the initial planning stages of your AST initiatives.</li> </ul>

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Share Responsibilities with Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is important that AST programming doesn't rest with one person or organization, both for sustainability purposes and to ensure efficient use of resources.</li> </ul>
Schedule Strategic Meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Know who is at the table and play to their strengths and skillset.</li> <li>• Whenever possible, be strategic with committee membership to minimize knowledge and skill gaps within your project.</li> </ul>
Offer School-Specific Supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify the types of support needed by schools within your community and ways to address them.</li> <li>• Designate a portion of the OAST fund for school-specific items that emerge as schools move through the school travel planning process.</li> </ul>
Focus on the Wider Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrate messaging into existing community-wide physical infrastructure and communication channels to maximize its impact.</li> <li>• Identify infrastructure changes that are appealing and useful for school children and the community as a whole.</li> </ul>
Build an AST Legacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seek opportunities to make connections between city- or community-wide issues and AST, making AST relevant for everyone.</li> <li>• Policy and procedure documents related to AST strengthens and entrenches programming within a community, so that it can withstand changes to committee membership or champions.</li> </ul>

**Notes:**

Evaluation work was conducted by an independent research consultant. Participants were purposively selected to ensure that a range of communities (i.e., size, municipal structure, and geographic location) and stakeholder groups (i.e., student transportation consortia, non-profit corporations, public health, municipalities, public health, and school boards) were represented.

Participants were asked to reflect on their OAST Fund initiatives and broad experience with Active School Travel (AST) promotion, and identify the main components that contributed to community buy-in, cultural shifts to normalize AST and ultimately, increases in AST.

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