Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development

Ontario Bridge Training Program (OBTP)
2021 Request for Applications (RFA) 2021

Applicant Questions and Answers – March 19, 2021

Reference Materials

Information on the current Ontario Bridge Training Program (OBTP) Request for Applications (RFA), may be found on the Employment Ontario Partners' Gateway.

- Please review the RFA Guidelines to become familiar with Ontario Bridge Training Program (OBTP) requirements.
- For additional information, applicants should also review materials from the Webinar hosted by the ministry of February 11, 2021 including:
  - Webinar PowerPoint Presentation
  - Webinar Questions and Answers
  - Webinar recording (English only)
    - Part 1
    - Part 2

Application Submission Questions

Applicant Eligibility

Q1. Are registered Ontario Private Career Colleges eligible to respond to this Request for Applications?

Yes. For detailed information on applicant eligibility please review the RFA Guidelines, Section 4.3.

Q2. Please clarify if faith-based not-for-profits can apply under the not-for-profit category.

Any organization that fulfils these eligibility criteria can apply. For detailed information on applicant eligibility please review the RFA Guidelines, Section 4.3.

Participant Eligibility

Q3. Are visitors to Ontario eligible to participate in the Ontario Bridge Training Program?

No. Please see the RFA Guidelines, Section 3.1.2, Participant Eligibility, for a comprehensive description of eligibility and ineligibility for participation in the OBTP.

Q4. Do OBTP participants need to be a resident of Ontario? Do they have to be a resident of Ontario to apply to the program?

Yes, the OBTP participants must be residents of Ontario. Please refer to the RFA Guidelines, Section 3.1.2 for the eligibility criteria.

Q5. Are individuals who have completed post-secondary education in Canada eligible for the OBTP?

No. Please see the RFA Guidelines, Section 3.1.2, Participant Eligibility, for a comprehensive description of Eligibility and Ineligibility for participation in the OBTP.

Q6. Are international students eligible for the OBTP?

No. Please see the RFA Guidelines, Section 3.1.2, Participant Eligibility for a comprehensive description of eligibility and ineligibility for participation in the OBTP.

Q7. Do internationally trained immigrants have to have post-secondary education to qualify for the OBTP?

Yes. Please see the RFA Guidelines, Section 3.1.2, Participant Eligibility for educational requirements to qualify for the OBTP.

Q8. Do internationally trained immigrants with a skill such as welding, but with no post-secondary education, qualify for the OBTP?

An internationally trained immigrant who has come to Canada as a skilled journeyperson (i.e. someone who has successfully completed an official skilled trade qualification) is considered to have post-secondary education, and would therefore qualify to participate in an OBTP project designed to serve the trade in question.

Q9. Is there a limit to post-secondary education received in Canada to be eligible? For example, if an applicant completed a course or two at a university in Canada and remains unemployed and in need of training, is the applicant eligible?

An applicant who has had post-secondary education in Canada, in the field in which they were trained or in a related field, is not eligible for the OBTP. However, organizations in receipt of OBTP funding will be expected to refer the applicant described above to appropriate Employment Ontario services and record that referral in the OBTP case management system currently under development.

Q10. Our program participants will attend a preparatory program and then upon successful completion, will join the third year of a professional degree program as advanced standing students. Part of the program involves two clerkship rotations which can take place in any province. Would this be a problem for the bridging/advanced standing students?

The proposed program describes a participant pathway that leads to the completion of a degree, inclusive of co-ops. Degree-granting programs are not eligible for OBTP funding. All program participants must be residents of Ontario and all program components will be delivered in Ontario.

Positive outcomes for OBTP participants are licensure/registration (for regulated occupations) and/or commensurate employment in a timely manner, without repeating previously gained education and professional experience outside Canada.

Please refer to the RFA Guidelines, Section 3.

Q11. Our program is a second entry program, we often have candidates who have completed some post-secondary education in Canada (often have completed an undergraduate degree) but have completed their professional education abroad. Would these people be ineligible?

Second entry programs are usually degree-granting programs and are therefore not eligible for OBTP funding.

Additionally, individuals who have Canadian post-secondary education - related to their field – are not eligible to participate in OBTP projects.

Q12. Some regulators consider post-graduate degrees from Canadian institutions as counting towards some of the work experience that is necessary to meet licensure requirements. Furthermore, some technical aspects of the requirements for licensure can be completed through post-secondary institutions. Many of our past participants have taken required courses for licensure at post-secondary institutions prior to enrolling in our program. Will the OBTP allow individuals in these circumstances to participate in bridging programs?

This question describes program participants who have gained technical components and work experience required for licensure in Canadian institutions. That would make them ineligible to participate in an OBTP project.

Additionally, organizations applying to the current OBTP RFA are required to offer all client- facing components to candidates, including technical, academic and/or experiential components.

Please review the RFA Guidelines, with special attention to Program Components and Participant Eligibility (3.1.2).

Q13. Do Francophone and Bilingual OBTP project participants need to have a Canadian Language Benchmark Level 7 (CLB7) to qualify for admission into a bridge training program?

Yes, participants need to have a CLB7 to qualify for admission into an OBTP project.

Projects serving highly skilled Francophone internationally trained immigrants must provide occupation-specific English language training, in partnership with appropriate language training providers, to increase participants' English and, if necessary, demonstrate/certify French language proficiency to the level required for bilingual employment.

Q14. In the past, the length of time in Canada was a criterion for eligibility. Has this changed?

Length of time in Canada is not a criterion for eligibility. However, it is important for stakeholders to understand that professionals who have been out of practice for some time (length of time to be determined by regulatory bodies or educational institutions) may not be likely to be able to demonstrate currency of practice and would not be eligible for admission into an OBTP on that basis.

Q15. Why are provincial nominees under the Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program (OINP) not eligible for OBTP? We feel that OINP nominees can also benefit from the program.

Provincial nominees under the OINP are not eligible for the OBTP as they may have Canadian post-secondary degrees, Canadian work experience, and are expected to be employment ready. Provincial nominees may have job offers and have been nominated by the province. The OBTP is designed for a different client group than the OINP nominees.

You can review the criteria for OBTP eligibility Section 3.1.2 of the RFA Guidelines and for the OINP on the [Government of Ontario web site.]

Partnerships

Q16. Is a partnership organization defined solely as one that receives funding through our application?

As stated in the RFA Guideline glossary of terms, partner organizations have a formal role in the development and implementation of the proposed project. A partner organization is directly involved in the delivery of a project component such as academic/skills training, language assessment or employment services, or provides ongoing program advice/direction through governance structures such as an Advisory Committee.

Please review Section 4.5 of the RFA Guidelines carefully for comprehensive information regarding partnerships.

Q17. Are partnership letters required from stakeholders we may collaborate with, (I.e. settlement agencies, professional associations, regulatory bodies, employers) or only from formal partners only who are receiving a portion of our funding?

Partnership letters are required only from partner organizations that have a formal role in the development and implementation of the proposed project. Letters from stakeholders with whom the organization may collaborate are not required.

Please review Section 4.5 and the Glossary of Terms in the RFA Guidelines for comprehensive information and definition regarding partnerships.

Priority Projects

Q18. Can the ministry provide a full list of occupations (along with their NOC codes) that are deemed to be a priority?

Applicants to the OBTP RFA are welcome to propose projects to serve occupations that they think, based on labour market research, will support the pandemic recovery. Proposals must meet the criteria identified in the RFA Guidelines to qualify for the consideration of funding.

Q19. Can other occupations (other than NOC 3, 217, 228) be considered to have a direct contribution towards addressing the pandemic?

Applicants to the OBTP RFA are welcome to propose projects to serve occupations that they think, based on labour market research, will support the pandemic recovery. Proposals must meet the criteria identified in the RFA Guidelines to qualify for the consideration of funding.

Q20. How is a direct contribution towards addressing the pandemic defined?

The applicant will be required to show labour market research that demonstrates the contribution the occupation in question will make in addressing the pandemic.

Budget

Q21. Are there fixed budget ranges for non-regulated vs regulated occupations?

The ministry does not set proposal budget ranges. Applicants are expected to submit budgets that are based on the requirements of the project they are proposing to develop, implement, and evaluate. Applicants are also expected to develop a budget according to the instructions provided with the RFA budget template.

Q22. The Category A Budget Template requires us to provide the number of cohorts per year. As a continuous entry program, how should we handle the questions regarding cohorts on the budget template?

In this case, the cohort size is one (1). Applicants are expected to estimate the number of participants they will target to serve and use that number to project their budget requirements.

It is important to show how the cohorts progress throughout the agreement, and that all cohorts are completed by the end of the agreement. If participants are continually entering and exiting the program, an assessment of the expected demand will need to be completed and entered into the cohort section.

Please note that there is an option to choose continuous intake on the program summary page of the application.

Q23. Are we required to add each staff position individually into the budget template (i.e. add rows to the template)?

No, a full breakdown of each staff member is not required, however the source of the calculation should be included in the “Comments” column. The level of detail in the comment section should support the calculation, including Full Time Equivalents (FTEs) and average expected salary plus benefits.

For example, “Instructional Staff,” per quarter = 18,750. Comment: 4 part time instructors with a total salary and benefits of $75,000 per year.

Q24. Are we permitted to change or remove rows that are not relevant to our project?

No. If a row does not apply to your proposal it can be left blank or zero entered.

Q25. What is the total funding for OBTP projects under this request for applications (RFA)?

The total funding envelope for the OBTP under this RFA is $23.2 million per fiscal year.

Tuition Fees

Q26. What is the minimum tuition amount that can be charged to participants enrolled in technical training provided by an academic partner?

The ministry does not set tuition amounts. An applicant is expected to determine appropriate tuition for technical or academic training. Tuition fees charged to OBTP participants must be in line with general tuition rates (domestic student) charged for similar programs offered by publicly funded post-secondary educational institutions.

Q27. Tuition fees collected from participants must be applied in full towards program costs related to the delivery of the bridge training project. Can you provide an example and a full definition of what is included in program costs related to delivery?

All program expense categories are reflected in the budget template. If you do not see your expense reflected in the existing categories, please use the ‘other’ row to specify.

Q28. Do program costs include educational institutions' overhead or just costs in the program ministry budget.

The budget template includes a section to specify allocated and overhead costs, in addition to direct program costs. Any overhead allocated to the proposed project should be captured in the project budget template. In some cases, an institution does not break out an overhead allocation into components. In this case, the aggregate amount can be entered under "Other" and the "Comment" column should indicate what is covered by the allocated cost.

Q29. In educational institutions where tuition fees received by faculties are based on a set formula, (i.e. tuition fees also include other fees such as student services, supplementary fees, auxiliary fees, etc.), is the amount received by the faculties for the fees accepted as total fee costs transferred to the program?

If some funds are diverted from tuition for central expenses, the revenues recorded should be net of those expenses, provided that the expenses are not also entered elsewhere in the budget template. In other words, if the institution retains some of the tuition for central services and does not charge these services to individual programs, neither the expenses nor the revenues associated with this should be entered.

If the costs of these services are included under allocated overhead costs (ie. an allocation for student registration is entered), then the gross amounts should be included. Each institution will have different policies, so the revenues and expenses should be recorded on a consistent basis with explanations where needed.

Program Delivery Questions

Program Components

Q30. Do the programs being delivered have to train the internationally trained immigrants for same discipline/designation as they held in their former countries?

Yes. The goal of OBTP is to provide highly skilled internationally trained immigrants with the supports and services they need to achieve licensure and/or obtain commensurate employment in their respective field of training/expertise or in a related field in a timely manner.

Q31. If the applicant cannot deliver a component is it permissible to partner with another organization for the delivery of that component?

Yes. An applicant must demonstrate a plan to offer all program components. If the applicant cannot deliver a specific component, the applicant can partner with another organization that has the expertise to deliver that component.

Q32. What is the time period for the length of a program and how many clients do we need to serve?

The maximum duration for both Category A – Service Delivery and Category B – Changing the System projects is three (3) years.

The ministry does not set the number of clients that should be served. The applicant must determine how many clients the organization can serve, as well as the length of time it will take to meet client needs. All services to clients must end by the expiration date of the agreement with the ministry.

Mentoring

Q33. Under this RFA, can we apply to continue to provide occupation specific mentoring for multiple occupations under a single application?

Category A - Service Delivery projects have ten (10) components – three (3) non-service components and seven (7) participant-facing service components. It is expected that all Category A - Service Delivery projects be prepared to offer all client-facing components, either directly or through partnerships with appropriate organizations. Mentorship is one among many services that all service providers must offer to program participants.

While service providers must offer all seven participant-facing service components, it is expected that they will develop individual participant service plans that are customized to include the service components that address the participants’ needs and goals.

The current RFA does not have a category for renewal bridge training projects. Please refer to the RFA Guidelines for detailed descriptions of Category A – Service Delivery and Category B – Systems Change projects.

Please see the RFA Guidelines, Section 3.1.1.2 for a description of client facing program components.

Financial Supports for Participants

Q34. Are financial supports going to be administered to successful applicants after the selection process, or are applicants required to include these costs in their proposed program budget?

Applicants will be required to input proposed financial supports for participants into the budget template for Category A – Service Delivery projects.

Q35. Are financial supports for participants only to be distributed after assessment and acceptance to the program, or are supports relating to credential assessment and document translation meant to be provided to applicants during the intake process as well?

Participant financial supports address temporary financial barriers to participation in the project from intake to completion of job placement. Participants should be admitted to the program before financial supports can be paid.

Q36. Does distribution of financial supports have a required administrative process?

Service providers who administer financial supports must:

- Have policies in place to support the allocation and documentation of financial supports.
- Maintain supporting documentation for all training support disbursements, including learners' applications for financial support, attendance records, original receipts, type of expense, and amounts paid out.
- Meet Revenue Canada requirements regarding taxable benefits.
- Report on the number of participants who received financial support and the total amount expended.

Q37. Does allocation of financial supports require a full financial assessment or can these funds be allocated based on participant financial self-reporting.

Financial supports are available to participants whose household income falls within the Low Income “Market Basket Measure Thresholds by MBM Region”.

This threshold information is maintained by the federal government, at the Statistics Canada Website.

Participant supports address temporary financial barriers to participation in the project (from intake to completion of job placement):

- Transportation
- Emergency or occasional / infrequent dependent care
- Academic credential assessment
- Translation of international academic documents

The maximum funding allocation for financial supports per participant is $1,000 for every 12 months of a bridge training program in which they are registered. If a bridge training program is fewer than 12 months long, the amount will be pro-rated.

Not all participants will require financial supports.

Participants should not receive financial supports if they are eligible to receive similar supports through other programs. It is expected that service providers will be familiar with supports available to their participants through social assistance, other Government of Ontario ministries such as the Ministry of Health, and other entities.

Q38. Are there any limitations about which types of transportation costs can be covered by financial supports, i.e. metro passes, presto cards, mileage for cars, etc.?

There are no limitations on the types of transportation cost that can be supported. However, these costs must be directly linked to participation in the program and costed accordingly.

Q39. Can you explain what is included in the emergency or occasional/ infrequent dependent care category of financial supports and what will be required to be provided to distribute these funds to participants?

Some examples of emergency or occasional/infrequent dependent care are the need for a personal support worker for a dependent with disability or an elderly dependent, and childcare arrangements. Financial supports for dependent care must support participation for low-income participants in the OBTP program e.g. in order to attend an interview, a participant has an emergency/temporary need for dependent care.

Service providers must have policies in place to support the allocation and documentation of financial supports.

Q40. Can the full cost of these financial supports be allocated to the student in one payment or does each cost require a tracked and receipted process?

OBTP service providers who administer financial supports must have policies in place to support the allocation and documentation of financial supports. Given that financial supports are intended to address temporary financial barriers to participating in the project, it is not expected that the full cost of supports will be allocated in one payment.

Please review Section 3.1.3.2 of the RFA Guidelines for details on how financial supports should be used.

Q41. How and when will OBPAP be distributed in future?

OBPAP program management plans for the OBTP projects beginning October 1, 2021 are under development and will be negotiated with successful OBTP stakeholders during the period of contract negotiations.

Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR)

Q42. Does the ministry have a definition of what they expect to be included in a PLAR process?

The ministry does not have a definition of what a PLAR process must include. It is the applicant's responsibility to define and implement a PLAR process that will enable the applicant to then develop an action plan to meet participant needs without repeating previously gained education and experience in as rapid a time as possible.

Q43. If it is discovered through the PLAR that a participant has already been through pre-employment training, does this mean he/she could be exempt from this pre-employment training in our bridging program?

Category A - Service Delivery projects have ten (10) components – three (3) non-service components and seven (7) participant-facing service components. It is expected that all Category A - Service Delivery projects be prepared to offer all client-facing components, either directly or through partnerships with appropriate organizations.

While service providers must offer all seven participant-facing service components, it is expected that they will develop individual participant service plans that are customized to include the service components that address the participants' needs and goals.

Q44. Does PLAR need to be done for all participants, or only for those who are unable to provide official credentials due to valid reasons, for example refugees, or where transcripts not available from home country?

Service providers must ensure that their recruitment activities are occupation focused. At a minimum, recruitment, orientation and service planning activities must include Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition.

Program Evaluation

Q45. Is there a need to evaluate OBTP projects on a timely basis? For example, annually?

Yes, the ministry does require the evaluation of OBTP projects. Successful applicants for funding must contract with an external, third party evaluator to evaluate their OBTP project at the end of the transfer payment agreement (TPA). Typically, that will be at the end of the three-year program. It may be wise to choose a third-party evaluator close to the beginning of the TPA in order that the evaluator has the opportunity to conduct ongoing assessment and evaluation during the life of the program and provide useful feedback to the service provider.

Q46. Are there any evaluation frameworks that the OBTP recognizes, for example the Social Return on Investment (SROI) frameworks?

No. It is expected that the applicant is in the best position to determine the nature of evaluation, in collaboration with the potential third party evaluation consultant. It may also be wise for the successful applicant to discuss evaluation plans with the ministry's Employment Training Consultant (ETC) at the time of contract (TPA) negotiations.

Q47. How is the cost of evaluation supposed to be covered? For example, will it be included in the funding as well?

Projected costs for third party program evaluation should be included in the budget template prepared by the OBTP applicant.

Performance Measures

Q48. Customer Service performance indicators (customer satisfaction and whether participants would recommend the services) are to be measured at program exit. Please clarify whether "program exit" is upon completing technical training and workshops, or further on after obtaining a job when the service is completed.

Both indicators are measured at program exit, i.e., upon completion of all service components of a participant's OBTP service plan. Participants are asked to indicate, on a scale of 1 to 5, how likely they are to recommend the OBTP to someone looking for similar services; and how satisfied they are with the services received.

Participants are also to be followed at 3, 6 and 12 months after exiting OBTP until the Service Provider receives a positive result, i.e., licensure and/or commensurate employment in their field or related field.

Q49. Can you provide specific information regarding the specific data fields that successful applicants will be required to track and report on over the course of the project?

The EO Cas Management System will be customized to meet OBTP requirements and is under development. It will become available to successful applicants during TPA negotiations.

Q50. Would it be possible to obtain a copy of the Transfer Payment Agreement as it will assist significantly in helping to determine the type and level of financial, administrative and project management services required to support the project.

The new Transfer Payment Agreement (TPA) that successful proponents will enter with the ministry is currently under development and will become available at the time of contract negotiations.

Transfer Payment Ontario Contact Information

Q51. How do we submit our application on TPON?

For technical support related to submitting your application on TPON, please contact the TPON Client Care at Service Ontario:

- Tel: 416-325-6691
- Toll-free: 1-855-216-3090
- TTY: 416-325-3408
- Toll-free TTY: 1-800-268-7095
- Email: TPONCC@ontario.ca