

Questions and Answers
Canada-Ontario Job Grant (COJG) 2018-19 Program Changes

Questions and Answers:

General

1. What is the Canada-Ontario Job Grant (COJG)?

The Canada-Ontario Job Grant is a shared investment between employers and the government. The program provides direct financial support to individual employers who wish to purchase training for their workforce.

It is delivered through **cost-sharing agreements** between individual employers and government, where currently (until March 31, 2018):

- Government covers 2/3 of direct training costs, up to \$10,000 per trainee.
- Employer pays at least 1/3 of direct training costs:
 - Small employers (50 employees or less) have the option to contribute up to 50% of their required contribution in wages paid to training participants.
 - Employers with 50 or fewer employees who are training and hiring unemployed individuals are eligible for up to \$15,000 per trainee and are not required to make a minimum contribution to training costs for training funded through the grant.

2. What funding amounts are employers currently eligible for?

Under the 2017-18 COJG guidelines (which expire on March 31, 2018), the government covers 2/3 of direct training costs, up to \$10,000 per trainee.

Employers pay at least 1/3 of direct training costs:

- Small employers (50 employees or less) have the option to contribute up to 50% of their required contribution in wages paid to training participants.
- Employers with 50 or fewer employees who are training and hiring unemployed individuals are eligible for up to \$15,000 per trainee and are not required to make a minimum contribution to training costs for training funded through the grant.

3. How is the Canada-Ontario Job Grant changing?

Effective April 1, 2018, the following changes to COJG will be implemented:

Renewed focus on supporting small employers:

- The definition of “small employers” will be expanded to include firms with 1-99 employees, which aligns with other federal and provincial definitions.
- Access will be expanded by providing higher levels of support for small employers by decreasing the contribution requirement from 1/3 to 1/6, and eliminating the “in-kind” contribution requirement. This will also reduce the administrative burden of accessing the program.
- Contribution requirements will increase for large employers (100 or more employees) from 1/3 to 1/2, to offer a more balanced approach to cost-sharing between government and employers who have greater capacity to invest in their workforces.

Making it easier for employers who wish to apply as part of a consortium:

- Administrative support funding will be introduced for organizations who act as intermediaries of consortium-based training, coordinating and managing training agreements with the ministry.

Winding down COJG pilots (Customized Training and Upskill) that will provide insights into improving the COJG program:

- The Upskill pilot and associated training activities ended on September 30, 2017.
- The ministry will stop accepting applications for the Customized Training pilot on March 31, 2018.

4. Why are we making changes?

The Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development (MAESD) recently made a decision to re-profile program funding to support new investments in skills programming that will provide greater alignment between training supports and the needs of employers and sectors.

These investments include increasing the funding toward consortium-based training. The Consortium Stream allows an organization to act on behalf of a consortium of employers who pool their resources to support common training objectives and goals.

Ministry research has shown that there are positive benefits/outcomes that can come from partnership-based industry-driven “intermediary” approaches to skills development. Specifically, consortium-based training can:

- Reduce barriers to access by providing partnership-focused opportunities for employers who can pool their resources and expertise to better identify training needs;
- Address supply and demand issues related to local labour market and skills training needs;
- Produce training cost efficiencies; and
- Support the ministry’s effort to promote workforce development strategies that help employers secure workers with the skills they need.

In addition to the renewed focus on the Consortium Stream, the ministry is making broader enhancements to COJG to offer a more balanced approach to serving all employers.

5. Who did the ministry consult on these changes?

Over the past several months, the ministry has sought feedback from our service delivery partners and employers who have previously accessed COJG. These consultations have provided important first-hand perspectives, as well as insight into improving the program to support the needs of employers.

Based on this feedback, the ministry is making improvements to the program which will streamline administration and increase access for employers – especially those who face barriers to investing in workforce training.

6. When do the 2018-19 guidelines with new contribution rates come into effect?

All new guideline requirements become effective on April 1, 2018.

7. How does the ministry define “large employer” and “small employer” and how will this definition change as of April 1st?

Under COJG, a small employer is currently defined as any employer with 50 employees or less, and a large employer is any employer with 51 or more employees. Starting April 1, 2018, the definition of small employer will be expanded to include firms with 1-99 employees, to align with other federal and provincial definitions.

8. How much are large employers expected to contribute towards training before and after April 1st?

Under the current COJG guidelines (2017-2018), the government covers 2/3 of direct training costs, up to \$10,000 per trainee, and large employers (51 or more employees) pay at least 1/3 of direct training costs.

After April 1, 2018, contribution requirements will increase for large employers (100 or more employees) from 1/3 to 1/2 of direct training costs, to offer a more balanced approach to cost-sharing between government and employers who have greater capacity to invest in their workforces.

9. How much are small employers expected to contribute before and after April 1st?

Under the current COJG guidelines (2017-2018), the government covers 2/3 of direct training costs, up to \$10,000 per trainee, and small employers (50 or less employees) pay at least 1/3 of direct training costs, with the following flexibilities:

- Small employers have the option to contribute up to 50% of their required contribution in wages paid to training participants.
- Small employers who are training and hiring unemployed individuals are eligible for up to \$15,000 per trainee and are not required to make a minimum contribution to training costs for training funded through the grant.

After April 1, 2018, contribution requirements will decrease for small employers (firms with 1 – 99 employees) from 1/3 to 1/6 of direct training costs. The ministry will also eliminate the “in-kind” contribution requirement. This will also reduce the administrative burden of accessing the program.

10. When is the last date that employers can apply for the COJG under the current guidelines?

Employer applications received on or before March 31, 2018, will be assessed under the current guidelines (2017-2018) and must be approved in the system before the system update scheduled for April 20. Applications received on or after April 1, 2018, will be assessed under the new guidelines, but these applications will not be able to be approved in the system until after the April 20 system update. For more information on system updates – see below.

11. Are further changes anticipated to the COJG program?

The ministry continues to review COJG to ensure that the value for money is provided in training supported by COJG funding. As a result of these reviews, further changes could be implemented to the program. The ministry will continue to communicate with service providers to update and keep them informed of program changes.

12. How is the ministry informing employers about these program changes?

The ministry will update the public COJG page to let prospective employers know that changes will be taking effect in the new fiscal year. Service providers are expected to communicate changes to employers they are currently working with.

System Updates

13. Why is the system not being updated on April 1st to match the new criteria?

The system is being updated on April 20 to allow employers to submit applications under the current guidelines until March 31, 2018. Updating the system on April 20 will give service provider staff enough time to properly assess applications and activate the service plans before the system updates.

Only one set of contributions can be active per application, but the system will allow for both sets of contributions within the 2018-19 fiscal. If the application was submitted before April 1 and approved before April 20, the application and associated service plans will follow the 2017-18 contribution rules throughout its lifecycle. If the application was submitted after March 31, the application and its associated service plans will follow the 2018-19 contribution rules throughout its lifecycle.

14. I received an application on or after April 1st but before April 20th, what do I do with this application?

Any application submitted after March 31, 2017, must be assessed using the 2018-19 guidelines. These applications cannot be approved in the system until after the April 20 system update. For situations where training begins before April 20, applications can be assessed with the [Reasonability Checklist](#). After April 20, the application will need to be approved in the system. This includes updating the training start and end dates as well as completing the Reasonability Checklist in EOIS-CaMS.

15. When does an application need to be approved in EOIS-CaMS in order for the 2017-18 contribution rules to be applied?

All applications received by March 31, 2018 must be assessed against the 2017-18 guidelines and must be approved in the system by April 20, 2018. If the application has not been approved by April 20, the system will reject the application. In this situation the employer will need to resubmit the online application using the new contribution rules.

16. A training application was approved and entered into the system during the 2017-18 fiscal year, but the training does not start until after April 2018. What contribution rates will be used?

An agreement's contribution rates are based on the fiscal year that the application was approved and activated in EOIS-CaMS. It is not based on the year the training occurs. In this situation the contribution rates would follow the 2017-18 guidelines.

17. I received an application before March 31st but was unable to activate the service plans before April 20th. Can I retroactively make the contribution amounts the 2017-18 requirements?

No. The application cannot be retroactively approved in the system after April 20 to follow the 2017-18 contribution rules. A new application will need to be completed and submitted using the 2018-19 application form. If the application was submitted before March 31, 2018 and approved in the system by April 20 2018, then any service plans linked to that approved application will follow the 2017-18 contribution rules throughout the Service Plan lifecycle.

Consortium Stream

18. What is the Consortium Stream?

The Consortium Stream allows a group of employers (more than 2 employers) to pool their resources to support common training objectives and goals. Applications will be submitted to and assessed by ministry staff.

Employers who participate in a consortium will be required to provide the same contribution rates for small and large employers (1/3 for small employers and 1/2 for large employers) who have applied to the Under and Over 25 streams.

19. Why has the government decided to increase the funding available through the Consortium Stream and how does the Consortium Stream benefit employers?

Ministry research has shown that there are positive benefits/outcomes that can come from partnership-based industry-driven “intermediary” approaches to skills development. Specifically, consortium-based training can:

- Reduce barriers to access by providing partnership-focused opportunities for employers who can pool their resources and expertise to better identify training needs;
- Address supply and demand issues related to local labour market and skills training needs;
- Produce training cost efficiencies; and
- Support the ministry’s effort to promote workforce development strategies that help employers secure workers with the skills they need.

In the past, uptake of the COJG Consortium Stream has been limited. The ministry hopes to address this issue by providing administrative funds to intermediaries who coordinate and manage training agreements, which is an incentive that was not previously provided.

20. Who is eligible to be an intermediary under the Consortium Stream?

As per the guidelines, groups of employers are eligible to apply for COJG-funded training through the Consortium Stream through an intermediary organization, who will serve as the “lead” applicant on behalf of the employers.

Examples of organizations that can perform the role of intermediary include:

- Industry Associations
- Sector Councils
- Union Training Hall and Union / Management Partnerships
- Local Employment Planning Councils and Local Boards
- Local Economic Development Organizations
- Public / Private Training Institutions.

21. How much administrative funding will intermediaries receive?

The intermediary organization will be paid 15% of the approved COJG ministry contribution to cover the administrative cost related to the completion of the consortium application.

Most organizations acting as an intermediary for consortium-based COJG applications are eligible for administrative funding equal to 15% of the total grant value. In order to qualify for administrative funding, the intermediary who has facilitated the consortium application must demonstrate that they intend to provide services that both support employers in identifying their training needs and relate to training agreement preparation and administration.

Trainers acting as an intermediary are **not** eligible for 15% administrative funding. This is due to risks associated with real or perceived conflicts of interest (i.e., the intermediary would be acting on behalf of employers to identify and implement skills training, while also setting the cost for that training) and potential overlap between their regular business activities (and the activities of an intermediary).

22. What is the eligibility criteria for employers who wish to apply via the Consortium Stream?

Organizations acting on behalf of a consortium of employers are eligible to apply for Canada-Ontario Job Grant. For the purposes of Canada-Ontario Job Grant, an employer consortium is defined as an organization which has a formal agreement to represent and/or co-ordinate activities benefitting a specific group of two or more employers which will pool their resources to support common training activities and achieve common training objectives and goals.

Each employer within a consortium must meet the employer eligibility requirement in order for the consortium to be considered for grant funding.

One organization must be the lead applicant on behalf of the employers within the consortium. If approved, the intermediary would be the holder of the legal agreement with the ministry and would be accountable for all activities and outcomes.

23. What is the difference between the COJG Consortium and the SkillsAdvance Ontario pilot?

SkillsAdvance Ontario (SAO) is intended to assist jobseekers who are further from the labour market to obtain and subsequently advance in employment. The pilot supports sector-based workforce development by funding partnerships that connect employers with the employment and training services required to recruit and advance workers with the right essential, technical, and employability skills.

SAO is distinct from COJG as it serves jobseekers, in preparing them for placements in sectors with entry-level vacancies and support to succeed in their new occupations.

For the purposes of Canada-Ontario Job Grant, an employer consortium is defined as an organization which has a formal agreement to represent and/or co-ordinate activities benefitting a specific group of two or more employers which will pool their resources to support common training activities and achieve common training objectives and goals.

Pilots

24. What are the two COJG pilots?

As part of the Canada-Ontario Job Grant, in 2015 the ministry launched two Canada-Ontario Job Grant-funded pilot programs, designed to test different ways of working with employers to meet workforce needs.

- The **Canada-Ontario Job Grant: UpSkill pilot** supports new approaches to sector-specific essential and technical skills training to meet employers' needs.
- The **Canada-Ontario Job Grant: Customized Training pilot** supports firm-specific training for employers, where such training does not exist and employers do not have the capacity to develop it on their own.

25. Why are the pilots being discontinued?

The pilots were intended to test alternative models of employer focused skills training, and inform the longer-term delivery of the COJG.

Once pilots have ended, the ministry will assess the results and use findings to inform future improvements to the COJG program.

26. When is the last date to apply to the pilots?

Since launch, the ministry has held two calls for proposals for the Upskill pilot, with the final activities ending in September 2017.

As of March 31, 2018, the ministry will stop accepting applications to the Customized Training pilot program.

27. With the wind-down of the COJG pilots, how will the ministry support employers who have unique workforce development and training needs?

The wind-down of these pilots will not lead to a service gap. Employers will continue to have access to COJG, which provides them with an opportunity to receive support that helps them invest in the training needs of the employees and jobseekers.

In addition, employers can apply for similar funding through the following Employment Ontario programs:

- **Ontario Labour Market Partnership (OLMP):** is a program that provides financial assistance to local communities, sector groups, employee/employer associations, and employers in developing and implementing strategies for addressing and responding to local economic (employment) development, labour force adjustments and human resource planning.
- **SkillsAdvance Ontario (SAO):** is a sector-focused workforce development pilot. It will support partnerships that bring together sector-based employers and employment and training providers, to develop a pool of job-ready, skilled workers that meet their workforce development needs.

SkillsAdvance Ontario supports participating employers through:

- Identifying workforce development needs, specifically entry-level vacancies in low and medium-skill occupations.
 - Determining the employability, essential, and technical skills required for jobseekers to succeed in the jobs for which vacancies are identified.
 - Matching and placing trained, job ready candidates to fill those vacancies.
- **Sector Partnership Planning Grant (SPPG):** is a new grant that will bring together partners—employers, training groups and employment and workforce planning agencies—to develop strategies that align training with the skills needed for their industry or sector to grow and compete in the new economy.

28. How will the results of the pilots inform the future of the COJG program?

Once pilots have ended, the ministry will assess the results and use findings to inform future improvements to the COJG program.