



**Working Group
Application Package**

What is OPIRG Peterborough?

Established in 1976, OPIRG Peterborough is a campus-based, community-oriented, non-profit organization committed to research, education and action on social justice and environmental issues. Each year, OPIRG staff and volunteers organize speakers, films, conferences, publications and campaigns on a wide variety of topics that fit within our mandate.

A volunteer board of directors works with one full-time staff person and several part time student staff people to administer the office, develop programming, allocate resources, and network with other campus and community organizations. The OPIRG board uses a consensus decision-making process and meets fortnightly during the school year. Board members are elected annually and usually serve a two-year term.

For more than three decades OPIRG has been pursuing social justice and environmental activism on the Trent campus and the Peterborough community. During this long history, OPIRG has worked on a wide range of issues and has seen its alumni go on to contribute to other social justice and environmental movements after they leave Trent. Today, OPIRG continues to be a dynamic organization where many Trent students learn the skills and knowledge they need to be active citizens.

What is an OPIRG Working Group?

One of the ways that OPIRG sustains research, education and action around social and environmental justice issues is through support for the creation and maintenance of Working Groups. Working Groups are central to the functioning of OPIRG. They consist of a group of volunteers who work on specific issues pertaining to anti-oppressive, anti-colonial, social justice, and environmental issues, and they are dedicated to enacting change on campus and in the broader community.

Working Groups receive funding, support, and other resources from OPIRG. People can choose to form new Working Groups or to join existing ones. Working Groups can vary with time (in terms of membership and goals) in order to adequately reflect interests and relevance.

The Working Group model allows OPIRG to diversify our focus on different issues, and to increase ideas, energy and hope in order to achieve greater impacts. Furthermore, it generates a more organized, concerted challenge towards unjust structures of power. Today a great deal of power is concentrated in the hands of the well-organized individuals and corporations who make decisions based on profit margins – decisions that end up affecting all of our lives. The best way to challenge this imbalance of power and to foster a more democratic society is for each of us to learn how to recreate our culture based on ideals of equality and cooperation. This is exemplified within the working groups!

What Your Group Can Expect From OPIRG

All Working Groups are allocated a budget for projects and events they wish to have. These might include a speaker series, movie nights, handbooks, outreach materials, trainings and anything else. In addition to a budget each Working Group also has access to OPIRG's many resources:

- We offer a budget for all Working Groups as well as access to other important resources like the phone, internet, specialized software such as Photoshop, and our printer / photocopier.
- We help with volunteer outreach by giving out your Working Group's literature as well as directing potential volunteers to your meetings/email.
- We will help plan and brainstorm possible events, actions, etc.
- We offer the OPIRG office as a place to meet, hang-out and hold meetings for your Working Group.
- We can book rooms for you to have meetings, host events, meet-and-greets, film screenings etc. on the Trent campus or at Sadleir House.
- We send information out via our email newsletter for your events and meetings so as to ensure people hear about it.
- We can help you draft literature, make posters, put up posters, and generally advertise your Working Group, your event or your meetings.
- We offer anti-oppression, consensus-based decision making, and other trainings for all Working Groups.
- We can facilitate other workshops or trainings on-demand for your Working Group, such as campaign strategy, long-term planning, or more.
- We can provide resources on different matters, including our *Growing Communities* activist skills resource manual.

- We can connect your group to others across the province or across the country who are doing similar work.
- We can provide dedicated space on our website for your group to use as a homepage or to post news or blog articles.
- We can provide our Green Dishes for use at your group's events.
- We can partner on events.
- Ultimately, we strive to be a resource and place of support for your Working Group

What OPIRG Expects in Return

- The contact person for the Working Group will keep us apprised and up-to-date on meetings, events, etc.
- Information for the OPIRG website, including current contact person and links to affiliated organizations.
- Working Groups will be committed to organizing in an anti-oppressive manner, which includes (but is not limited to) addressing any and all racist, sexist, classist, ableist, anti-Semitic, homophobic, transphobic, xenophobic and/or any other oppressive language or actions in meetings, at events, and so on.
- Working Groups will strive to operate in a non-hierarchical manner, and will employ a consensus decision making process.
- All new Working Group members will attend a consensus-based decision making training and an anti-oppression workshop. Returning members are always welcome and encourage to attend as well.
- The Working groups will put the OPIRG logo on all posters and other advertisements.
- The Working Groups will use the OPIRG office respectfully and responsibly. This includes cleaning up after yourselves, keeping the office tidy and not removing/taking items from the office without asking permission, or returning.
- Working Group members will attend a mandatory Working Group orientation meeting at the beginning of each year.
- Every working group will present their work throughout the year at the Annual General meeting at the end of March or early April of the year.
- All working groups will provide a year-end report that will be published in the annual newsletter, or be put on the OPIRG York website.

- Working Groups will be expected to publish one research-based article each semester, either in the Arthur Newspaper or in an OPIRG publication.

Application Process

To be considered for Working Group status, please fill out the application form that is attached below, and attach a Working Group proposal. This form allows the Working Group to concisely outline its goals and the way in which it embodies a particular issue. A sample Working Group proposal is attached, as well as tips on how to create a mission statement. Please note that a majority of the working group members listed on the application must be members of OPIRG-Peterborough, meaning they are full-time undergraduate students at Trent who have not opted out of the levy, or they have chosen to pay the membership fee.

Once the application has been reviewed by the OPIRG board of directors, the contact person will be notified of the board's decision. Working groups then must follow the working group policies.

Working groups are expected to reapply each year, which provides an opportunity to update information as needed. It also provides an opportunity to reflect on the previous year and to consider whether changes in focus or structure need to be made.

If you have any questions about applying to become a working group and/or what the benefits of becoming a working group are please contact us at 705-741-1208 or opirg@trentu.ca.

Defining Your Mission Statement

Each working group needs to formulate a mission statement as part of their initial proposal. This is a short expression of the group's focus and purpose. Through creating this statement you will develop a more clear idea of your goals and how to direct your energy.

A mission statement often does more than identify an issue of focus – in many cases it frames the issue of focus in relation to specific courses of action. Two working groups focusing on a specific issue could have very different mission statements leading to very different courses of action.

For example, here are two possible mission statements for groups which would both focus on the issue of racism through different actions:

1. To expose racism on campus and to educate and research around the issue of racism.
2. To provide a support network for people of colour to discuss racism issues and anti-racist ideas and actions.

To begin defining your mission statement, you may want to have each group member consider a few questions individually, such as:

- Why are you interested in the group?
- What do you hope to accomplish over the following months?
- What kind of time commitment can you make over the following months?

After members have considered their interests in the group individually, it will be necessary to have a group discussion in order to clarify member's agendas and to unify your focus and direction. Some questions you may want to discuss as a group could include:

- What is the group together?
- Who does the group hope to reach?
- What does the group hope to achieve? How?

Working Group Application



Title of Working Group: _____

Contact Persons:

Name: _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____

Name: _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____

Signatures – Minimum of three:

Only active members of the group should sign this application. If more space is required please attach a separate sheet.

Name (Printed)	Signature	Date

Has this Working Group/Project been funded by OPIRG-Peterborough in the past?
YES NO

Is this Working Group/Project currently being funded by other sources?
YES NO If Yes, by who?

Is this Working Group/Project affiliated with other organizations and/or groups on campus, in the greater community or internationally? YES NO

If yes, which one(s)?

Working Group Proposal

Proposal – Minimum of one page, single spaced:

The written proposal is to be attached to this form and must include:

- A mission statement
- A group description
 - o Which issues/goals the group will focus on
 - o Reasons for applying for working group status
- An informal action plan about how the group plans to:
 - o Contribute to OPIRG's goals and follow its mission statement
 - o Involve and be accessible to Trent and Peterborough communities
 - o Recruit new members

Sample Working Group Proposal

For the consideration of the OPIRG Board of Directors:

We would like *Tree Huggers* to become an official OPIRG working group. Right now *Tree Huggers* is made up of a group of Trent students and some community members, and we plan on meeting weekly to have discussions and plan events. The following is our proposed mission statement:

Tree Huggers exists to educate both Trent students and the wider Peterborough community about the importance of tree hugging, and to promote the use of recycled paper products.

Some of the goals we would like to work towards include:

- 1) Getting the university to purchase 100% post-consumer waste recycled paper for photocopies and offices
- 2) Holding a screening of a film about deforestation
- 3) Organizing a tree planting event for the community

We feel that *Tree Huggers* would be a good OPIRG working group because of our shared commitment to environmental protection, action and education. We think that many OPIRG volunteers would be interested in participating in *Tree Hugger* events. *Tree Huggers* would also like to be able to use OPIRG's meeting space and other resources, such as the photocopier, website and library, because they are located in a central hub of activist activities.

Tree Huggers members commit themselves to learning about OPIRG's mission statement and policies, and to acting within OPIRG's mandate. Our focus on environmental education and action is directly related to the work that OPIRG does, thus the creation of a *Tree Hugger* working group supports OPIRG's goals.

We will make our meetings accessible to the Trent and Peterborough communities through advertising all of our meetings in advance through the OPIRG email list and in the *Arthur* newspaper. We will participate in tabling days on campus to raise awareness about the group. We will also make posters and put them in a wide variety of locations to attract a diverse membership. *Tree Huggers* will also strive to have our meeting and events in wheelchair accessible locations. All minutes from our meeting and our promotional material will be kept in a file in the OPIRG office for anyone to access.

Members of *Tree Huggers* are committed to learning about anti-oppression, and to attending OPIRG's training sessions if they are made available to us. We will address any issues of sexism, racism, homophobia, etc., if they arise within the group, as we strive to have a group where everyone can feel comfortable and safe.

We will use consensus decision making in our meetings and will strive to create a non-hierarchical environment of respect, openness and understanding. All members will have the opportunity to facilitate meetings and take minutes.