

## Academic *Innovation* Fund

### Some Guidance to Support AIF Applications to Address SDGs

**BACKGROUND:** In keeping with the University's commitment to advancing the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs; <https://www.yorku.ca/uap2020-25/answering-the-call/>), we are highlighting the opportunity provided by the Academic Innovation Fund to advance student and faculty awareness of the SDGs. In doing so, a percentage of the total AIF funding will be allocated this year to support projects that specifically align with one or more SDGs.

To support this initiative, in consultation with colleagues, the Office of the AVP Teaching and Learning has developed this brief document to provide guidance to Associate Deans and AIF applicants. The following provides additional information about how an applicant might align their proposal with the SDG framework to foster collective awareness and (eventual) action related to social justice for peoples and the planet.



First and foremost, the objective of the opportunity to highlight the SDGs in the development of AIF proposals is intended to enhance awareness across York University of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, their wide-ranging applicability to multiple lenses and approaches regarding social justice, and our community's commitment to them. This approach creates a platform that will collectively enable us to help our students and our whole community learn about the SDGs; we are helping to educate the next generation of people who will advance the SDGs.

The depth and breadth of the SDGs provides university educators with ample space to foster increased awareness and applied learning in ways that make sense to individual courses and programs. While each of the 17 SDGs encompasses multiple targets and indicators, which we invite prospective applicants to explore, those targets and indicators generally do not align with the capacity of an educational institution to directly affect. That is, the work we do as academics may not directly contribute to “end[ing] poverty in all its forms everywhere” (SDG #1), as an example.

However, in our work we can create academic innovations in curriculum and programs that provide a transformative education for our students that helps them to be aware of and knowledgeable about poverty around the world. We can create access to education and training that helps our students understand how they might eventually be able to engage in developing and implementing solutions that strive toward “ending poverty ... everywhere”.

**PROPOSALS:** Each year, AIF disseminates up to \$1.5 million to support excellent academic innovation projects. This year, a minimum of 30% of the AIF funding, and up to 50%, will be allocated to support AIF projects that choose to focus their proposed AIF project in a way that can advance our collective commitment to the SDGs, dependent upon the level of interest among colleagues.

As is normally the case, a project might focus in the theme areas of experiential education, technology enhanced learning, or internationalization; and the project might be submitted in either Category 1 (large project), Category 2 (course conversion), or Category 3 (scholarship of teaching and learning).

In addition to selecting the theme and category for their proposal, the applicant may also choose to opt-in to the SDG-focused option. If an applicant chooses to select the SDG-focused option, we **do NOT** expect or require that an application address any specific SDG target or indicator. We **do** expect that an application will demonstrate how the proposed project will enhance awareness and knowledge of one or more SDGs. It is enough to make this demonstration in the application. If a proposal does address a specific SDG target or indicator that is wonderful, too, but not required.

Please note that no one is obliged to select the SDG-relevant option, but we do hope colleagues will take this opportunity to explore the SDGs further and consider the various ways by which the SDGs can be embedded.

We have the opportunity to ask questions of ourselves now about what we can do *locally* at York University and within our community, in partnership with our students and perhaps with colleagues across different academic disciplines to build awareness and understanding of the SDGs, so that we have the opportunity to create *global* impact in the future.

Here are a few examples of academic innovation projects that demonstrate how an AIF proposal might address an SDG but not reference a specific target or indicator:

- diVRsity (CVRriculum) program: embedding Virtual Reality as an experiential education medium to teach empathy; this project aligns with SDG – 10 – Reduce Inequalities and brings awareness, knowledge and action towards reducing inequalities, raising awareness about important diversity issues.
- Embedding Sustainable Development Goals and Twenty-First Century Teaching in the Glendon Curriculum; this project aligns with SDG – SDG 4 – Quality Education and directly supports Target 4.7 "By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development."
- Environmental Education of York University Students: Windows, Art and the Conservation of Migratory Birds; this project aligns with SDG 15 – Life on Land which brings awareness, knowledge and action towards protecting biodiversity and ecosystems conservation.

Finally, in support of colleagues wanting to develop AIF proposals this year, we will host a question-and-answer session (date TBD) to which all are invited. As well, an 'SDGs In The Classroom Community of Practice' that is emerging will hold an event on November 26<sup>th</sup> at 9:30 am, and this is an excellent opportunity for colleagues to learn about the activities a wide range of faculty have undertaken to creatively infuse some aspects of the SDGs into a course, a module, an assignment and other areas.

**Additional Resources:**

- UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>
- Global Goals for SDGs: <https://www.globalgoals.org/>
- 2020 SDGs Progress report: <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2020/>
- Getting Started with the SDGs in Universities: [https://ap-unsdsn.org/wp-content/uploads/University-SDG-Guide\\_web.pdf](https://ap-unsdsn.org/wp-content/uploads/University-SDG-Guide_web.pdf)
- Accelerating Education for the SDGs in Universities: <https://blogs.upm.es/education4sdg/prueba-elementor/curricular-lt-actions/>
- A Guide for Universities, Higher Education Institutions and the Academic Sector [https://ap-unsdsn.org/wp-content/uploads/University-SDG-Guide\\_web.pdf](https://ap-unsdsn.org/wp-content/uploads/University-SDG-Guide_web.pdf)