

OAKTREE 10

Building Capacity, Together



Information Package for Charities

AUGUST 2025

Building stronger and more resilient organizations across Guelph-Wellington

Oak Tree 10 focuses on supporting nonprofits that are doing extraordinary work to meet the growing demands of our community by strengthening capacity in the face of growing challenges.

We recognize the immense day-to-day demands on charities. That is why OTP 10 is not about moonshots; it is about helping you do more with what you already have. We are interested in hearing practical ideas that will make your work easier, more sustainable, or more connected.

Whether it is a better process, a new tool, or a collaboration that frees up time or energy, upgrades come in many forms. We will be looking for proposals that:

- **Increase operational capacity:** Strengthening how your organization runs – inside and out.
- **Upgrade what is working:** Small changes with meaningful impact, whether tech-based or not.
- **Strengthen collaborations:** Building or deepening connections that support your mission.

More information and apply: OakTreeGuelph.ca

Prize Framework

To celebrate our 10th anniversary, Oak Tree is embracing a new approach that recognizes multiple great ideas instead of crowning a single winner.

Every applicant wins something valuable: free access to the Oak Tree Learning Lab. These three professional development sessions are worth hundreds of dollars and open to all Guelph-Wellington charities – no application required.

Each of the five finalists selected by our Expert Panel receives a guaranteed \$2,500, plus their share of the remaining prize pool based on expert evaluation. The stronger your idea and execution, the larger your share.

The total prize pool will be at least \$50,000, distributed based on combined scores from expert panels (60%), initial applications (30%), and public voting at the finale (10%).

Our commitment is that everyone in the final five goes home with meaningful funding.

The Process

Step 1 – ‘Keeping it Simple’ Online Application

Open from September 3-30, 2025 at www.oaktreeguelph.ca

Complete our online application to tell us about how an Oak Tree gift can strengthen your organization.

Question	Up to	% of Score
1. What priority are you addressing?	1 line	15%
2. Why this priority?	100 words	15%
3. What will you do?	100 words	10%
4. How will it work?	200 words	20%
5. What measurements (quantitative and/or qualitative) will determine success?	150 words	5%
6. Explain the impact of this project on the lives of people who live in Guelph and Wellington County	150 words	20%
Panelists’ Overall impression of your submission		15%

Step 2 – Learn, Share & Connect: introducing the Oak Tree Learning Lab

Fall 2025

Whether you’re applying to Oak Tree or not, all charities in Guelph-Wellington are invited to join the Oak Tree Learning Lab, a free professional development series designed to help you work smarter, not harder.

Session facilitation and training brought to you by [Four Simple Words](#).

This three-part virtual workshop series will help strengthen your organization by exploring two essential themes: building your team's mental health and resilience, and embracing AI tools with confidence.

Oak Tree Learning Lab Schedule

October 15, 10:00-11:00am – Setting the Stage – Why mental health and AI matter for your team

October 22, 10:00-11:00am – Mental Health & Team Resilience – Practical tools from Compass

October 29, 10:00-11:00am – AI Made Simple – Streamline your work without the overwhelm

All sessions are virtual, recorded for registrants who can't attend live, and designed for real people doing real work in today's challenging charity environment.

Registration details and session links will be available at www.oaktreeguelph.ca in September 2025.

Step 3 – Expert Panel Review & Shortlist Announcement

October-November 2025

Your application will be reviewed by an incredible Expert Panel of community leaders, nonprofit veterans, and sector experts who understand the challenges you are facing. They will review every submission using criteria focused on impact, feasibility, and organizational strength.

By December 1, 2025, you'll know if you're one of our five finalists – if not, you'll still have valuable feedback and access to all our learning opportunities.

Step 4 – Let's Chat

January 2026

In an opportunity to learn more and exchange ideas, the 5 finalists will join our panelists for a 30-minute conversation about their submission. You'll share a 5-minute presentation (maximum 6 slides – we're not here to make work, folks!) followed by a 25-minute Q&A session.

Pro Tip: questions and answers work both ways – use this opportunity to tap this great group to help strengthen your idea!

The expert panel's evaluation rubric will be sent to finalists at least two weeks in advance of the interview.

Step 5 – Gather and Celebrate!

Mark your calendar for the end of January 2026 – we will firm up the exact date in the coming months

Open to all! This event is about more than our finalists – it's a gathering to celebrate the great work of charities across Guelph and Wellington County. All applicants and community supporters are welcome to attend. Each finalist is welcome to bring up to 20 supporters.

We'll hear a final pitch from the finalists, the crowd will have an opportunity to vote for their favourite idea, we'll raise a glass and nibble a snack or two, and then we'll crown our winners!

How we'll calculate final scores:

Round 1 submissions scores	30%
Round 2 interview scores	60%
Public vote at the finale	10%