

LITERACY AND BASIC SKILLS (LBS) PROGRAM – Contact Hours

BACKGROUND

The LBS Guidelines state that an organization's funding level is determined by reviewing its past performance, current status, and future commitments. Contact hours have been one means of tracking an organization's service activity to learners.

Contact hours represent the actual amount of time that a delivery organization is directly involved in delivering to learners any of the five delivery services. The number of contact hours includes meetings with learners as well as group activity and workshop participation. It does not include administrative activities, such as records management or local service planning, that support service delivery organizations' work with learners.

Contact hours measure the time a learner or client spends receiving LBS services and may provide some indication of an organization's funding requirements. Contact hours do not capture learner outcomes and they do not directly measure learner progress, two key areas of performance in the LBS Program.

MTCU is introducing the Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework (OALCF) in 2011-2012. The OALCF will provide clearer guidance to organizations about the learning required to achieve the goals of employment, further education and training, and independence. The OALCF will give learners greater mobility across goal paths and EO services, and will allow MTCU to have clearer accountability on learner progress.

In 2011-2012, LBS organizations will be focusing their resources on preparing to implement the OALCF. They will be improving their organizational capacity in areas that, when fully in place, will facilitate a smooth transition to using the OALCF. For this period of preparation and implementation, LBS service delivery organizations will not be required to track and report on contact hours.

LBS Service Delivery Organization Qs & As – Contact Hours

1. What is happening?

MTCU will not require contact hours to be reported in 2011-2012. LBS organizations will be informed in early April 2011 on how to use the LBS-IMS accordingly.

Although LBS organizations will no longer be required to track contact hours, the Client Module of the LBS-IMS system that the organizations use does require that at least one(1) contact hour be recorded for each client they serve for the reporting period for the system to know to include them in reports. So LBS organizations must ensure they enter a placeholder value of one (1) hour in order for their reporting to be accurate.

2. Why is this change happening now?

The support of an outcomes-based approach with strong literacy services planning results in more inter-organization referrals, better served clients and stronger client outcomes.

Other Employment Ontario (EO) programs, such as Employment Services, do not track contact hours. As the services provided by EO become more coordinated and integrated, it is important to align the Ministry's expectations and focus on outcomes.

(See also Question 1)

3. **Not reporting contact hours in LBS-IMS in 2011-12, is it only the training hours including overall assessment and training plan development (associated with attendance) or is it also not reporting the hours for the other services such as Information and Referral and Follow up at 3 and 6 months? In other words, will the contact hours associated with the other LBS services that the organization tracks and reports continue to be transmitted monthly in LBS-IMS?**

No contact hours will be reported in LBS-IMS in 2011-2012. The system will allow organizations to report on the number of clients served by Information and Referral and Follow up at 3 and 6 months, but it will not count the number of contact hours associated with those services. The same will be applied to Training services, with the number of learners reported, but not the contact hours. LBS organizations must ensure they

enter a placeholder value of one (1) hour in order for their reporting to be accurate.

LBS-IMS reports will continue to be transmitted monthly. Service delivery organizations will be informed in early April 2011 on how to use the LBS-IMS to report on learners and outcomes without having to report on contact hours.

(See also Question 1)

4. Will the ministry provide comprehensive instructions for organizations to make the changes in its business operations and to start transmitting in a timely manner?

Yes. Information about this change as well as revised instructions on how to produce and upload their reports to the secure site will be posted on the LBS-IMS system as well as the Employment Ontario Partners Gateway website at <http://www.tcu.gov.on.ca/eng/eopg/programs/training.html>

(See also Question 1)

5. Will the LBSIMS Help Desk be available to assist the organizations?

Yes. Service delivery organizations will be informed in early April 2011 on how to use the LBS-IMS interim solutions accordingly.

6. Will the 2011-13 LBS agreement Schedule B indicate only a service commitment for learners?

Yes.

7. How are organizations going to plan as a community because they look at contact hours and learners to see the intensity of service? Does this mean that the 2011-12 Literacy Services Plan (LSP) will need to be modified?

Literacy Services Planning will continue to focus on improving service coordination, both within LBS and within the broader Employment Ontario system. In 2011-2012, LSP committees may also wish to invest time in OALCF preparation. The 2011-2012 Literacy Service Plan will not need to be modified.

The evaluation of the LSP will continue to consider improvements achieved in service coordination and determining if the projected number of learners served was met. Evaluation of the 2011-2012 LSP will not include a consideration of contact hours.

8. Will organizations still have to show attendance charts to LBS Consultants at Program Monitoring Visits?

The evidence an organization provides to LBS Consultants at a monitoring visit should indicate the results of the service to learners and clients, as well as identify the investment of LBS funding in its delivery. Organizations must be aware that the ministry may wish to review attendance as part of their monitoring if poor attendance patterns have been identified as an issue.

9. Performance management measures three types of indicators: effectiveness, customer satisfaction and efficiency. Will the efficiency of the organization's delivery of the LBS program now be only based on learner numbers?

Contact hours are not tracked by e-channel service providers. Research indicated contact hours were not an accurate or useful measure of online service delivery because learners could be logged on but not necessarily working on literacy.

As more learners are accessing both face-to-face and online learning, both channels of delivery should use number of learners served for a consistent measure of efficiency but focus on effectiveness outcomes.

Contact hours were not attached to the additional funding provided by the 2009 Budget Initiative in 2009-2010 and 2010-2011. Only additional learner targets were included to measure the efficiency of the investment.

10. MTCU is giving organizations an important message that they must now focus on effectiveness. What would you suggest that organizations do to strengthen their effectiveness?

Section 5 of the 2011-2012 LBS business plan template indicated four key areas for LBS programs to support learner success and to prepare for implementing the Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework (OALCF). These four areas are: Transitions-Oriented Programming, Service Coordination, Task-based Approach and Task-based Assessment. The rubric included in the business plan allows organizations to see what these

four elements look like when fully in place (column 4), and provides guidance on what improvements need to be made to their program, wherever they currently assess it to be.

Support organizations have been funded in 2011-2012 to provide the necessary support to service delivery organizations, to help them make these improvements and to begin to implement the OALCF. These improvements and the use of the OALCF are expected to result in increased effectiveness and learner success.

11. Is this a permanent change, or will organizations have to start reporting contact hours again once they are on the EOIS-CaMS?

Yes, this is a permanent change. Based on the ministry's outcomes-based focus, EOIS-CaMS will be implemented to allow LBS service delivery organizations to track levels of learner activity. Functionality will be available to LBS service delivery organizations to support the tracking of learner progress in meeting learning milestones.

As we move towards implementation of EOIS-CaMS, more information and training in its use will be available.

12. What changes will there be to the LBS-IMS tool that organizations use to report data to the Ministry?

Service delivery organizations will be informed in early April 2011 on how to use the LBS-IMS interim solutions accordingly.

13. Will organizations need to change their budgets to adjust to this change in administrative duties?

Organizations can discuss with their TCU consultant any changes to their administrative practises resulting from the change in reporting requirements. Overall funding to LBS organizations will continue to be at levels announced during the annual business planning process.

14. What will be used to hold LBS service providers accountable instead of contact hours?

Organizations are currently expected to be accountable for learner numbers, learner satisfaction, and learner outcomes, including status at exit and at 3 and 6 months after exit, goal achievement at exit, and the coordination of their services within the Literacy Services Planning activity.

These measures will be enhanced in 2012-2013 by the Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework (OALCF) and EOIS/CaMS to include service coordination and learner progress measures. Service delivery organizations are expected to prepare for OALCF and EOIS implementation by improving their capacity in the four key areas identified in Section 5 of their business plan.

Organizations will continue to report on existing measures in 2011-2012. MTCU staff will monitor their progress toward both organization and LBS Program targets of existing measures, and their progress toward improving their capacity to implement the OALCF.