



YMCA
Youth Exchanges
Canada Program

**Connect.
Exchange.
Discover.**

*Give your group
the experience of a lifetime!*

Your Guide and Application



Guide and Application

This guide and application will help you to prepare when you're ready to submit your application online.

KEY DATES :

For travel between January and June: Application deadline **September 30**

For travel between July and December: Application deadline **March 1**

Keys to a Great Exchange

If you would like to get the most out of your exchange experience, here are some tips to help you create a great program:

- ▶ **Know your objectives.** Your exchange application should meet the objectives of YMCA Youth Exchanges Canada. Include learning, communication and engagement activities before, during and after the actual exchange. Whatever your objectives, clearly define them so we can match you with the appropriate group.
- ▶ **Choose the participants.** You may be organizing an exchange that includes an entire class or a group such as a club, sports team or association. If you are forming a group to go on an exchange, we encourage you to include youth from a variety of backgrounds.
- ▶ **Choose the group you'd like to twin with.** If you want to be twinned with a specific group, include their contact information in the application and we will do our best to meet your request. We can also help you find a group that shares your objectives and interests. Requests for a specific twinning will be considered within regional targets and budget availability once the eligibility of each group has been determined.
- ▶ **Plan ahead.** Exchanges usually last at least five days, excluding travel time. It is essential to plan the activities before, during and after the exchange. A joint project that you can work on with the organizer of the other group before, during and after the exchange can be helpful.
- ▶ **Get involved.** Successful exchanges involve the youth participants in all aspects of the exchange, including planning and fundraising. The overall experience, including developing communication, planning and leadership skills, will be a great benefit.
- ▶ **Get engaged.** All YMCA youth exchanges include an opportunity for youth to become actively engaged in the community. Examples might include a service or community educational awareness project.

- ▶ **Start fundraising.** The Government of Canada, through YMCA Youth Exchanges Canada, pays for the travel costs of all eligible participants and organizers. However, you will need to raise funds to cover the cost of activities in the host community and local transportation costs. A fundraising event is an excellent way for participants to learn to cooperate with others and to involve members of the local community.
- ▶ **Develop ongoing interaction.** Once the twinned groups have hosted each other, the organizers should encourage continued interaction between the groups. Both organizers and participants must evaluate their experience. These results will help assess the effect of YMCA Youth Exchanges Canada and better serve other young Canadians.

Remember: A successful exchange is carefully planned! It is an exciting experience for the group that involves full participation by youth, their parents or guardians, and the organizers.

Roles and Responsibilities

Here's a breakdown of the roles and responsibilities of everyone involved in the exchange:

GROUP LEADER

The Group Leader...

- chooses the group members and makes sure each is matched with a participant from the twin group
- makes sure the host families are screened
- promotes interaction among group members

...organizes for the group

- leads members in planning and implementing the orientation, host program and follow-up phases
- helps group members develop leadership and interpersonal skills
- returns the required documents to your Regional Coordinator by the assigned due dates
- raises awareness of the exchange with parents and throughout the community using information sessions, letters, local media, etc.

...travels with the group

- participates in and supervises the group while visiting the twin community
- takes responsibility for the group at all times while staying in the host community
- has a plan to deal with medical or other emergencies
- works with members to resolve personal and group difficulties that may arise
- links the group with the YMCA Exchange office and stays in regular contact with the Regional Coordinator

...makes arrangements

- completes all required forms and program reports
- receives all travel documents from travel agent
- ensures that participants receive the evaluation link
- encourages continued interaction between the groups to promote lasting connections among participants
- encourages youth to share the experience with other groups

PARTICIPANTS

- participate in all phases of the exchange: planning, travelling and hosting, following up, sharing ideas and suggestions
- bring commitment and energy to the exchange process
- youth participants can contribute to building their own group; the level at which they participate will depend on their abilities
- share the experience with other youth, schools and the community at large (meetings, articles in local newspapers, interviews, etc.)
- completing an evaluation of their experience of the program

PARENTS/GUARDIANS

Parents and guardians of the participants, to whatever extent they can:

- encourage group members to take part in all phases of the exchange
- provide a safe, welcoming place and appropriate supervision for their twin group members
- participate in fundraising and other exchange activities

YMCA

Staff in the YMCA Exchange office and your Regional Coordinator:

- coordinate the exchange, including all travel to and from the twin community, and assist your group in finding a twin
- support group leaders by answering questions and providing written materials
- link each exchange to the national network
- support the organizers by answering their questions, helping them solve problems, and providing documentation and an orientation session

The following are the Terms and Conditions to which you will need to agree once you apply online:

Agreement Terms and Conditions

I understand that if my application is approved I accept the following responsibilities:

1. My school or organization has given authorization to apply to the YMCA Youth Exchanges Canada Program. They agree to authorize our school or group to participate in the YMCA Youth Exchanges Canada Program if our application is approved.
2. The applying association, group or school (Organization) understands that the Organization is solely responsible for
 - Planning and carrying out pre-travel orientation program and post-travel follow-up program
 - Establishing safety procedures and training for group leaders and parents and participants
 - Making sure appropriate accommodations are provided for participants during their visit to your area, and
 - Protecting personal information by following responsible information handling practices, including government and regulatory requirements.
3. The YMCA is not responsible for any bodily injury, loss or damage to personal property resulting from participation by the Organization before, during or after the exchange, unless such injury, loss or damage is the direct and sole result of proven negligence of the part of the YMCA.
4. By participating in a YMCA program, you agree that you are participating voluntarily and do so at your own risk. You agree to fully release the YMCA and its officers, directors, agents, staff, and volunteers from all claims or lawsuits for any injuries, death, property damage or theft, losses, or any other liability of any kind, arising directly or indirectly out of your participation in YMCA programs, unless sole and proven negligence of YMCA.
5. The Organization shall maintain in force at all times adequate insurance including a minimum of \$5M Commercial General Liability insurance for its own protection against claims resulting from any act or omission of the Organization, its employees or participants, in the course of its participation in the YMCA Youth Exchanges Canada Program. The Organization shall provide the YMCA with proof of insurance coverage, adding the YMCA of Greater Toronto as an additional insured for the duration of the exchange, or during the travel and hosting periods. I am an authorized representative of the Organization.

I understand that, if my proposal is approved:

- I will be responsible for overseeing the organization of the exchange with my twin leader.
- I will ensure that all youth participants have not previously participated in the program.
- I will ensure that participating youth will meet the program age requirements (12 to 17 years old) and that our group size is between 10 and 30 participants. I will speak to my YMCA representative for any exceptions.
- I will be required to submit a group participation fee (based on \$75/ member) if we accept an exchange offer.
- I will be responsible for contacting and coordinating travel details with a YMCA designated travel agent who will make all travel arrangements.
- I agree to oversee hosting activities in my community that meet program and safety guidelines.

The following are the application questions for your review before applying online. Please note you will need to fill out these questions online – this does not replace the online application.

Name of school/group: _____

Type of group: _____

Address1: _____

Address 2: _____

City: _____

Province/Territory: _____

Postal Code: _____

Can't find your city in the list? Please choose "Other City" on the dropdown menu and then add it to address line 2.

Phone: _____ Ext: _____

Email: _____

Other Phone (If applicable): _____ Ext: _____

Fax: _____

Group Profile

Number of participants: females _____ + males _____ + adults _____ = _____

Age range of youth: Minimum Age _____ Maximum Age _____

Current grade levels: From _____ To _____

Principal language of group: _____

Other, please specify: _____

Has your group/organization/school ever participated in an exchange funded by the YMCA OR any other Exchanges Canada Delivery Organization (Experiences Canada, Canadian 4H Council, Canada Sports Friendship Exchange Programs)?

Yes No

Do you have previous experience in organizing an exchange?

Yes No

Please specify exchange program: _____

Are you applying to any other Exchanges Canada delivery organization at this time?

Yes No

If yes, which? Experiences Canada Canadian 4H council

Canada Sports Friendship Exchange Programs

Other _____

Group Description

Are you intending to take an existing group (e.g. members of one Grade 8 class, scout group, drama club, student council, sports team) or has your group been formed for the purpose of this exchange (e.g. 25 Grade 9 students from 120 Grade 9 social studies students)?

If forming a group strictly for the purpose of taking part in this exchange, how are you selecting participants?

We encourage the participation of youth who have traditionally been under-represented in exchanges. The Government of Canada defines Indigenous youth as those persons who report identifying with at least one Indigenous group, that is, First Nations, Métis, or Inuit. Visible Minority youth are defined as an individual other than an Indigenous person, who is non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour. Please indicate if your group includes youth who fall within the following groupings:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Youth with Disabilities | <input type="checkbox"/> Youth from low-income household |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Indigenous Youth | <input type="checkbox"/> Youth from rural areas |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Visible Minority Youth | |

Other than regular transportation between your community and your twin community, do you expect to need any additional support to meet the needs of these participants, e.g. sign language interpreter, modified vehicle, accessible home?

- Not Sure Yes No

Please specify: _____

Are you applying for a bilingual exchange? Yes No

How many participants in your group are members of an official language minority group (i.e. Francophones outside Quebec, Anglophones in Quebec)?

Please describe your group:

Exchange Description

If you are selected to participate in YMCA Youth Exchanges Canada, and once you have been twinned, you will be asked to provide a detailed plan of your activities. This section aims to collect your preliminary ideas, knowing that your plans will change when you begin to plan with your twin group.

Please list the objectives of your exchange (*i.e. What are you hoping to achieve through the exchange?*)

What activities are you planning to help achieve your exchange objectives before the exchange?

What activities are you planning to help achieve your exchange objectives after the exchange?

Please describe the educational focus/main activities that you are planning to include when hosting your twin group in your local community:

Exchange Dates

Please indicate your preferences for hosting and travelling:

On which approximate dates would you prefer to visit your twin group?

Departure Date: _____ Return Date: _____

On which approximate dates would you prefer to host your twin group?

Hosting Start Date: _____ Hosting End Date: _____

Please note that the hosting and travel dates can change and only need to be approximate dates.

Other

Where did you hear about this program?

Former Youth Participant Former Group Leader YMCA Staff Brochure/Poster

Internet/Website If other, please specify: _____

Specific Requests (Optional)

If you wish to request a specific twin or location please fill in this section. Both groups must apply separately to the YMCA, indicating they want to be twinned with each other.

Name of School/Group Requested: _____

Twin Group Organizer's Name: _____

If the twin or location you requested is not feasible, will you consider other possibilities?

Yes No