

Employment Ontario

Invitation for Project Ideas

Overview

More than one-fifth of Ontario's workforce is currently underutilized – not working and wanting to work or working significantly reduced hours. Key segments of the labour force and communities are experiencing high unemployment and changing labour market circumstances. The Ontario government is committed to a made-in-Ontario plan for growth, renewal and economic recovery, to restart jobs and development, strengthen communities, and create opportunity for people in every region of the province.

The Ministry recognises the need to be flexible and innovative in responding to the diverse labour market needs of individuals, employers, sectors and communities during this challenging period. The Ministry is welcoming ideas through an open invitation for project ideas, approaches and potential pilots to support recovery. The four strategic pillars focus support to (1) communities, (2) workers and job seekers, (3) businesses and industries and/or (4) digital services.

Description

This Invitation for Project Ideas is a non-competitive, open invitation for project ideas to provide employers, displaced workers and job seekers – particularly those facing multiple barriers and those impacted by the pandemic – with employment and training supports, while more broadly supporting labour and talent needs in communities to help fuel economic recovery.

Projects to be considered for funding will target support to (1) communities, (2) workers and job seekers, (3) businesses and industries and/or (4) digital services.

The Invitation for Project Ideas will also:

- Generate interest within communities, Employment Ontario service providers, and employer groups to seek ideas to align with identified priorities and objectives
- Provide flexibility for inclusive and community-based proposals that may demonstrate significant need but may be challenged by a formal competitive process (for example, Indigenous communities, small businesses, women's organizations, youth-based organizations)

- Improve demand and uptake of existing employment and training programs through better promotion and broader reach
- Use existing operational processes and infrastructure to allow for rapid deployment and implementation (i.e. reporting and accountability mechanisms already in place).

Proposed project ideas will be assessed by the ministry. Local ministry offices will work with proponents and stakeholders to refine and align proposals with existing Employment Ontario programs and operational processes.

Eligibility Requirements

The Invitation is open to non-profit organizations, employers, industry/business associations, economic development organizations and municipalities based in or that have operational presence in Ontario.

Priority Themes for Project Ideas

The Invitation will give preference to project ideas aligned with the following strategic priorities or themes:

1. Support Communities

The goal of this theme is to encourage and support local communities, groups and employers to work together to address local labour market issues and gaps.

Projects under this theme could aim to:

- Help communities to anticipate and manage the labour market changes affecting them
- Help industries and sectors to stay competitive
- Promote the creation of broad industry/community partnerships necessary to address labour market issues
- Assist local communities with the development of innovative strategies to prepare for new future-focused skills requirements and prevent skills shortages within new and emerging industries and organizations.

2. Support Workers and Job Seekers

The goal of this theme is to help unemployed, laid-off and existing workers learn new, in-demand skills that help them quickly rejoin the workforce, or maintain employment and support those more distant from the labour market to gain the skills and experience to enhance their employability.

Projects under this theme could aim to:

- Help the unemployed or employees being laid-off deal with the impacts of losing their jobs and help them review their options and plan their next steps
- Give unemployed individuals work experience through participation in projects that are incremental to an employer's regular business and which create a community benefit
- Provide the skills necessary so that unemployed individuals can obtain employment and employed individuals can maintain employment/advance in their careers
- Support workforce development in specific sectors / clusters 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
- Support workers who experience barriers in the labour market (including unemployed jobseekers and workers who experience barriers to job retention or advancement), to obtain, retain and advance in employment by providing them with sector-specific employment and training services, connecting them to employers with identified job vacancies, or to advancement opportunities if already employed
- Support workforce development of specialized populations including but not limited to Persons with Disabilities (PWDs), Indigenous people, recent immigrants, older workers, at-risk-youth and the long-term unemployed.

3. Support Business and Essential Industries

The goal of this theme is to support businesses, key sectors and industries to address labour market challenges and create a strong, resilient and adaptable workforce with the skills needed to succeed in Ontario's economy

Projects under this theme could aim to:

- Support workforce development in specific sectors/clusters 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
- Support workers who experience barriers in the labour market (including unemployed jobseekers and workers who experience barriers to job retention or advancement), to obtain, retain and advance in employment by providing them with sector-specific employment and training services, connecting them to employers with identified job vacancies, or to advancement opportunities if already employed

- Support workforce development needs through greater employer involvement in training
- Plan for effective utilization of local human resources
- Develop and promote labour market intelligence and its use in labour market development
- Support the development and implementation of innovative workforce development projects that test new and emerging ideas and approaches to labour market challenges. It supports collaboration across the workforce development system to jointly develop and deliver demand-focused solutions that support better employment and employability outcomes for all individuals
- Provide underutilized and underemployed workers, workers at risk of job loss, and unemployed individuals with high-quality, short-duration training and prepare them for longevity while providing employers with highly skilled and agile workers.

4. Support Digital Services for Unemployed Individuals or Laid-Off Workers

The goal of this theme is to broaden and enhance access to self-serve employment services through innovative digital solutions that help unemployed individuals and laid off workers quickly find opportunities to re-enter the workforce.

Projects under this theme could aim to:

- Introduce new functionality to an existing digital employment service tool to better serve clients
- Increase access and visibility to an existing digital employment service tool to serve more clients
- Expand access to existing innovative self-serve digital tools province-wide, including solutions for regions with limited broadband
- Provide digital solutions with job search and career exploration content curated to highly impacted sectors, workers and regions.

Project Idea Guiding Principles

Aside from alignment with one or more project themes, project ideas must be developed with the following planning principles and objectives in mind:

- Addresses a defined labour market issue
- Goal setting and approach is supported by credible data and evidence
- Outcome and results-oriented
- Duration and scope is defined and finite
- Provides good value-for-money

- Describes an effective delivery approach
- Inclusive of populations facing multiple barriers and supports individuals disproportionately impacted by labour market changes (e.g., the pandemic)
- Flexible and adaptable to changing and evolving employment needs
- Sensitive to timelines, given current labour market challenges
- Rapid, comprehensive and responsive to local needs and targets sectors/ industries
- Locally-driven, community-led
- Promotes strong partnerships

Funding Amount

The ministry will work with applicants to co-develop the project idea and as a result may negotiate the funding amount to maximize outcomes and value for money. Applicants may obtain project funding from other sources, if needed.

Note: The following are **not** eligible for funding:

- Major capital expenditures
- Community development projects without partner contribution
- Overhead, regular operations or working capital costs of organization or partner organizations
- Internal training costs such as:
 - Executive, senior management training or conferences
 - Business consulting services;
 - Indirect costs not directly related to training

Project Duration

Proposed projects should have a maximum duration of 12 months.

Deadline

Applications are accepted on an on-going basis.

How to submit applications

Please follow the link to complete the online [Project Idea Submission Form](#) to submit your project idea.

Note that submissions through the form do not have to be fully formed ideas and are not considered formal or final project proposals that will be assessed as is. Local ministry offices will connect with proponents to further develop and refine project ideas.