

Ontario 

2021-2022

**QUEST FOR
GOLD**

Ontario Athlete Assistance Program

**Ontario Card
Athlete Handbook**

**Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and
Culture Industries**

Program Overview: *Quest for Gold* - Ontario Athlete Assistance Program

1. What are the goals and objectives of the *Quest for Gold* - Ontario Athlete Assistance Program?

The overarching goal of the *Quest for Gold* – OAAP is directly related to the High Performance Sport goal of the Canadian Sport Policy – that Canadians are systematically achieving world-class results at the highest levels of international competition – by improving the performance and number of Ontario athletes performing at the national and international level; thereby contributing to the improved performance of Canada at international competitions. Specific objectives of the program are:

- a) To help athletes continue their pursuit of athletic excellence at the highest levels of national and international competition;
- b) To encourage athletes to stay in Ontario to live and train;
- c) To compensate athletes for earnings lost while training;
- d) To enable athletes to successfully pursue excellence in sport while fulfilling their educational goals;
- e) To increase athlete access to improved high performance coaching; and
- f) To enhance training and competitive opportunities available to athletes.

2. How will the *Quest for Gold* - OAAP achieve its objectives?

The *Quest for Gold* - OAAP achieves its objectives by:

- Providing additional direct financial assistance (Canada Card designation) to Ontario athletes who are carded at the national level by Sport Canada;
- Providing standards for the identification and support of eligible sports and eligible junior-aged Ontario athletes to be carded at the Provincial level (Ontario Card);
- Ensuring that Provincial Sport and Multi-Sport Organizations (PSO/MSOs) have appropriate selection procedures and criteria in place, for the nomination of Ontario athletes to be carded at the Provincial level (Ontario Card);
- Providing OAAP carding support in a consistent and timely manner to athletes who meet their sport-specific carding criteria in those sports that meet OAAP eligibility requirements;
- Focusing support on junior-aged athletes to assist in their transition from junior to senior national and international competition;
- Providing a living and training allowance to help offset some of the costs athletes incur as a result of their involvement in high-performance sport;
- Allowing financial assistance provided to be used to offset tuition costs to allow athletes to attain academic goals;
- Ensuring, in conjunction with the PSO/MSO, that appropriate training and competitive opportunities are in place and providing annual, ongoing and long-term evaluation of athlete performance and potential.

3. What are the eligible expenses for this funding?

Carded athletes receiving funding under the Ontario Athlete Assistance Program can spend funding obtained only on the following items:

- Normal living costs;
- Costs directly associated with training (e.g. coaching, facility fees, other athlete services);
- Costs associated with attending training camps and competitions (e.g. entry fees, travel costs);
- Sport-specific equipment;
- Tuition and education related expenses (e.g. books, fees, commuting costs).

Minimum eligibility requirements for athletes

- Athletes who have achieved Canada Card status are not eligible for an Ontario Card in the same fiscal year;
- Athlete must be a member in good standing with PSO/MSO and NSO where applicable;
- Athlete must have entered into a Sports Organization - Athlete Agreement with his or her PSO/MSO and must be in full compliance with the terms and conditions of that agreement;
- Athlete must have met all terms and conditions of any previous *Quest for Gold* Sports Organization – Athlete Agreements to the satisfaction of the PSO/MSO in order to be eligible for consideration in 2021-2022;
- Athlete must demonstrate a commitment and dedication to a proper training and competitive program;
- Athlete’s coach should be minimum Level 2 NCCP certified or trained status Competition Stream or the sport’s equivalent in the Instruction Stream, or be engaged in completing this training, as determined by the PSO;
- Athlete must not be under a sanction that prohibits competition as per the Canadian Anti-Doping Policy;
- Athlete must be attending an educational institution full-time (i.e. elementary and secondary schools):
 - Exceptions will be made provided that the athlete can substantiate that his/her training will not allow for full-time attendance or if an athlete requires special needs that preclude full or part-time attendance (e.g. Athlete with a Disability (AWAD));
- Athletes who have completed their area of study at the secondary level (i.e. high school) or post-secondary level and who continue to train towards participation in major national or international competitions will also be considered;
- If eligible, the athlete must compete, and continue to compete solely for Ontario and/or Canada for one year from the date funding is received, at Canada Games and other national competitions involving provincial level competitions;
- Athlete must not receive financial support from any other provincial/territorial athlete assistance program. This does not include academic scholarships, bursaries, student grants, student loans, social assistance, disability pensions, and other forms of financial assistance that are unrelated to competitive sport.
- Eligibility will be limited to Ontario junior-aged athletes, ages 11-22 (“junior-aged” refers to chronological age, not a sport’s specific age category) - only exception is for PSO/MSOs

using 30% of Ontario Card allotment for athletes older than 22 years of age who have been identified as a potential next generation national team athlete by the PSO/MSO's selection process.

4. Can an athlete be nominated for Ontario Card status in two sports? (i.e. receive two cards)?

No. If an athlete is nominated in two separate sports the athlete will have to decide which sport he/she wishes to receive carding support from.

5. How does receipt of *Quest for Gold* - OAAP funding impact on an athlete's current or future eligibility for a National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) scholarship or their eligibility to compete in a non-scholarship NCAA sport?

Effective August 1, 2013, the NCAA has revised their policies related to an athlete receiving funding from a government program (new language is bolded):

12.1.2.4.9 Exception for Training Expenses. An individual (prospective or enrolled student-athlete) may receive actual and necessary expenses [including grants, but not prize money, whereby the recipient has qualified for the grant based on his or her performance in a specific event(s)] to cover developmental training, coaching, facility usage, equipment, apparel, supplies, comprehensive health insurance, travel, room and board without jeopardizing the individual's eligibility for intercollegiate athletics, provided such expenses are approved and provided directly by the U.S. Olympic Committee (USOC), the appropriate national governing body in the sport (or, for international student-athletes, the equivalent organization of that nation) **or a governmental entity.**

The effective date for this piece of legislation as it relates to **prospective student-athletes who have not started college** will apply differently than it will for **current student-athletes.**

Current student-athletes: The effective date for current student-athletes is August 1, 2013, meaning they cannot accept funds from a governmental entity **until after August 1, 2013.**

Prospective student-athletes: Individuals enrolling full time at a collegiate institution on or after August 1, 2013 are currently being certified under the new rule. In other words, a prospective student-athlete who has accepted these funds from a governmental entity or who will accept these funds prior to the August 1 date from a governmental entity will get the benefit of the new rule (e.g. will not be required to return the funds).

Any athlete considering an application to an NCAA institution is strongly encouraged to contact the NCAA Eligibility Center if they have any additional questions.

The onus is entirely on the athlete to determine the impact of accepting OAAP funding on current or future NCAA eligibility and to decide whether or not to accept OAAP funding. The athlete will be required to acknowledge this onus and responsibility when signing the OAAP Ontario Card application form and agreeing to the related terms and conditions of the program. The MHSTCI accepts no responsibility for any consequences that may follow, or losses that may be sustained in connection with an athlete's eligibility or ineligibility for a NCAA scholarship, or in connection with an athlete's eligibility or ineligibility to compete in a non-scholarship NCAA sport. The MHSTCI strongly urges the PSO/MSO and individual athletes to contact the NCAA Eligibility Center to determine the impact of *Quest for Gold* - OAAP funding on current or future eligibility for a NCAA scholarship or on eligibility to compete in a non-scholarship NCAA sport.

National Collegiate Athletic Association

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6. How does the acceptance of *Quest for Gold* – OAAP funding impact on an athlete's eligibility for disability pensions, other social assistance programs or academic scholarships?

The PSO cannot offer any definitive opinion on how acceptance of OAAP funding will impact on current or future eligibility for any other income programs or scholarships (see Note below). The onus is on the athlete to check the terms and conditions of such programs or scholarships to determine potential impacts. The PSO makes no representations or warranties regarding the possible impact of *Quest for Gold* - OAAP funding on such programs, pensions or scholarships and accepts no responsibility for any consequences that may follow, or losses that may be sustained in relation to such programs, pensions or scholarships.

Athlete Selection Requirements and Application Process

1. How are athletes considered for Ontario Card eligibility?

Athletes will be nominated for Ontario Cards by their PSO/MSO using an objective sport specific selection criteria developed by a "Selection Committee" appointed by the PSO/MSO. The sport specific selection criteria will be approved by the PSO/MSO's Board of Directors in advance of the selection process. The selection criteria must be clear, objective, and transparent, and must be applied in a manner that is free from bias, discrimination and conflict of interest.