

Better Jobs Ontario (BJO) Eligibility Desk Aid

For external distribution

Purpose

This desk aid is intended to help Service Providers determine the eligibility of BJO applicants entering the Regular Stream, and which pathway they may be eligible for. The document will reference the [BJO Guidelines](#) and will include examples to illustrate the nuances of the two pathways of the Regular eligibility stream.

This desk aid is not a comprehensive tool for determining an applicant's eligibility, as it does not detail every eligibility criterion. Please reference the [BJO Guidelines](#) in full when completing application assessments.

For more information on additional initiatives under BJO (e.g., manufacturing stream), please reference the [Employment Ontario Partner's Gateway](#).

Introduction

To be eligible for BJO, applicants must:

1. Have been **Laid-off and Unemployed**,

OR

2. Be from a **Low-income Household with Challenges Attaching to the Labour Market**.

Laid-off and Unemployed Stream (BJO Guidelines 2.3.1)

The principal definition of "laid-off" includes those:

- whose fixed-term employment contract has expired (i.e., the applicant was employed for a set period of time, which has ended without the applicant quitting and without the employer terminating the agreement prior to the end date),
- who have received EI Part I maternity or parental benefits and are seeking to re-enter the labour force,
- who have left work due to medical reasons, **OR**
- who were laid-off and then became self-employed.

Individuals who have been laid-off can be considered unemployed if they:

- are working less than an average of 20 hours per week,
- have taken an interim job¹ to provide for basic needs after their initial lay-off, **OR**
- are continuing to receive salary via salary continuance or received severance pay.

Low-income Household with Challenges Attaching to the Labour Market (BJO Guidelines 2.3.2)

This stream is intended to assist applicants with little or no workplace experience, but who will still benefit from BJO training opportunities. For example, many social assistance clients may benefit from this stream.

To be eligible for this stream of BJO, clients must meet the following four criteria:

1. Do not have a lay-off event (i.e., if the applicant has been laid off at any time, they can only be considered for the **Laid-off and Unemployed** stream),
2. Have been unemployed for 6 months or longer, defined as meeting one of the criteria below:
 - without work but actively seeking employment and currently available to start work,
 - not working more than an average of 20 hours per week, **OR**
 - engaging in unincorporated, self-employment without a business number (e.g., gig work) for an average of 20 hours per week or less.
3. Are part of a household where the combined income of the client and their spouse is at or below the BJO Low-Income Threshold (see table below). Note:
 - Individuals in receipt of social assistance at the time of applying to Better Jobs Ontario are considered below the BJO Low-Income Threshold.
 - The BJO Low-Income Threshold is unique to this program and is not the same as the Statistics Canada Low Income Cut-offs.

¹ An “interim job” is a job that an individual has taken while seeking better employment. An interim job must be a low skill level job (i.e., National Occupational Classification (NOC) 2021 Training, Education, Experience and Responsibilities (TEER) category 5). These jobs may be full-time, part-time, seasonal, or temporary contract work.

- The chart below includes threshold totals as outlined in the BJO Application for Financial Assistance form in June 2023. Please reference the application form via the [Employment Ontario Partner's Gateway](#) when completing assessments to ensure current thresholds are applied.

Household Size	BJO Low-Income Thresholds (6 months)
1 person	\$13,310
2 persons	\$16,571
3 persons	\$20,327
4 persons	\$24,734
5 persons	\$28,053
6 persons	\$31,638
7 persons or more	\$35,225

4. Have had a two-year period where they did not attend high school (full-time, part-time or academic upgrading) with the following exceptions:
 - Have left full-time high school and participated in Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) programming within the last two years, **and/or**
 - Are currently in receipt of social assistance.

Additional Eligibility Considerations

Applicants who quit or were terminated from a job (BJO Guidelines 2.3.5, 2.3.6)

- Individuals who quit or were terminated from their employment (excluding an interim job) are not eligible for the BJO program.
- Individuals who were **laid-off**, and who subsequently worked in a full-time job (excluding an interim job) but quit or were terminated from that job, are not eligible for the BJO program. However,
 - o Individuals from **low-income households with challenges attaching to the labour market** who quit or were fired from a low-level skill job (i.e., National Occupational Classification (NOC) 2021 Training, Education, Experience and Responsibilities (TEER) category 5) while seeking better employment are also eligible for the BJO program.
- Individuals who quit or were fired from an interim job after being laid-off are eligible for the BJO program.

Example Cases

Example 1

An individual quit their job as a cashier (NOC TEER category 5) and is currently employed as an Uber driver (NOC TEER category 5), working 15 hours per week. Their household income is below the BJO LICO threshold. The individual last attended school five years ago and has never been laid off.

This individual is eligible for the [Low-income household with Challenges Attaching to the Labour Market](#) stream because:

- They have not been laid off in the past.
- They meet the criteria for being unemployed for 6 months or longer.
- They are part of a household with combined income below the LICO threshold.
- They have had a two-year period where they did not attend high school. (BJO Guidelines: 2.3.2)

Example 2

An individual was laid off eight years ago. They have worked four different interim (NOC TEER category 5) jobs for the last six years; they quit three of these jobs and were fired from the fourth. They are currently unemployed.

This individual is eligible for the [Laid-off and Unemployed](#) stream because:

- They have been laid off in the past (BJO Guidelines: 2.3.1).
- They have taken on interim jobs to provide for basic needs after their initial lay-off and are currently unemployed (BJO Guidelines: 2.3.1).

Example 3

An individual was laid off four years ago. They then found employment (NOC TEER category 4) and were fired two years ago. The individual has since been working in interim jobs.

This individual is ineligible for the [Laid-off and Unemployed](#) stream because:

- They have been laid off in the past, but subsequently worked a full-time non-interim job and were terminated from that job (BJO Guidelines: 2.3.6).

This individual is also ineligible for the [Low-Income Household with Challenges Attaching to the Labour Market](#) stream because they have been laid off in the past (BJO Guidelines: 2.3.2).

Therefore, this individual is ineligible for BJO based on their current employment status and employment history.

Example 4

An individual quit their job as a dental assistant (NOC TEER category 3) 1 year ago and have not worked more than an average of 20 hours/week since. They have never been laid off, have a household income below the BJO low-income threshold, and have been out of school for 6 years.

This individual is ineligible for the [Laid-off and Unemployed](#) stream because they have never been laid off.

This individual is also ineligible for the [Low-Income Household with Challenges Attaching to the Labour Market](#) stream because they quit their employment in a non-interim job (BJO Guidelines: 2.3.6).

Therefore, this individual is ineligible for BJO based on their current employment status and employment history.