

# **Better Jobs Ontario**

## Program Guidelines

Effective June 16, 2023



## Revisions History:

Revised: March 2023. Changes include:

- Updated all references in the program guidelines and addendum to the National Occupational Classification from NOC 2016 to NOC 2021 and the replacement of skill levels with the new Training, Education, Experience and Responsibilities (TEER) categories.
- Section 1.2.3 Second Career Redesign updated to include summary of program changes under Phase Three.
- Section 2.4.2 Occupational Demand with Evidence of Good Employment Prospects updated and subsequent references to local community priorities have been removed. Local community priorities have been removed from the Fast Track Addendum as no priorities have been identified by the Ministry.
- Minor clarifications under Section 2.3.2 on low-income threshold calculations; Section 2.3.4 to include more information about 900 Series SIN number eligibility for those awaiting permanent residence status and visitors under Emergency Travel measures enacted by the federal government; Section 2.6.1.3 removed reference to tuition supports dependent upon a household income assessment; Section 2.4.1.10 to clarify university level training eligible under the Fast Track Stream; Section 2.7 to clarify household size as a factor in the financial needs assessment; Section 2.7.1.1 to reflect correct program practices requiring notice to the Ministry of changes to household income; and Section 2.7.3.2 on eligibility of part-time trainings for the Training Access Payment.
- Minor revisions made to layout, formatting, grammar and spelling.

Revised: August 2022. Changes include:

- Updated the ministry name to Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development.
- Program Name change from Second Career to Better Jobs Ontario;
- Section 1.2 Context and subsections have been renamed, renumbered and revised to reflect funding source and Second Career Redesign details;
- Section 2.1 Objective and 2.2 BJO Approval has been updated to reflect that the program is intended for individuals who are laid-off or low-income and do not have the financial resources to access training. Revisions have also been made to indicate that suitability thresholds may be adjusted periodically based on evolving labour market needs and/or client demands;

- Section 2.3 Eligibility has been revised to reflect Phase 3 Redesign aspects with respect to eligibility, in particular, expanding the definition of laid-off and unemployed, including a new subsection 2.3.2 Low-Income Household with Challenges Attaching to the Labour Market, and adding clarifying language to sections on eligible and ineligible individuals;
- Section 2.4 Eligible Training has been updated to provide additional information regarding occupations that demonstrate demand and good employment prospects. Removed references to the 2017 Labour Market Indicators list posted on EOPG and replaced with links to resources at the Ontario, regional and local levels;
- Section 2.5 Suitability has been revised to reflect Phase 3 Redesign aspects with respect to suitability expanding the criteria in subsections 1 through 7. The following subsections have been renamed: 5. Labour Market Prospects renamed to In-Demand Occupational Requirements and 7. Need for Retraining renamed to Occupational Experience;
- Section 2.6 Skills Training has been updated to clarify eligible training in both regular and Fast Track Streams. Section 2.6.1.5 has been renamed from Single Skills Training to Single Skills, Micro-Credentials or Continuing Education Programs. Section 2.6.2.5 has been renamed from Breaks in Skills Training Due to Illness to include Significant Life Event and corresponding details. New section titled 2.6.2.6 Exception to the Two-Year Training Rule;
- Section 2.7 Financial Needs Assessment has been updated to include a definition of financial hardship based on the Canada Revenue Agency and further clarified that exceptions can be granted at the discretion of Regional Directors or their delegate in accordance with the Delegation of Financial Management Authority (DOFMA);
- Minor revisions were made to Sections 3.0 Program Delivery, 4.0 Accountability, 5.0 Administration;
- Inclusion of Appendix A Glossary of Terms that aligns with existing EO Program Guidelines. Terms listed in this section support decision-making to assess clients for eligibility and suitability and are meant to provide consistency, clarity and specificity for use in the Better Jobs Ontario program;
- Minor revisions made to layout, formatting, grammar and spelling.

Revised: July 2021: Participant Contribution has been replaced with an income adjustment built into the Basic Living Allowance and Transportation funding. Basic Living Allowance adjusted based on need using the Moderate Standard of Living

(MSOL) threshold for housing income. Dependent care rates updated to reflect current rates. Transportation funding moved to a flat rate, reduced by the income adjustment using MSOL. Other Personal Supports funding category has been renamed to Training Access Payment and is now a one-time payment for participants with families below the income thresholds outlined in Section 7.7.2.1. Living Away From Home rate has been increased.

Revised: October 2020: Feepayer application and assessment expectations updated; maximum duration changes from 24 months to 52 weeks; language regarding credentials updated; reference to Integrated Employment Services model added; Section 2.4.2 Occupational Demand with Evidence of Good Employment Prospects updated; tuition caps removed; SC Fast Track Stream launched (see Fast Track Stream Addendum for further information).

Revised: April 2020: Updated “the Ministry” name to Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development, added language to align with policy clarification on 900-series SIN in Section 2.3.5, added language to Section 2.6.1.5 Skills Training, added new Section 2.6.1.7 Bundled Programs, expanded Section 2.6.1.9 Certification Exams, removed reference to training at the Ontario Real Estate Association (OREA), added definitions in Section 2.7 Financial Assistance, Section 2.7.4.1 Household Income, and added additional language in Section 2.7.4.4.2 Other Instructional Costs, and clarified how Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP) loans or grants are treated with respect to Second Career financial assistance in Section 3.2.3.

Revised: April 2018: Ministry name changed to Advanced Education and Skills Development throughout, 2.3.2 change to the definition of interim job, 2.6 change to the calculation of household income, 2.6.4.4.2 change to allowable other instructional costs to allow “Bring Your Own Device”.

September 2015 – Change to document formatting.

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Purpose**

The purpose of the Better Jobs Ontario (BJO) Guidelines is to provide the required information and policy direction needed to deliver the BJO program, formerly referred to as the Second Career program. These BJO guidelines supersede all previous Second Career guidelines and are effective as of June 16, 2023.

### **1.2 Context**

#### **1.2.1 Employment Ontario**

Employment Ontario (EO) is the province's one-stop service delivery system. EO offers a range of employment, training and labour market programs and services, delivered by third-party service providers to over 870,000 Ontarians.

The EO service promise is to:

- Ensure the highest quality of service and support to help individuals meet career or hiring goals.
- Provide opportunities to make it easier for individuals to improve their skills through education and training.
- Ensure that no matter which EO office individuals access they will get the help they need.
- Work with employers and communities to build the highly skilled and highly educated workforce Ontario needs to be competitive.

The BJO program is part of a broad number of services and programs offered through the integrated EO employment and training network.

#### **1.2.2 Funding Source**

BJO is funded through the Canada-Ontario Labour Market Development Agreement and the Canada-Ontario Workforce Development Agreement. This partnership advances workforce development by supporting the province's efforts to build an inclusive, integrated, client-centered, outcomes-driven employment and training system responding to the evolving needs of individuals, employers, and communities. These agreements also give the province the primary responsibility for the design and delivery of labour market programs and services in Ontario.

### **1.2.3 Second Career Redesign**

Second Career redesign was announced in the 2019 Budget and 2020 Budget. Incremental changes were made as part of the phased redesign. The first phase, launched on December 17, 2020, with changes targeting workers laid-off from sectors most impacted by COVID-19 and helping them to quickly re-enter the labour market. This phase also streamlined the application for fee paying clients looking to access timely reskilling during the pandemic.

Since December 2020 (Phase 1), the program has fast-tracked access for people who were laid-off from sectors most impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and funded shorter duration training to get trained people back into the workforce faster.

The second phase of redesign was launched on July 15, 2021. This phase streamlined the program application process for all clients and provided enhanced financial support when needed. With these changes, the ministry improved the participant experience by reducing application wait times and addressed participant financial needs while better reflecting current costs of living.

Phase three of redesign launched on April 25, 2022. As part of the phase three redesign, the program name was changed to Better Jobs Ontario. Changes were made to eligibility and suitability to expand program access to unemployed individuals who have not been laid-off, but are experiencing challenges developing strong labour market attachment, and are experiencing, or are at risk of, long-term unemployment. This includes many individuals with known barriers to employment such as social assistance recipients, youth, newcomers, gig-workers, and persons with disabilities.

## **2.0 PROGRAM DESCRIPTION**

### **2.1 Objective**

The objective of the BJO program is to support unemployed individuals in need of skills training to help find employment in in-demand occupations with demonstrated labour market prospects in Ontario. The intention of the BJO program is to help individuals rapidly attach to employment by the most cost-effective path.

The BJO program is appropriate for individuals who plan their own future, commit to an Employment Service Plan (ESP)/Employment Action Plan (EAP), and actively pursue its implementation.

The BJO program is intended for individuals who do not have the financial resources (on their own or with the help of others, such as their parents) to access training. It is important to note that the BJO program is intended to be one option among many EO

services and programs. Individuals interested in becoming certified in a trade are encouraged to explore Apprenticeship programs. The Apprenticeship program combines on-the-job and in-school training for employment in a skilled trade, to enable workers to become certified in their trade of choice. For more information, please visit the [Employment Ontario Partners' Gateway \(EOPG\)](#).

## 2.2 Consideration for BJO Approval

There are three distinct and incremental levels of assessment to determine participation in the BJO program. Individuals must be assessed against the eligibility requirements (see Section 2.3) and suitability criteria (see Section 2.5):

- Eligibility – Determines whether individuals meet the baseline requirements for BJO in advance of further assessment.
- Suitability (relative need/priority for skills training) – Determines whether individuals deemed eligible are also most appropriate for the program.
- Financial Need – Determines the amount of BJO financial assistance individuals deemed eligible and suitable will receive.

Suitability thresholds may be adjusted periodically based on evolving labour market needs and/or client demand.

FeePAYERS as outlined in Section 2.8.2 are not eligible for financial assistance and will only be assessed against the eligibility requirements.

Note: In December 2020, the Fast Track Stream was temporarily added to the BJO program to support individuals most impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. See the [Fast Track Stream Addendum to the Guidelines](#) for more information.

Employment Service (ES)/Integrated Employment Services (IES) providers must enter participant eligibility and suitability information in the Employment Ontario Information System-Case Management System (EOIS-CaMS). The ministry is responsible for reviewing the eligibility and suitability assessment submitted by ES/IES providers as well as assessing the financial need of individuals.

All skills training requests under the BJO program must also comply with the training requirements outlined in Section 2.4 Eligible Training.

## 2.3 Eligibility

To be eligible, individuals must:

- have been laid-off and be unemployed, **OR**
- be from a low-income household and experiencing challenges attaching to the labour market.

In addition to the above criteria, individuals must:

- be a resident of Ontario; and
- be a Canadian citizen or permanent resident or meet the 900-series Social Insurance Number (SIN) policy outlined in Section 2.3.4;
- not be ineligible pursuant to Section 2.3.6; and
- demonstrate occupational demand for the skills training request with evidence of good employment prospects locally or within Ontario - with the exception of Feepayers who are exempt from this requirement. Eligibility requirements for the BJO Fast Track Stream can be found in the [Fast Track Stream Addendum to the Guidelines](#).

### **2.3.1 Laid-off and Unemployed**

For the purposes of the BJO program, “laid-off” individuals also include those:

- whose fixed-term employment contract has expired;
- 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 laid-off from another country with demonstrated evidence of their lay-off may be considered.

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

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

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).<sup>1</sup> These jobs may be full-time, part-time, seasonal, or temporary contract work.

“Salary continuance” is an alternative to a lump sum severance payment whereby laid-off workers receive their salary as per their regular pay schedule for a designated period, during which time they may also receive some or all of their work benefits.

“Severance pay” is compensation that is paid to a qualified employee who has their employment ‘severed’. It compensates an employee for losses (such as seniority) that occur when an employee loses their job and, for the purposes of the BJO program, may include termination pay in excess of statutory entitlements. Not all laid-off individuals are eligible for severance pay. If the individual is eligible for severance pay and does receive it, the allocation of the severance package will affect the calculation of the individual’s financial assistance under the BJO program.

Whether an individual receives a salary continuance, severance pay, or EI Part I benefits does not impact their eligibility for the BJO program. However, any income will be taken into consideration in the assessment of financial assistance.

### **2.3.2 Low-Income Household with Challenges Attaching to the Labour Market**

For the purposes of the BJO program, individuals are considered to be from a low-income household and experiencing challenges attaching to the labour market, if they meet all criteria below:

- a) Do not have a lay-off event
- b) 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 or;
  - not working more than an average of 20 hours per week, or;
  - engaging in unincorporated, self-employment without a business number for an average of 20 hours per week or less. Note: Individuals who currently have

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<sup>1</sup> [The National Occupational Classification](#) (NOC) is the national reference for occupations in Canada. It provides a systematic classification structure that categorizes the entire range of occupational activity in Canada for collecting, analyzing, and disseminating occupational data for labour market information and employment-related program administration. The NOC 2021 comprises more than 40,000 job titles gathered into 516 unit groups, organized according to six Training, Education, Experience and Responsibilities (TEER) categories and ten broad occupational categories.

or have had an incorporated business with a business number within the last 6 months are not eligible.

- c) Are part of a household where the combined income of the client and their spouse is at or below the BJO Low-income Threshold outlined in the BJO Application for Financial Assistance. Individuals in receipt of social assistance at the time of applying to Better Jobs Ontario are considered below the BJO Low-income threshold.
- d) 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.

### **2.3.3 Resident of Ontario and Legally Authorized to Work in Canada**

Individuals must be residents of Ontario (i.e., their home address is in Ontario) and must be legally authorized to work in Canada to be eligible for the BJO program. There is no specific required length of time for having resided in Ontario.

### **2.3.4 900-series Social Insurance Number (SIN)**

SINs that begin with a “9” are issued to individuals who are not Canadian Citizens or Permanent Residents but require a SIN for employment purposes.

International students and temporary foreign workers with a 900-series SIN are not eligible for Better Jobs Ontario.

Individuals with a 900-series SIN and an open work permit who have received preliminary approval from the federal government and are waiting for their permanent residence status to be finalized are eligible to apply for Better Jobs Ontario, provided all other program criteria are met. These individuals include:

- Protected Persons - those determined by the Refugee Protection Division of the Immigration and Refugee Board to be either: a) a Convention Refugee; or b) a person in need of protection.
- Those in Canada on a temporary work permit who have been granted Permanent Resident status.

Refugee claimants with a 900-series SIN and an open work permit are also eligible to apply for Better Jobs Ontario, provided all other program criteria are met.

Visitors under Emergency Travel measures enacted by the federal government, including the Canada-Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel (CUAET) measure, with a 900-series SIN and an open work permit are eligible to apply for Better Jobs Ontario, provided all other program criteria are met.

Proof of status is required. Individuals with a 900-series SIN and a work permit awaiting their official documents for permanent residency will usually have a letter to this effect and must present that documentation to support their change in status. Individuals must present their new SIN (replacing the 900-series SIN) once they receive it.

Refugee claimants with an open work permit must present their work permit as well as any updates to the status of their work permit.

### **2.3.5 Additional Considerations for Eligible Individuals**

- Individuals who were laid-off but are now in receipt of a "recall to work" notice from their former employer may be eligible for the BJO program. The ESP/EAP should confirm that skills training is the appropriate intervention over returning to their previous employment.
- Individuals who lost their job because of business closure and chose to take early retirement packages are eligible for the BJO program. This applies to individuals who were laid-off and required to take early retirement packages at any time since the implementation of the BJO program in June 2008.
- Individuals who quit or were fired from an interim job after being laid-off are eligible for the BJO program. Individuals from a "low-income household with challenges attaching to the labour market" who quit or were fired from a low-level skill job (i.e., NOC 2021 TEER category 5 occupation) while seeking better employment are also eligible for the BJO program.
- Individuals who are seasonally unemployed are eligible for the BJO program only if skills training is aimed at one or more of the following outcomes:
  - lengthens the duration of seasonal employment thereby decreasing the lay-off period;
  - provides skills that lead to year-round employment;



- provides skills necessary to find alternate work in the off-season;
- prevents job loss in the event that the seasonal job changes, and the employee needs new skills that the employer does not provide. The potential for job loss and need for skills training must be confirmed with the employer. Skills training would occur during a period of unemployment; or
- Is expected to provide skills for an occupation, for which the expected wage would exceed any social assistance funding for which the person is eligible.

### **2.3.6 Ineligible Individuals**

- Individuals are not eligible for BJO financial assistance if they have been restricted from receiving assistance under the Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP) pursuant to paragraphs 1 or 2 of section 42.1 of Ontario Regulation 268/01 under the *Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities Act, 1990* because they have:
  - failed to provide all required information and documents relating to OSAP; or
  - provided incorrect information to OSAP (or other federal or provincial/territorial student financial assistance programs) or failed to promptly update previously provided information.
- Individuals (including Feepayers) who begin skills training before being approved by the ministry are not eligible for the BJO program. For more info on Feepayers, see Section 2.8.2.
- 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.
- Individuals who are working in a full-time job (excluding an interim job) after maternity or parental benefits have ended are not eligible for the BJO program because they are considered to have “re-entered” the work force.
- Individuals who are in a work-sharing program are not eligible for the BJO program. Work-sharing is an Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) adjustment program designed to help employers and employees avoid temporary layoffs when there is a reduction in the normal level of business activity that is beyond the control of the employer. The program provides income

support under EI Part I to employees eligible for EI Part I benefits who work a temporarily reduced work week.

- International students and temporary foreign workers with a 900-series SIN are not eligible for the BJO program. See Section 2.3.4 for details on eligibility for individuals with 900-series SIN.
- Individuals who completed a skills training program in the last two years (24 months) through Ontario government funding<sup>2</sup> are not eligible for the BJO program (including but not limited to SkillsAdvance Ontario (SAO), Better Jobs Ontario, Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP), Skills Development Fund (SDF)). This includes funding received directly or indirectly through service providers. See Section 2.6.2.6 Exception to the Two-Year Training Rule for more information.
- Individuals intending to return to school in the upcoming academic year and have not made the transition from school to work (defined as not worked or been seeking work for a continuous period of 12 months), are not eligible for the BJO program.
- Individuals who are taking part-time and full-time postsecondary courses while working or seeking work are considered to have not made the transition from school to work and are therefore not eligible for the BJO program.
- Individuals who return to school after casual employment (e.g., summer employment or Christmas employment) would be considered to have not made the transition from school to work and are therefore not eligible for the BJO program.
- Individuals who left their employment temporarily to take a leave of absence are not eligible for the BJO program, however individuals who had to leave their employment due to serious illness or significant life event may be eligible to participate in the BJO program if they meet the eligibility (Section 2.3) and suitability criteria (Section 2.5).
- Individuals who quit or were terminated from their employment (excluding an interim job) are not eligible for the BJO program.

## **2.4 Eligible Training**

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<sup>2</sup> Does not apply to Ontario Jobs Training Tax Credit.

Individual applicants must demonstrate that the proposed training:

- is vocational in nature;
- delivers all the skills and knowledge required to gain employment in a specific occupation; and
- is designed for an occupation for which the individual can demonstrate occupational demand and evidence of good employment prospects, locally or within Ontario<sup>3</sup>.

#### **2.4.1 Professional Development**

Professional development (e.g., First Aid training, WHMIS, Word, Excel, etc.) generally does not qualify for funding under the BJO program since most professional development enhances the existing skills of individuals and is not considered vocational skills training. Please refer to Section 2.6.1.5 for additional clarification on single skills courses.

#### **2.4.2 Occupational Demand with Evidence of Good Employment Prospects**

To achieve the best results for jobseekers, employers, and communities, the ministry has identified provincial priority sectors. Clients who select a training program for an in-scope occupation based on it being a provincial priority area are not required to provide evidence of good employment prospects as part of their application. The list of provincial priority sectors can be found in the Fast Track Stream Addendum and is updated periodically.

If an individual is looking to retrain in an area not identified as a priority in the Addendum, the individual will be asked to present evidence of good employment prospects for discussion with their ES/IES provider. Such a client would then be assessed for entry into the program under the regular stream.

Evidence of good employment prospects includes one or more of the following:

- the occupation demonstrates occupational demand and has an “above average” outlook at either the [Ontario](#) or [regional](#) level.

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<sup>3</sup> FeePAYERS and individuals participating through the Fast Track Stream are exempt from this requirement.

- submission of currently advertised job opportunities in the local labour market, or evidence of recent job postings in Ontario, which can include information from resources such as:
  - [Worxica.com - Canada's Curated Job Vacancy Archive](#)
  - [Canadian Online Job Posting Dashboard](#)
  - Local Board job information (for e.g., [Workforce Planning Ontario | Champions of Ontario's Local Labour Market Solutions](#))
- submission of attestations from employers that they are hiring for the occupation; or evidence of future job opportunities (e.g., future plant or office expansion, new employer)

The minimum number of advertised job opportunities or employer attestations required is as follows:

<b>Population</b>	<b>Job Opportunities</b>
Communities with a population under 100,000	One (1) job opportunity or employer attestation
Communities with a population between 100,000 and 500,000	Two (2) job opportunities or employer attestations
Communities with a population over 500,000	Three (3) job opportunities or employer attestations

Individuals are encouraged to search for job profiles and job prospects at either the Ontario or regional level to assess whether an occupation has the potential for long-term employment. An occupation with few opportunities for long-term employment is considered a “below average” or “limited” prospect.

Local economic conditions may produce different employment prospects. Ontario or regional-level job search tools are designed to be used as part of an assessment process that also considers economic conditions in the community or labour market in which the Better Jobs Ontario applicant will be seeking work.

Note: Feepayers as outlined in Section 2.8.2 are exempt from this requirement.

## **2.5 Suitability**

For consideration under the BJO program, individuals must be assessed against the eligibility requirements (see Section 2.3) and suitability criteria (see Section 2.5). ES/IES providers must use the Better Jobs Ontario Eligibility and Suitability Assessment Tool in EOIS-CaMS to complete the assessment process. Suitability thresholds may be adjusted periodically based on evolving Labour Market needs and/or client demand.

FeePAYERS as outlined in Section 2.8.2 and individuals participating through the Fast Track Stream will not be assessed against the suitability criteria and will only be assessed against the eligibility criteria (see the Fast Track Stream Addendum for more information).

### **2.5.1 Better Jobs Ontario Eligibility and Suitability Assessment Tool**

In addition to helping determine eligibility, the BJO assessment tool helps determine which individuals are most suitable for the BJO program by:

- prioritizing individuals based on transparent, consistent, and measurable criteria; and
- combining and balancing the needs of jobseekers with the needs of employers in the local economy, demands for labour in emerging and growth sectors, and/or demands for a more highly skilled workforce.

Individuals are assessed against seven criteria, each having two or three measurable indicators of suitability. The criteria are based on the needs of individuals and the economy. The criteria reflect characteristics, experiences, and barriers that demonstrate whether skills training is appropriate for individuals.

Those individuals who meet or exceed the baseline score will be considered suitable for the BJO program. Individuals who score below the baseline may be redirected to other EO and community services and programs.

### **2.5.2 Suitability Criteria**

The following are the BJO suitability criteria. (For scoring information, refer to the Better Jobs Ontario Eligibility and Suitability Assessment Tool in EOIS-CaMS.)

#### **1. Active Job Search**

The following actions illustrate an active job search for clients, the evidence of which can be characterized by the following actions: job search, creation of job search tools (e.g., resume and cover letters, interview practice, compilation of references, etc.), research (e.g., review of job postings, utilization of job-finding clubs, attendance at job

fairs, etc.) and pursuit of employment (e.g., cold calling known and/or hiring employers, etc.) in fields related to an individual's work experience, skills, education and training. Assessment of a client's active job search duration will be made against the following duration parameters:

- More than 26 weeks
- 13 to 26 weeks
- Less than 13 weeks

An individual's participation at an Action Centre is considered evidence of an active job search.

Action Centres are designed to address a community need and support individuals who have lost employment. They can provide individuals with the support they need in looking for work, provide information on other services within the community, etc. These Centres may be known by different names depending on the community (e.g., Job Action Centre, Employment Action Centre or Action Centre).

Time spent in an interim job may be included in the calculation of job search time. Appropriate examples of evidence used to illustrate an interim job may include the provision of a Record of Employment, first and last pay cheque stubs, written Notice of Lay Off.

Documentation of job search or proof of interim employment should be provided to and supported by the ES/IES provider.

## 2. Duration of Unemployment

The number of weeks that an individual has been unemployed:

- More than 26 weeks
- 13 to 26 weeks
- Less than 13 weeks

Time spent in an interim job may be included in calculating the duration of unemployment. For an individual who has been on maternity/paternity leave, the duration of unemployment is calculated from the time the individual began seeking re-entry into the labour market.

For individuals with limited labour market attachment who do not have a lay-off date, duration of unemployment is measured by the number of weeks an individual has met the definition of “unemployed” under Section 2.3.2, sub-bullet B.

### 3. Educational Attainment

The highest education level an individual has completed is defined as:

- High school completion or less (this includes those with an Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD) or equivalent, (e.g., the General Educational Development (GED)), the equivalent in other jurisdictions, or any amount of secondary schooling up to the point of BJO application); or
- High school completion with some postsecondary education or some apprenticeship training; or
- Postsecondary completion or apprenticeship completion (Certificate of Apprenticeship or Certificate of Qualification).
- Postsecondary completion that is not recognized in Ontario.

For postsecondary completion not recognized in Ontario, the individual must present documentation that indicates that a relevant professional association or agency that assesses foreign education has completed a review of the participant’s documentation and attests that the credential is not recognized in the Ontario labour market. Internationally trained immigrants looking for commensurate employment in the field in which they were trained or in a related field without having to duplicate their existing skills and education should be referred to the Ontario Bridge Training Program (OBTP), as appropriate.

### 4. Work History

This is defined as the extent to which an individual’s work history (in Canada or abroad) impacts their ability to attach to the labour market.

For individuals with a work history (defined as having had annual earnings of \$5,000 or more over one or more years) the following factors will be assessed through suitability:

- Longer duration in the same occupation previous to lay-off event (more than 5 years, 3-5 years, less than 3 years)

- Longer duration of poor employment history (more than 3 years, 2-3 years, less than 2 years). “Poor employment” history is defined as having experienced one or a mixture of:
  - A period or periods of long-term unemployment (27 weeks or more unemployed)
  - Precarious work<sup>4</sup>, including interruptions in work history and underemployment<sup>5</sup>
- No previous work history<sup>6</sup>

## 5. In-Demand Occupational Requirements

A credential/license may or may not be required for the chosen occupation; however, an individual is deemed more suitable if the chosen training will lead to a credential/license.

Credential/license requirements are specific to the employment requirements associated with the specific occupation/trade. These prerequisites are stipulated by a provincial or territorial governing/regulatory body that recognizes the credentials and allows the holder to work in the occupation and/or trade.

## 6. Type of Skills Training

Skills training that leads to a credential and qualifies for additional BJO skills training includes:

- Occupation specific skills training in NOC TEER category 2, 3 or 4 or NOC TEER category 1 occupation if it is for one of the identified in-scope occupations listed in the Addendum to Better Jobs Ontario Guidelines.
- Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) training or language training that is needed in advance of occupation specific skills training.

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<sup>4</sup> For the purposes of Better Jobs Ontario, “precarious work” is defined as work that is low-income (at or below LICO for one individual per each year of precarious work history) and lacks continuity (e.g., non-permanent positions, part time, short-term contracts, unreliable shift work, gig work or self-employment where earnings fluctuate, or NOC TEER category 5 work which an individual has quit due to low pay).

<sup>5</sup> For the purposes of Better Jobs Ontario, “underemployment” refers to employment with less than full-time hours.

<sup>6</sup> For the purposes of Better Jobs Ontario, “having no work history” is defined as never having had a year where \$5,000 or more in employment income was earned.



An individual must research at least three training institutions (if feasible), including at least one College of Applied Arts and Technology (CAAT) and one Private Career College (PCC), and consider the cost effectiveness of occupation-specific skills training. This also applies to LBS training.

An example of a situation where it would not be feasible to research three institutions is if there were less than three institutions offering the proposed training within commuting distance.

Cost effectiveness involves several considerations such as the cost of tuition, duration of skills training (e.g., a longer duration would require more basic living allowance), location of skills training and most direct route (e.g., direct participation in skills training versus LBS training as a prerequisite to occupation-specific skills training).

## 7. Occupational Experience

Occupational experience is the extent of skills and experience that an individual possesses that is relevant to the current labour market and available opportunities. The need for retraining is based on:

- Work experience in NOC TEER category 5 occupations and where there are few opportunities for sustainable, long-term employment; and/or a disability prevents an individual from using existing occupational skills.
- Work experience is in NOC TEER category 2, 3 or 4 occupations and where there are few opportunities for long-term employment; and/or a disability prevents an individual from using existing occupational skills.
- No previous work experience.

### **2.5.3 Suitability Decision**

The assessment criteria help to ensure a flexible, multi-faceted, and defensible evaluation of an individual's need for training through the BJO program. Building on the assessment, the decision model provides a baseline for determining BJO suitability.

The baseline BJO suitability score is 16; this represents the minimum scoring needed for consideration for the BJO program.

Individuals who score 16 points or higher on the suitability criteria are considered most suitable for the BJO program. As noted in Section 2.2, suitability thresholds may be adjusted periodically based on evolving Labour Market conditions and/or client demands.

Individuals who do not meet the BJO threshold of 16 may only be considered in exceptional circumstances. Exceptional circumstances are at the discretion of the ministry's Regional Directors or their delegates in line with the Delegation of Financial Management Authority (DOFMA). Individuals allowed under this exception must still meet BJO eligibility requirements and be assessed for financial need.

## **2.6 Skills Training**

Skills training must be vocational in nature (i.e., occupationally specific) to be eligible for BJO consideration. Non-vocational programs, including professional development programs, are not eligible for BJO funding.

Allowable skills training for labour market-destined individuals includes skills training for specific occupations and, where required, LBS training and/or training in English or French as a Second Language (i.e., if it is a prerequisite for the chosen occupational skills training or for a specific employment opportunity and is not an end in itself). A specific employment opportunity would be a documented and verifiable offer of employment.

Skills training is allowable for NOC TEER category 2, 3 or 4 occupations and equivalent with good employment prospects in Ontario. This skills training includes programs provided by universities. Fee-payers, as outlined in Section 2.8.2, are exempt from this requirement. Individuals (in both the regular and Fast Track Streams) may be eligible for skills training in a NOC TEER category 1 if it is for one of the identified in-scope occupations (see the Fast Track Stream Addendum for further details).

The training period (time between the start and end date, including breaks/vacation and placement) cannot exceed 52 weeks. This excludes a maximum of one calendar year (12 months) for LBS training or language training.

The maximum duration of skills training, LBS training, and language training may be extended to meet the special needs of persons with disabilities. If required, the maximum amount of funding - \$28,000 - can also be exceeded for such persons at the discretion of Regional Directors or their delegate in accordance with the Delegation of Financial Management Authority (DOFMA).

Skills training must lead to a credential, such as a micro-credential, certificate, or diploma, as long as it can be attained within one year or less. To be eligible for Better Jobs Ontario:

- A certificate or diploma must signify that all of the skills and knowledge required for employment in a specific training occupation have been attained;

- A micro-credential must either provide a skill or set of skills that is in demand and expected to lead to employment without the need for further credentials or fill a skills gap for the participant who has the other skills relevant to the target occupation.

## **2.6.1 Prerequisites and Types of Skills Training**

### **2.6.1.1 Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS)**

The LBS program serves individuals who need literacy and basic skills to find and keep a job, to successfully participate in further education, to succeed in the apprenticeship program or other skills training, or to meet everyday needs.

LBS activity described previously as “academic upgrading” is now described more specifically within the context of BJO as preparing individuals for one of the following goal paths:

- postsecondary - the learning program used to prepare individuals for transition to college and other training institutions.
- employment - the learning program used to prepare individuals who require secondary school credit or secondary school equivalency for a job that they have been offered.

### **2.6.1.2 English as a Second Language (ESL) or French as a Second Language (FSL)**

Individuals who cannot secure employment in their trade or occupation or those who are unskilled workers and cannot attain employment because of a lack of fluency in one of Canada’s two official languages are eligible for language training (in English or French) through the BJO program. This language training (in English or French) is specifically designed to remove an employment barrier. The ESP/EAP must demonstrate that a lack of fluency in English or French is a barrier to employment.

Upon completion of the language training, individuals should be sufficiently competent in English or French to commence the BJO training identified in their ESP/EAP.

Caution should be exercised when considering funding under the BJO program for English or French language instruction as this type of training is often available in the community at minimal or no cost. For example, the Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) program, delivered by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), provides free basic French and English language courses to adults who are permanent residents, and Ontario’s Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS) funds the Adult Non-Credit Language Training Program,

which delivers English and French as a Second Language (ESL/FSL) training - beginner to advanced levels - to adult immigrants. School boards across the province also offer free language classes (there may be a small cost for materials/administration) that are open to naturalized Canadian citizens, permanent residents, protected persons (including Convention refugees), refugee claimants, provincial nominees approved through the Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program, and persons admitted under a federal caregiver program with a path to permanent residency.

### **2.6.1.3 Continuing Education and Other Part-Time Skills**

Continuing education and part-time education programs may be defined differently depending on the educational institution. Part-time skills training requests should be assessed closely, to ensure they do not extend beyond the maximum duration of 52 weeks. Recommendations for these types of programs may be approved under extenuating circumstances but must be based on a thorough assessment and designed to lead to employment. Part-time skills training may be allowable under the following instance:

- Basic living allowance and other supports will not be provided during part-time training. Based on an individual financial needs assessment, exceptions can be made for people with disabilities who cannot attend full-time skills training because of their disabilities.

### **2.6.1.4 Correspondence/Online/Distance Skills Training**

Skills training delivered through distance learning (e.g., correspondence or online) may be permitted through the BJO program. It must be carefully assessed on a case-by-case basis. Training delivered through these alternative modes of delivery must maintain the same standards and expectations and not exceed the duration of similar training offered in a classroom setting. The following should be considered before a recommendation is made:

- availability and accessibility of other training institutions and training methods;
- industry recognition of certification and training provider;
- ability/motivation of individuals to work independently;
- suitability of this skills training method to individual learning styles; and
- whether training institutions will offer ongoing assistance to individuals and monitor progress.

#### **2.6.1.5 Single Skills, Micro-Credentials or Continuing Education Programs**

A single skill course, micro-credential, or a continuing education program may be eligible for BJO funding if it addresses a particular skill gap within the broader suite of skills that an individual already has. As outlined in Section 2.6, micro-credentials should provide a skill or set of skills that are in demand and lead to employment without having to attain further credentials, or they fill a gap for the participant who has other skills relevant to the target occupation. Any recommendation regarding BJO support must be based on a thorough assessment and must move the participant forward on their path to employment by the most cost-effective route. It is expected that these courses plus an individual's existing knowledge/credentials will lead them to employment. For example, a laid-off experienced technician wanting to improve employability can learn the skills required to use a new green technology that is in demand in their industry.

Successful completion of single skill courses, micro-credential or continuing education programs must lead directly to employment and provide individuals with a credential upon completion. The phrase "must lead directly to employment" does not require that the applicant produce a job offer from an employer. Rather, it emphasizes the importance of the participant showing that there are good labour market prospects for the occupation in which training is being requested, during their assessment.

#### **2.6.1.6 Combination Skills Training**

Combination courses provide training in skills and knowledge in more than one area needed for an occupation. Such courses (including micro-credentials) are only eligible for BJO funding at the discretion of the ministry, considering the local labour market and employment requirements.

For example, in some areas, skills training on one piece of heavy equipment may suffice, whereas in another area skills training on one or more additional pieces may be required.

BJO funded training must always be the most cost-effective route to employment. Costs should not jeopardize the client's ability to complete training.

#### **2.6.1.7 Bundled Programs**

Bundled or dual credential programs allow students to earn two credentials (including micro-credentials) within a compressed timeframe. These programs are the result of collaboration either within or between postsecondary institutions. Requests for Better Jobs Ontario support for participants undertaking bundled programs should be carefully assessed on a case-by-case basis to ensure the training choice aligns with the intention

of the Better Jobs Ontario program to return individuals to employment by the most cost-effective path.

#### **2.6.1.8 Clinical Placement/Work Placement/Practicum**

A clinical placement is part of a skills training program in a real-life setting (e.g., hospital, clinic, laboratory) where individuals perform actual clinical procedures under the direction of an instructor. This type of placement moves the classroom to a hands-on facility with individuals and instructors remaining together. To be approved, a clinical placement must be a requirement for graduation, and it may be up to 50% of the total program duration. It must not be approved if it is a stand-alone activity.

A work placement or practicum is a period of supervised practical application of learned theory that is a mandatory part of the skills training curriculum. This component is necessary to graduate. It is an unpaid activity (i.e., no salary) that is regularly supervised and evaluated by the training institution. It is the responsibility of the training institution to arrange the work placement or practicum.

Individuals participating in a work placement or practicum component that is part of the established curriculum are eligible to continue receiving financial assistance during this period.

The acceptable amount of work placement or practicum is up to 15% of the program. A longer work placement may be acceptable, if it is a requirement for certification in a particular field of study, such as the health care or education sectors. For any other exceptions to the 15% maximum, individuals must demonstrate that a longer work placement is an integral and mandatory part of the skills training program.

Training institutions must provide supervision throughout the work placement.

A work placement or practicum should be followed by at least one week in-school training (including online). In the exceptional cases where the program does not end with at least one week of in-school training, individuals must demonstrate that some form of supervision and evaluation by the training institution will take place after the work placement for final program assessment and completion.

The ministry must ensure that the placement is not solely a benefit to employers. The primary objective of the placement is to have the individual gain experience.

Work placements/practicums which are scheduled to take place outside of Canada cannot be supported through the BJO program unless it is a mandatory requirement of the curriculum. This requirement must be identified and approved by the ministry prior to commencement of the program. An example is a truck driving program where driving routes often require entering the USA.

If the work placement does not develop into an employment opportunity after graduation and lack of work experience has been identified in the ESP/EAP, individuals should work with their ES/IES provider to explore the potential for other employment service options.

Paid work placements are allowable; however, the income earned will be used in the calculation to determine the amount of BJO financial assistance.

#### **2.6.1.9 Certification Exams**

Individuals cannot be supported through the BJO program for the sole purpose of writing a certification exam as no skills training is involved. Certification is the issuing of a formal document attesting to a set of skills, knowledge and abilities gained through completion of set education/skills training requirements. Certification exams are required by a regulatory body that governs the practice of the occupation (e.g., registered nurses, journeypersons).

If individuals attend skills training for an occupation where certification is required for employment, and the option to take a certification exam is offered as part of that skills training program, the cost of that exam may be considered an eligible expense under Other Instructional Costs.

#### **2.6.1.10 University Training**

Skills training provided by a university is allowable for NOC TEER category 2, 3 or 4 occupations. Skills training for university programs at NOC TEER category 1 skill level, however, are not eligible under the BJO program.

FeePAYERS are exempt from this requirement. Individuals (in both the regular and Fast Track Stream) may also be exempt if the training is for one of the identified in-scope occupations. Skills training provided by a university will be allowable for programs at a NOC TEER category 1 skill level, providing the occupation is one of the provincially identified occupations outlined in the addendum (see the Fast Track Stream Addendum for more information).

#### **2.6.1.11 Examination/Test Preparation Courses**

Examination/test preparation courses that have the sole purpose of preparing individuals for an examination/test, which do not provide any LBS training or skills training, are not eligible for the BJO program.

Examples of courses that do not include LBS training or skills training are:

- General Educational Development (GED) preparation classes for individuals wanting to receive their high school equivalency certificate.
- Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), which may be a requirement for admission into colleges and universities where instruction is in English, and English is not the individual's first language.

However, examination/test preparation courses may be considered for support through the BJO program if it is evident that they are part of a skills training program.

#### **2.6.1.12 Licensing Fees**

Supporting registration costs so that individuals can be “registered” or “licensed” with an association or regulatory body is not permitted through the BJO program. Being registered or licensed with an association or regulatory body is not required for individuals to receive their credential. While registering may include a competency exam, individuals do not receive skills training.

### **2.6.2 Additional Skills Training Considerations**

#### **2.6.2.1 Skills Training Outside of Ontario**

Individuals should make every effort to select training with an Ontario-based institution as, the ministry will not support skills training outside of Ontario. The skills training approved must be recognized in Ontario and applicable to the Ontario labour market.

However, in exceptional circumstances, skills training outside of Ontario can be supported, if one or more of the following conditions are met:

- skills training is not offered in Ontario;
- skills training is not offered in another Canadian province or territory;
- skills training is fully remote and a more cost-effective method;
- an essential work placement/practicum portion of the training requires individuals to be outside of Ontario; and/or
- is more cost effective for the ministry than if taken in Ontario or Canada.

The reason for accessing an institution outside of Ontario cannot be based solely on the fact that the individual could start training at an earlier or more convenient time than at an institution in Ontario.



### **2.6.2.2 Short Breaks in Skills Training**

Individuals may continue to receive financial assistance under the BJO program during short scheduled breaks in skills training such as March break or the closure of training institutions during the summer for up to 3 weeks.

### **2.6.2.3 Breaks between Skills Training**

During a break or gap between programs, such as the break between LBS training completion and the start of skills training, individuals will not receive BJO financial assistance. Where applicable, this must be discussed before approving their ESP/EAP to ensure that they have the financial ability to support themselves during this period.

### **2.6.2.4 Interruption of Skills Training – Strike**

In the event of an interruption of skills training resulting in the closure of entire classes or skills training institutions due to circumstances beyond the control of the individual (i.e., strike), financial assistance may continue to be paid until the original end date of the skills training program. If the duration of the interruption is unduly long, the ministry may suspend financial assistance or may discuss alternate solutions.

### **2.6.2.5 Breaks in Skills Training Due to Illness or Significant Life Event**

In situations where a client had to leave their skills training due to illness or a significant life event, the ministry may consider permitting re-entry into skills training (on a case-by-case basis). These situations may include:

- Experiencing discrimination on any of the protected grounds under the Ontario Human Rights Code<sup>7</sup>;
- Care for dependents, including ailing parents who required care;
- Parental leave by either parent at the time of pregnancy, birth, or adoption;
- Health concerns or issues related to accessibility or disability; or
- A death in the immediate family (i.e., parent/guardian, sibling, spouse, child).

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<sup>7</sup> The Human Rights Code protects people from discrimination in specific situations. Under the Code, you have the right to be free from discrimination in five parts of society – called social areas – based on one or more grounds. Discrimination based on 17 different personal attributes – called grounds – is against the law under the Code. The grounds are: citizenship, race, place of origin, ethnic origin, colour, ancestry, disability, age, creed, sex/pregnancy, family status, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, receipt of public assistance (in housing) and record of offences (in employment).

This list is not meant to be exhaustive but is meant to provide guidance for consistent decision-making in granting approval for clients to complete previously started training.

Individuals who had to leave their skills training due to a serious illness or significant life event may be permitted re-entry if they meet the eligibility (Section 2.3) and suitability criteria (Section 2.5), and:

- the training program is vocational in nature and is for an occupation with evidence of good employment opportunities locally or within Ontario;
- the training institution will recognize the previously completed courses/ components (through a letter of acceptance);
- the remaining training duration does not exceed 52 weeks, as indicated in the letter of acceptance provided by the training institution; and
- training completion leads to a credential.

#### **2.6.2.6 Exception to the Two-Year Training Rule**

In exceptional cases, individuals who have completed a skills training program with Ontario Government funding in the last two years (24 months) may be granted an exception to participate in BJO prior to the end of the two-year period if they cannot pursue employment in the occupation for which they were trained, including:

- Individuals who received skills training in an occupation with low-occupational outlook to retrain in marketable, in-demand occupations based on provincial priority areas, as described in Section 2.4.2.
- Vulnerable youth<sup>8</sup> (15-29 years old) such as justice-involved youth, youth with disabilities and individuals under Youth in Extended Society Care.

These cases must be well-documented and be approved by ministry Regional Directors or their delegates in line with the Delegation of Financial Management Authority (DOFMA).

#### **2.6.2.7 Training Institute Closure**

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<sup>8</sup> Vulnerable youth include young people who are more exposed to risks than their peers and face significant barriers to achieving and maintaining well-being. Risk factors and indicators of vulnerability in young people can be related to health-related factors, social factors and family problems contributing to vulnerability.

For situations which result in temporary and/or permanent training institute closure (e.g., an investigation or a bankruptcy), the ministry may use its discretion and continue to pay financial assistance for a temporary period.

For permanent training institute closures, the Training Completion Assurance Fund (TCAF) protects individuals at registered PCCs. TCAF is an industry insurance fund. Individuals will be provided with an alternative PCC that can provide the remaining training. Where it is not possible to provide alternate solutions for BJO participants, refunds are issued and must be returned to the ministry.

### **2.6.2.8 Commercial and Helicopter Pilot Skills Training**

Individuals who request assistance to take skills training to obtain a commercial pilot or helicopter pilot's license can only be approved if they already have their private license<sup>9</sup>.

## **2.7 Financial Needs Assessment**

FeePAYERS, as per Section 2.8.2, are participants who pay their own tuition and training costs. FeePAYERS will sign an attestation relinquishing their rights to apply/request additional funding for other instructional costs. FeePAYERS are not required to undergo a financial needs assessment.

Financial assistance during skills training may be provided to individuals who are determined to be eligible and most suitable for skills training.

The BJO financial needs assessment considers income level and household size to determine the amount of financial assistance that may be required for individuals to attend skills training. As assistance is based on individual need, rates may differ from individual to individual.

Assistance may be provided to cover all or a portion of the cost of tuition and expenses. Assistance may also be provided to cover all or part of the incremental costs of participation in skills training, such as expenses relating to dependent care, disability needs, transportation and accommodation. The eligible cost of any of these categories includes taxes that would normally be charged, such as the Harmonized Sales Tax (HST).

### **2.7.1 Overview of Financial Assessment Calculation**

The BJO financial needs assessment considers the following:

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<sup>9</sup> FeePAYERS as outlined in Section 2.8.2 are exempt from this requirement.

- participant and spousal/partner income and potential resulting financial need for a living allowance, transportation allowance, and training access payment to support up-front costs;
- skills training and incremental costs (including tuition costs and other instructional costs, and dependent care costs); and
- costs associated with disability needs.

Household income will be considered to determine the financial need for:

- basic living allowance (see Section 2.7.2);
- transportation allowance (see Section 2.7.2); and
- training access payment (see Section 2.7.3.2).

Household income will not affect the financial supports for:

- Living Away from Home Allowance (see Section 2.7.3.3);
- Other Instructional Costs (see Section 2.7.3.1);
- Tuition (see Section 2.7.3);
- Dependent Care (see Section 2.7.3.4); and
- Disability-related costs (see Section 2.7.4).

#### **2.7.1.1 Household Income**

Any monies that are or will be received by the participant and/or their spouse/common law partner during the skills training period, from an employer or any other person (including a trustee in bankruptcy), are considered household income. A common law partner means living together as a couple for a continuous period of at least one year. This includes any material monetary gifts such as scholarships, bursaries and inheritances.

The following sources of income are not to be included in the calculation of household income for Better Jobs Ontario:

- Ontario Works;
- Ontario Disability Support Program;

- Tax benefits/credits such as the Canada Child Benefit, Ontario Child Benefit; Ontario Sales Tax Credit, Ontario Energy and Property Tax Credit and the Northern Ontario Energy Credit;
- Ontario Child Benefit Equivalent (OCBE) Savings Program;
- Child support payments (but spousal support is included in calculation of household income); and/or
- Assistance for Children with Severe Disabilities (ACSD), Special Services at Home (SSAH) and other disability supports for children.

Income received by any other individual living in the household that is not the participant and/or their spouse/partner is **not** to be included in the calculation of household income for Better Jobs Ontario.

If household income changes, individuals must notify the ministry immediately in writing.

Two categories of household income that are considered in the financial assessment calculation are Monthly Gross Household Income and Monthly Net Household Income.

### **Monthly Gross Household Income**

Income from all sources, subject to the exceptions identified in Section 2.7.1.1 Household Income, must be included. This includes spousal support, part-time employment, self-employment (after Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) allowed expenses), income derived from gig-work, EI Part I benefits, pension, allocation of earnings, severance pay, and income from a rental property (after CRA allowed expenses) received by the individual and/or their spouse/partner during BJO participation.

### **2.7.2 Transportation and Basic Living Allowance (BLA)**

Financial assistance during skills training should be sufficient to allow for participation in the program of those determined to be eligible and most suitable for skills training and to improve their access and ability to complete training. The intention behind Transportation and Basic Living Allowance (BLA) funding is to support a participant's basic living expenses, such as rent/mortgage, food, utilities, and transportation while they attend skills training.

Transportation costs are available for participants required to attend in-person training and/or in-person practicums/placements. Better Jobs Ontario will provide a weekly flat rate of \$45/week, adjusted based on the BJO Income Adjustment Thresholds.

Transportation costs may also be incurred for participants who must move to their

temporary residence at the beginning of training and move back to their primary residence at the end of training.

BLA is a weekly flat rate that is adjusted by the participant’s household income (Section 2.7.4.1 Household Income). For BJO participants who are not receiving EI Part 1 benefits during their skills training, the flat BLA rate before income adjustment is \$500/week. For BJO participants receiving EI Part 1 benefits during their skills training, the flat BLA rate before income adjustment is \$500/week minus their EI income. If a participant’s EI income is equal to or greater than \$500/week, then the flat BLA rate is \$0. Spousal/partner EI income will reduce BLA only by any amounts over the BJO Income Adjustment Thresholds.

**2.7.2.1 BJO Income Adjustment Thresholds**

The \$500/week BLA and \$45/week transportation allowance combine to \$545/week. This support will only be provided at an amount that brings household income to no higher than the following before-tax weekly income thresholds:

Household Size <sup>10</sup>	Income Threshold
1-person	\$1,055
2-person family	\$1,200
3-person family	\$1,491
4 or more-person family	\$1,698

The reduction in BLA and transportation coverage are as follows:

- If the participant is receiving BLA and transportation, the reduction = [(Base BLA + transportation + participant gross EI and non EI income + gross spousal income)] – income threshold;
- If the participant is receiving BLA only, the reduction = [(Base BLA + participant gross EI and non EI income + gross spousal income)] – income threshold.

**2.7.3 Skills Training and Incremental Costs**

Skills training and incremental costs include tuition, other instructional costs, training access payment, transportation costs, living away from home allowance, and dependent care.

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<sup>10</sup> The determination of household size for the purposes of BJO financial needs assessment includes the participant, their spouse/partner, and their dependent children under the age of 18.

### **2.7.3.1 Other Instructional Costs**

These are costs imposed by the skills training institution, excluding regular tuition costs, which are associated with and considered essential for participation in skills training.

Costs identified by the training institution as non-essential (i.e., optional) are ineligible under Better Jobs Ontario.

Other Instructional Costs can include application fees (if the CAAT has not waived this fee), charges for the credential, certification exams that are part of skills training, student fees, obtaining a student card, mandatory skills training-related books, software, mobile computing devices or other electronic equipment, supplies, library and laboratory fees, and photocopying charges.

An institution may have a Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) policy in place, in which case the purchase of a mobile computing device or other electronic equipment can be supported under Better Jobs Ontario. If it is more cost effective, participant-owned equipment can be upgraded, in lieu of the purchase of new equipment. In either case the maximum amount that can be reimbursed is \$500 per participant.

To qualify for funding for mobile computing devices or other electronic equipment, the participant must:

- Demonstrate that the institution requires the mobile computing device (or other electronic equipment) to fully participate in the program of study. Acceptable evidence of the institution's requirements should be included in the acceptance letter. Alternatively, the participant can provide a printout from the school's website stating that the equipment is required for that program.
- Provide three (3) written quotes for the purchase or upgrading of the device.
- Provide receipts that demonstrate that the device, or upgrading of the device, was paid for after the participant was approved for Better Jobs Ontario.

The ministry's contribution toward the cost of the mobile computing device or other electronic equipment must not be offset by another funder.

All instructional costs must be reviewed to determine appropriateness of the amounts being requested.

Tutoring costs may be considered if tutoring services are necessary for successful completion of a program in the following circumstances:

- tutoring must be skills training related;
- individual must be attending all training unless absent for an acceptable reason (e.g., short term illness);
- training institution must confirm a need for tutoring; and
- actual tutor must be recommended by the training institution.

Other Instructional Costs do not include fees for licensing, medical and driver abstracts, which are considered requirements for employment.

There are instances in which individuals must pass a medical examination prior to completing a program e.g., truck drivers. This is an eligible cost under the BJO program.

The ministry will not reimburse costs which are considered requirements for employment. For example, the ministry will not reimburse fees for testing or certification needed for employment on completion of skills training.

If individuals attend skills training for an occupation where certification is required for employment, and the option to take a certification exam is offered as part of that skills training program, the cost of that exam may be considered an eligible expense under Other Instructional Costs.

Training institutions must provide the laboratory equipment, tools or other capital items required for learning the curriculum, except as provided under “Other Instructional Costs”. It is further recognized that “tools of the trade” should be either supplied by the employer at the time of hiring or purchased by the workers themselves (for the employed or self-employed).

### **2.7.3.2 Training Access Payment**

Participants with household income at or below the BJO Income Threshold will receive an additional Training Access Payment. This is a one-time payment of \$350, regardless of skill training duration, to assist with up-front training-related costs (examples include, but are not limited to, uniforms, footwear, and safety equipment not already covered under other instructional costs). Personal supports not covered in other cost categories (i.e., Other Instructional Costs or Disability-related costs) will not be supported outside of the \$350 flat rate. Applicants for part-time training who meet the Better Jobs Ontario Income Threshold are entitled to receive the Training Access Payment.

### **2.7.3.3 Living Away from Home**



Individuals are eligible for financial assistance for Living Away from Home costs when the training institution and/or placement is located at such a distance from the place of residence that individuals need to maintain (i.e., own or rent) both a primary residence and a temporary second residence near the institution. Eligible individuals can receive a flat rate of \$240/week in Living Away from Home costs.

### **2.7.3.4 Dependent Care Costs**

Financial assistance for incremental dependent care costs may be provided if they are incurred by the participant while they are participating in the BJO program. These are incremental costs incurred for the care of a child under 14 years of age or a person with a disability who is dependent upon the participant for care while the participant participates in skills training. A dependent must reside with the participant or be under their care and be wholly or partially dependent on them for support.

In determining the incremental dependent care costs, the ministry will consider how dependents were cared for prior to participants entering the BJO program and how they will be cared for when participants have completed the program.

Financial assistance may be considered for dependent care provided by household members if this arrangement had previously been in place, acceptable proof is presented and if the need is incremental. For example, a grandparent cared for a child one day a week but must now care for the child five days a week to allow a participant to attend skills training (i.e., the four additional days may be considered for financial assistance).

Better Jobs Ontario will fund based on actual expenses incurred by participants, up to the following maximums:

<b>Care Types</b>	<b>Weekly Maximum</b>
Infant (younger than 18 months)	\$341
Toddler (between 18 months and 2.5 years)	\$279
Preschool (2.5 years to school age)	\$235
School Age (school age to 14)	\$210
Other Types of Care (i.e., person with a disability)	\$341

### **2.7.4 Disability Needs**

The ministry expects training institutions to provide support services and/or equipment to people with disabilities who are enrolled in skills training at the institution.

People with disabilities must discuss their need for support services or equipment with their training institution.

Services and equipment provided by training institutions to people with disabilities may include:

- assessments or advice on learning strategies;
- academic materials in alternative formats including digitized text, Braille, large print, voice activated software, assisted hearing devices;
- sign language interpreters or real time captioning for persons who are deaf, deafened, or hard of hearing;
- adaptive technology and training on it;
- in-class assistance from specialized professionals; and/or
- in-class supports (e.g., tutors, interpreters).

Note: If the training institution cannot provide an individual with disability-related support services or equipment, the ministry may, in those exceptional circumstances, provide financial assistance for these disability-related costs to the individual.

The ministry may extend the duration of their participation in the BJO program if required in order to accommodate participants with disabilities. Each request for an extension will be assessed by the ministry on an individual basis. If the duration of participation in the BJO program is extended, the ministry will continue to provide BLA and financial assistance for all applicable costs during the extended period.

If people with disabilities seek support for disability-related transportation costs from the ministry, they should be encouraged to first explore alternate sources of funding. If alternate funding cannot be obtained, individuals are required to provide supporting documentation to the ministry about their disability-related transportation costs.

If the ministry provides financial assistance for disability-related transportation costs, there is no maximum contribution amount in this category.

### **2.7.5 Financial Hardship**

The ministry has some capacity to address financial barriers which may prevent individuals from otherwise participating in the BJO program. The consideration of

financial hardship<sup>11</sup> includes all aspects of the financial needs assessment. Only in exceptional circumstances, individuals experiencing financial hardship may be considered for additional funding at the discretion of ministry Regional Directors or their delegates in line with the Delegation of Financial Management Authority (DOFMA). The overall participant agreement value, however, cannot exceed the maximum of \$28,000, except for the following costs: disability needs, dependent care, living away from home allowance and all costs related to Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) and/or language training.

## **2.8 Additional Considerations**

### **2.8.1 *Employment Insurance Act, 1996 (Part I) and Section 25 Approval***

Individuals are required to be capable of and available for work and must demonstrate that they are actively seeking employment in order to be entitled to EI Part I benefits. In approving the BJO program for active EI Part I claimants, a Section 25 approval from the ministry will release them from their obligation to actively look for work while they are pursuing their BJO training. The ministry provides Section 25 approval on behalf of Service Canada; therefore, careful consideration is required in these cases.

Requests for backdating Section 25 approval may be considered in cases where individuals who had initially been disqualified by Service Canada from receiving EI Part I benefits appeal the case and win, resulting in their EI Part I claims being established and backdated.

### **2.8.2 Feepayer**

Feepayers are EI Part I claimants who have requested and received Section 25 approval from the ministry to continue to collect EI Part I benefits for the duration of their entitlement period while attending approved skills training. Like individuals who receive BJO financial assistance, feepayers must be case managed. They too must develop a mutually agreed upon ESP/EAP that identifies a lack of skills as the barrier to employment and supports their request for Section 25 approval under the EI Act.

Feepayer approval must only be used when individuals are able to pay for their skills training but require their EI Part I benefits for the entire skills training duration. Feepayer approval **must not be used** if individuals will require BJO funding in order to complete skills training.

Feepayers must sign an attestation form that states that they will not request financial assistance from the ministry to support them with their training plan.

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<sup>11</sup> The Canada Revenue Agency defines “financial hardship” as “financial suffering or lack of what is needed for basic living requirements such as food, shelter, clothing and reasonable non-essentials”.

While Feepayers can pay their own tuition and training costs, they must meet the eligibility requirements of the program. Feepayers are not required to have a suitability assessment conducted (Section 1.5), are exempt from skills training requirements (Section 2.6) and are not required to select an identified priority area or demonstrate good employment prospects (Section 2.4.2).

### **2.8.3 Individuals with an Existing Support Order or Agreement**

Individuals must disclose the existence of a support order or agreement as early in their case management process as possible, and in any event before approval of their BJO applications.

The Family Responsibility Office (FRO) receives every support order made by Ontario courts and enforces the payments of the amounts owed under the support order. FRO also administers private written agreements that have been registered with it and court orders made in other jurisdictions that have reciprocal arrangements with Ontario. FRO has the legal authority to collect support payments and arrears of support and can take enforcement actions including garnishment for support orders and agreements that are filed with FRO.

### **2.8.4 Existing Overpayments**

If the ESP/EAP is determined to be appropriate by ministry staff, the existence of an overpayment owing to the Province, whether or not a repayment plan is in place, should not, change the referral decision to be considered for the BJO program.

It is particularly important to discuss with individuals the circumstances which lead to the establishment of any outstanding overpayments and/or penalties. The ministry would not increase the amount of Part II financial assistance to help individuals repay existing accounts receivable/penalty. Individuals approved under the BJO program can request a deferral of overpayment recovery until after the end of the skills training plan.

## **3.0 PROGRAM DELIVERY**

### **3.1 Roles and Responsibilities**

#### **3.1.1 Employment Service (ES) Providers/ Integrated Employment Services (IES) Providers**

Individuals interested in skills training must meet with ES/IES provider staff and complete thorough employment service needs assessment and explore EO and other community employment programs and services. It is important to note that the BJO program is one of many EO options; referral to the BJO program should be carefully considered.

Through the assessment process, individuals will develop a mutually agreed upon ESP/EAP with an ES/IES provider staff. If skills training is identified as the most appropriate way to address individuals' employment needs, it must be specified in the ESP/EAP. The ESP/EAP must also include a confirmation that individuals have demonstrated that they have completed a thorough job search and it has proved unsuccessful before being referred to the BJO program.

ES/IES providers are also responsible for assessing individuals against the BJO eligibility and suitability requirements. This includes responsibility for completing the Better Jobs Ontario Eligibility and Suitability Assessment Tool. By signing the template, ES/IES providers are attesting to the fact that they have assessed BJO eligibility and suitability for individuals. If the individual is a feepayer, the ES/IES provider will need to ensure the completion of the Better Jobs Ontario Feepayer Application and Email Attestation form. Although the assessment is conducted by ES/IES providers, the decision to approve individuals for the BJO program is made by the ministry. If there is inconsistency in the information provided by ES/IES providers, the ministry may request further information and documentation.

ES/IES providers are also responsible for follow-up and reporting on BJO participant outcomes.

### **3.1.2 Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development (the ministry)**

The ministry is responsible for:

- providing general information and advice to individuals about the BJO program;
- directing individuals to an ES/IES provider;
- confirming individuals' EI Part I status if applicable and approving Section 25 Referral for active EI Part I claimants;
- approving or denying individuals based on a review of their ESPs/EAPs and BJO application packages;
- advising individuals in writing that their BJO applications has been denied. The denial letter must advise individuals why the ministry has not approved their application, how individuals can request a review of the decision and where possible, offer alternate options;
- administering the Better Jobs Ontario Application Decision Review (BJO-ADR);
- assessing financial need and specifying the amount of BJO financial assistance for approved individuals;
- signing an BJO participant agreement;
- ensuring participants understand their responsibilities;
- issuing financial assistance payments; and

- administering BJO participant agreements including monitoring individuals' progress and financial activity.

### **3.1.3 BJO Participants**

BJO participants are responsible for:

- developing a mutually agreed upon ESP/EAP with an ES/IES provider;
- if they have applied for OSAP, putting their OSAP application on hold while their Better Jobs Ontario application for financial assistance is fully assessed<sup>12</sup>;
- submitting the Better Jobs Ontario Application for Financial Assistance or Feepayer Application and Email Attestation form and required accompanying documentation;
- providing evidence of the need for financial assistance;
- signing an BJO participant agreement;
- using the financial assistance as outlined in the BJO participant agreement;
- pursuing skills training diligently and making their best efforts to complete it successfully;
- providing the ministry with proof of payment to the training institution of each instalment of their tuition immediately after payment of the instalment;
- keeping detailed receipts, vouchers or other documentary proof of all their skills training costs and submitting them as requested; and
- notifying the ministry immediately in writing of:
  - any income they receive during their skills training that was not included in the application for financial assistance.
  - any other sources of funding (including non-OSAP student grants, scholarships and bursaries) they receive during their skills training that was not included in the application for financial assistance.

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<sup>12</sup> A micro-credential program funded by BJO will not be eligible for OSAP if the study period overlaps. Participants intending to apply to both BJO and OSAP must be assessed for financial need first by BJO. If applicable, OSAP applications should be put on hold while BJO financial needs assessments are complete.

- any other changes in their financial situation.
- any employment while in skills training.
- any change in or cancellation of skills training content.
- their intention to withdraw from the skills training.
- their absence from skills training for any reason.
- any suspension, expulsion, or withdrawal and the reasons for same.
- any change of address(es).
- following the BJO program direction and/or advice provided by the ES/IES provider and/or the ministry. (Clients are required to follow the instructions of the Province and/or their Service Provider, including but not limited to, any instructions to provide reports of their absences from Skills Training, their progress in Skills Training and proof of completion of Skills Training, as indicated in the BJO Participant Agreement, 6 (1)(k)).

Note: FeePAYERS are not required to submit the Better Jobs Ontario Application for Financial Assistance or comply with the financial related responsibilities noted here.

### **3.1.4 Training Institutions**

Quality skills training is provided by Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology (CAATs), Private Career Colleges (PCCs), Indigenous Institutions, and school boards. Numerous factors are taken into consideration in the identification of a suitable training institution, such as location and duration of the skills training, skills training content, and date of availability of the skills training.

ES/IES providers and the ministry must not encourage individuals to select public or private institutions on the basis of personal bias. Individuals' preferences should be fully considered with emphasis placed on skills training that provides the most cost-effective path to employment.

#### **3.1.4.1 College of Applied Arts and Technology (CAAT)**

Publicly assisted CAATs offer a range of skills training programs that may be approved under the BJO program. To find more information on the colleges and the programs offered at each college, refer to [Colleges Ontario](#).



#### **3.1.4.2 Private Career College (PCC)**

A PCC is an independent business. PCCs operating in Ontario must be registered and must have their programs approved by the Superintendent of Private Career Colleges in the Ministry of Colleges and Universities (unless they are exempt). PCCs must comply with the registration requirements in keeping with the provincial regulations and standards under the *Private Career Colleges Act, 2005* (PCCA). A decision to support individuals through the BJO program should be made in view of those existing policies and legislation.

Individuals enrolled in skills training that is exempt from approval under the PCCA must be made aware that they are not entitled to student protection measures under the PCCA.

The PCCA came into effect on September 18, 2006. The primary goals of the PCCA are to protect students, improve quality and strengthen the accountability of all institutions that make up the PCC sector.

To determine if a skills training program is approved and offered at a registered institution, refer to the [Private Career Colleges](#) section of Ontario.ca.

#### **3.1.4.3 Partnership between a CAAT and PCC**

When a CAAT enters into a partnership or other arrangement with a PCC to deliver skills training programs, the CAAT shall not pay, transfer or otherwise remunerate the PCC greater amounts than applicable through BJO.

For individuals registered with a CAAT, the conditions for providing BJO funding to them when a CAAT/PCC partnership exists are:

- the CAAT must identify in the individuals' letter of acceptance that it is partnering with a PCC to deliver the skills training program;
- the credential must be granted by the CAAT; and
- they must meet all other BJO program requirements.

Example:

An individual applies to a PCC for a skills training program for which the tuition fee is \$8,000. If the conditions outlined above have been met, then the individual may be eligible for up to \$8,000 for tuition fees (as determined by the BJO financial assessment), assuming a similar program at a CAAT also charges \$8,000 in tuition.

Other Instructional Costs not covered under the tuition definition may also be paid according to existing guidelines.

### **3.1.5 Indigenous Institutes (IIs)**

Indigenous Institutes are publicly assisted, Indigenous-governed and operated community-based educational institutions. The *Indigenous Institutes Act, 2017* recognizes Indigenous Institutes as a unique and complementary pillar of Ontario's postsecondary education system.

#### **3.1.5.1 Partnership between a CAAT and Indigenous Institutes (IIs)**

Indigenous Institutes may offer some credentials independently or may choose to offer some credentials through partnership with a CAAT.

### **3.1.6 Other Training Deliverers**

#### **3.1.6.1 School Boards**

School Boards and School Board affiliates are also eligible skills training providers for LBS training and skills training.

## **3.2 Additional Considerations**

### **3.2.1 Employment While Attending Skills Training**

Participants may work while attending skills training if they can still fulfill the terms of their BJO participant agreement. The intention is to ensure that individuals devote enough time to their studies for successful completion.

Participants must advise the ministry of any change in financial circumstances as it may have an impact on their ministry financial assistance. Individuals receiving EI Part I benefits must contact Service Canada regarding their reporting requirements prior to starting employment.

## **4.0 ACCOUNTABILITY**

### **4.1 Expected Outcome**

The expected outcome for the BJO program is skills training completion that will lead directly to employment.

### **4.2 Participant Agreement**

The ministry enters into an BJO participant agreement with all approved participants. The participant agreement is subject to audit. The participant agreement sets out the legal terms and conditions of financial assistance.

Note: Feepayers will sign the Feepayer Referral to Training Activity Agreement rather than the BJO participant agreement.

#### **4.2.1 Changes in Financial Circumstances**

BJO participants must advise the ministry of any changes to their financial circumstances during skills training. Changes in financial circumstances may necessitate the re-assessment of the amount of financial assistance that was originally determined. Feepayers are not required to notify the ministry of changes to their financial circumstances.

#### **4.2.2 Leave of Absence or Termination of Participant Agreement**

There are no provisions in the BJO program for leave. However, there may be exceptional and unforeseeable situations which warrant special consideration on a case-by-case basis (e.g., short-term injury or illness).

An BJO participant agreement can be terminated if the participant does not adhere to participant agreement terms and conditions.

The participant agreement may be terminated if skills training is cancelled. The ministry can also terminate the participant agreement if participants:

- withdraw from skills training;
- are expelled from skills training;
- are suspended from skills training;
- complete skills training early;
- fail to comply with obligations in the participant agreement; and/or
- provide information in their applications that is untrue, inaccurate or incomplete.

The ministry must notify a participant in writing of the termination of the BJO participant agreement. The letter should clearly state how participants failed to fulfill their obligations, including following advice provided by the ministry, and should also include details of final payments or overpayments, if applicable.

#### **4.2.3 Refunds**

BJO participants should be advised of any financial implications that may result from their withdrawing from or being suspended or expelled from skills training as outlined in the BJO participant agreement.

If individuals terminate their skills training and, as a result, a refund from the skills training institution is payable, the ministry would be entitled to an amount that bears the same ratio to the amount the ministry funded. An overpayment must be established for all reimbursements.

### **4.3 Monitoring, Reporting and Evaluation**

All BJO participant agreements are subject to monitoring of activities, expenditures, and results. The principal purpose of BJO monitoring is to ensure that participants are complying with their BJO participant agreement and that the funds are spent as specified. Through monitoring, the ministry collects data on the ongoing success of participants, mitigates any potential risks of inappropriate use of funds, and ensures that any monies owing or in debt to Ontario are identified in a timely manner.

The ministry should reinforce with BJO participants the importance of submitting timely receipts to avoid unnecessary overpayments and to ensure funds are reconciled in required cost categories.

All participant files must contain evidence of ongoing monitoring along with additional supporting documentation as required. Documented evidence of all monitoring in whatever form must be put on file.

The ministry will review the BJO program on an ongoing basis and evaluate the program as required to determine if participants are meeting expected outcomes.

## **5.0 ADMINISTRATION**

### **5.1 Protection of Privacy**

In order to comply with its obligations under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA), the ministry will obtain the consent of the affected individuals to the indirect collection of their limited personal information via the BJO Application for Financial Assistance and BJO participant agreement. In addition, the ministry will give these individuals notice of the uses it proposes to make of their personal information.

One of these uses is sharing an individual's personal information with external third parties such as other service providers and other government departments.

### **5.2 BJO Forms**

BJO forms for ES/IES providers are posted on the [Employment Ontario Partners' Gateway](#) (EOPG) website.

### 5.3 Taxation

For the purpose of determining eligible tuition and other instructional costs, the ministry uses Canada Revenue Agency definitions for eligible tuition costs as follows:

- admission fees
- charges for use of library or laboratory facilities
- exemption fees
- examination fees (including re-reading charges) that are integral to a program of study
- application fees (but only if the student subsequently enrolls in the institution)
- confirmation fees
- charges for a certificate, diploma or degree
- membership or seminar fees that are specifically related to an academic program and its administration
- mandatory computer service fees
- academic fees.

Under the *Income Tax Act, 1985* all financial assistance provided from the ministry to participants is to be included as income for income tax purposes with the exception of Adult Basic Education (i.e., LBS) tuition assistance and other skills training courses or programs that do not qualify for the existing tuition tax credit. Using additional ministry funds to make up any shortfall due to income tax deductions at source is not permitted.

To claim tuition amounts, the student must have received a Form T2202A - Tuition and Enrolment Certificate from their skills training provider.

The Tuition and Enrolment Certificate is issued to a student who was enrolled during the calendar year in a qualifying educational program or a specified educational program at a postsecondary institution, such as a college or university, or at an institution certified by Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC).

BJO participants requiring information on taxation should be directed to the Canada Revenue Agency at 1-800-959-8281 or <https://www.canada.ca/en/services/taxes.html>.

## APPENDIX A – Glossary of Terms

The following terms are used commonly to support decision-making to assess clients for eligibility and suitability for Better Jobs Ontario. All definitions are meant to provide consistency, clarity and specificity for use in the Better Jobs Ontario program.

Term	Definition
Action Centres	Action Centres are designed to address a community need and support individuals who have lost employment. They can provide individuals with the support they need in looking for work, provide information on other services within the community, etc. These Centres may be known by different names depending on the community (e.g., Job Action Centre, Employment Action Centre or Action Centre).
College of Applied Arts and Technology (CAAT)	Publicly assisted CAATs offer a range of skills training programs that may be approved under the BJO program.
Employment Ontario Information System-Case Management System (EOIS-CaMS).	EOIS-CaMS is a combination of computer support systems to support the administration and delivery of Employment Ontario (EO) programs and services.
Employment Service Plan (ESP)/Employment Action Plan (EAP)	An ESP/EAP is a mutually agreed upon plan between the client and the Employment Services/Integrated Employment Service provider staff. The plan may include information about the client's education, work history, employment barriers and needs, and occupational goal.
Expected Outcome	The expected outcome for the BJO program is skills training completion that will lead directly to employment.
Feepayers	Feepayers are EI Part I claimants who have requested and received Section 25 approval from the ministry to continue to collect EI Part I benefits for the duration of

Term	Definition
	their entitlement period while attending approved skills training.
Financial Hardship	The Canada Revenue Agency defines “financial hardship” as “financial suffering or lack of what is needed for basic living requirements such as food, shelter, clothing and reasonable non-essentials.”
Gig Workers	<p>Gig workers can be considered a sub-set of self-employed workers with no paid help (also known as “solo-self-employed” or “own account”) and without a business number. Self-employed workers are a subset of “non-standard workers,” a category that also includes part-time and contract workers, which is on the rise in Ontario. Non-standard work can be considered more precarious if it is also low paid.</p> <p>For the purposes of Better Jobs Ontario, individuals receiving income from non-incorporated self-employment without paid employees can be considered eligible for the program, as long as they meet all other criteria (e.g., low income).</p>
Having no work history	For the purposes of Better Jobs Ontario, “having no work history” is defined as never having had a year where \$5000 or more in employment income was earned.
Indigenous Institutes	Indigenous Institutes are publicly assisted, Indigenous-governed and operated community-based educational institutions.
Interim Job	An “interim job” is a job that an eligible 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 involve contract work.

Term	Definition
Limited Labour Market Attachment	An individual who has had trouble finding and/or keeping a job and accumulating job experience, including individuals who have only been able to find/keep non-traditional work (e.g., gig work).
Micro-Credentials	Micro-credentials are a series of courses that provide a skill or set of skills that are in demand and are expected to lead to employment without a broader credential required, or that fill a gap for the participant who has other skills relevant to the target occupation.
Non-Standard Employment	Non-standard employment refers broadly to work that is neither full-time nor permanent, and includes for example part-time work, contract work, self-employment or gig work. See <a href="#">The Changing Workplaces Review Report</a> for more information.
Participant Agreement	The ministry enters into an BJO participant agreement with all approved participants. The participant agreement is subject to audit. The participant agreement sets out the legal terms and conditions of financial assistance.
Precarious Work	<p>Generally, refers to work where the employee, rather than the employer, bears the risk of the job. While there is no official definition for precarious work in Canada, the International Labour Organization (ILO) defines precariousness by “risky” job attributes such as low pay (i.e., earnings at or below the poverty line), uncertain continuity of employment or high risk of job loss, little or no choice about working conditions (e.g., schedule or wages), and few to no job protections guaranteed by law or through collective agreements (e.g., lack of job benefits and social, health and safety, and other protections typically associated with standard employment).</p> <p>For the purposes of Better Jobs Ontario, “precarious work” is defined as work that is low-income (at or</p>



Term	Definition
	below LICO for one individual per each year of precarious work history) and lacks continuity (e.g., non-permanent positions, part time, short-term contracts, unreliable shift work, gig work or self-employment where earnings fluctuate, or NOC TEER category 5 work which an individual has quit due to low pay).
Private Career College (PCC)	A PCC is an independent business. PCCs operating in Ontario must be registered and must have their programs approved by the Superintendent of Private Career Colleges in the Ministry of Colleges and Universities (unless they are exempt). PCCs must comply with the registration requirements in keeping with the provincial regulations and standards under the <i>Private Career Colleges Act, 2005 (PCCA)</i> .
Salary continuance	“Salary continuance” is an alternative to a lump sum severance payment whereby laid-off workers receive their salary as per their regular pay schedule for a designated period, during which time they may also receive some or all of their work benefits.
School Boards	School Boards and School Board affiliates are also eligible skills training providers for LBS training and skills training.
Self-Employed	Self-employed persons are defined as persons whose job consists mainly of operating a business, farm or professional practice, alone or in partnership. The business can be incorporated or unincorporated. Self-employed persons include those with and those without paid help. Also included among the self-employed are unpaid family workers.
Severance pay	“Severance pay” is compensation that is paid to a qualified employee who has their employment ‘severed’. It compensates an employee for losses (such as seniority) that occur when an employee loses their job and, for the purposes of the BJO program,

Term	Definition
	<p>may include termination pay in excess of statutory entitlements. Not all laid-off individuals are eligible for severance pay. If the individual is eligible for severance pay and does receive it, the allocation of the severance package will affect the calculation of the individual's financial assistance under the BJO program.</p> <p>Please also refer to the severance section of the Guide to the <i>Employment Standards Act, 2000</i> for further information:  <a href="https://www.ontario.ca/document/your-guide-employment-standards-act-0/severance-pay">https://www.ontario.ca/document/your-guide-employment-standards-act-0/severance-pay</a></p>
Skills Mismatch	<p>A skills mismatch refers to the situation in which an employee's current skills do not match those needed to perform their current job. In all cases, a skills mismatch is identified at the level of a worker-job pair. Comparing an employed person's skills and the degree to which these align with the needs of the job determines a skills match.</p> <p>For more information see the <a href="#">Labour Market Information Council Insight Report No. 3</a></p>
Skills Training	<p>For the purpose of Better Jobs Ontario, skills training provides occupation-specific skills and leads to a credential.</p>
Standard Employment (or Traditional Employment)	<p>According to the Labour Market Information Council (LMIC), standard employment (also called traditional employment) refers to a work arrangement between an employer and employee that is both full-time and permanent.</p>
Training Institutions	<p>Quality skills training is provided by Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology (CAATs), Private Career Colleges (PCCs), Indigenous Institutions and School Boards and School Board affiliates.</p>

Term	Definition
Underemployed	<p>“Underemployment” refers to employment with less than full-time hours. Statistics Canada defines full time employment as working more than 30 hours a week.</p> <p>For the purposes of the Better Jobs Ontario suitability matrix criteria, underemployed refers to “poor employment” history, which includes having experienced “periods of underemployment”.</p>
Unemployed	<p>According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the unemployed are defined as people without work but who are actively seeking employment and currently available to start work.</p> <p>For the purposes of BJO, there are different considerations for who may meet eligibility criteria related to unemployment (see Section 2.3 Eligibility).</p>
Vulnerable Youth	<p>Young people (15-29 years old) who are more exposed to risks than their peers and face significant barriers to achieving and maintaining well-being. Risk factors and indicators of vulnerability in young people can be related to health-related factors, social factors and family problems contributing to vulnerability. Vulnerability is a relative state that may range from resilience to total helplessness.</p> <p>Vulnerable youth can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth in government care</li> <li>• Street-involved youth</li> <li>• Youth who are homeless or at risk of being homeless</li> <li>• Indigenous youth</li> <li>• Immigrant and racialized youth</li> <li>• Youth with addictions</li> </ul>

Term	Definition
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="695 258 1365 289">• Youth involved in the criminal justice system</li><li data-bbox="695 317 1382 348">• Youth with mental or physical disabilities, and</li><li data-bbox="695 375 1300 453">• Youth who have experienced physical, emotional, or sexual abuse and trauma.</li></ul>