

April 12, 2017

Dear Employment Ontario partners,

As you may know, in late 2015 the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development (MAESD) hired an independent consulting firm, Cathexis Consulting Inc., to undertake an evaluation of the Literacy and Basic Skills program (LBS). Since 2012, MAESD has introduced a number of significant changes to LBS, in particular: the implementation of the Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework (OALCF) and the LBS performance management framework, as well as further development of the distance learning component. The evaluation sought to understand the impact of these changes on the delivery of LBS and on participant outcomes.

The evaluation included wide-ranging data collection, analysis, and consultations. Over 1,500 learners and more than 250 service providers, as well as ministry staff, support organizations and community partners were involved in the evaluation, through surveys, focus groups or consultation.

The final evaluation report is now posted on the [Employment Ontario Partners' Gateway](#), along with a memo from Deputy Minister Sheldon Levy.

The views and recommendations provided by the external evaluator provide valuable information and context for the ministry and LBS network to consider as we collectively undertake continuous improvement of the LBS program.

The resulting evaluation report includes numerous, wide-ranging recommendations across the whole scope of the program, including:

Clarifying the Purpose and Objectives of the LBS Program

As part of Ontario's continuing efforts to modernize and transform employment and training programs and ensure Ontarians can access programs that best meet their needs, the ministry is committed to improving the LBS program.

Ensuring the Design and Management of the LBS Program Supports All Learners and All Service Providers

The report found that not all tools (e.g., OALCF assessment tools and performance management tools) are available and/or appropriate for all learners and/or service providers.

The ministry agrees that all of our tools should be available for, and appropriate to, all of our learners and that it is important to capture incremental progress for the broad spectrum of learners who participate in LBS.

Establishing a Funding Model

The report recommends that the ministry develop a rational and effective funding model, that ensures sustainable funding, and we agree. The development of a funding model for LBS is a priority for the ministry.

Improving Program Communications and Support

The report makes a number of recommendations around the importance of creating open, timely, and effective lines of communication between the ministry and the field, in order to ensure the effective delivery of the LBS program.

The ministry is committed to building and nurturing open and collaborative relationships, and agrees that this work is critical to ensuring the ongoing success of Employment Ontario programs and services.

Streamlining Administrative Requirements

The report indicates that many service providers struggle to navigate the large number of documents and contract management requirements related to the LBS program.

We recognize the time and hard work of our service provider network, and moving forward, the ministry is committed to working with service providers to explore solutions that will improve and streamline the communication of expectations, reporting requirements, and changes to program guidelines.

Next Steps:

The ministry is committed to evidence-based decision-making, and the results of the evaluation will inform our continuing efforts to improve the LBS program.

We will be reaching out shortly with details of our plans to engage with key stakeholders to help us prioritize the next phase of activity.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the LBS network for their continued collaboration and support throughout this evaluation process. This and other initiatives, including improvements to funding and client target allocations as part of 2017-18 business planning, are part of the ministry's ongoing efforts to improve our Employment Ontario programs and services to ensure Ontarians can get the skills and training they need to succeed.

If you have any questions, please contact your local MAESD office.

Sincerely,

(Original signed by)

Shelley Unterlander
Assistant Deputy Minister (Acting)
Employment and Training Division

(Original signed by)

Erin McGinn
Assistant Deputy Minister
Highly Skilled Workforce Division

(Original signed by)

Glenn Craney
Assistant Deputy Minister
Strategic Policy and Programs Division