

Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development
Ontario Bridge Training Program (OBTP)
2021 Request for Applications (RFA)

Questions and Answers from the February 11, 2021 Stakeholder Webinar

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Submission of Applications

Q1. When are applications due?

The deadline to submit applications is **April 30, 2021 – 5:00 pm EST.**

Q2. What if my application is submitted after the deadline?

The Transfer Payments Ontario (TPON) system will not accept applications after the stated deadline.

Q3. Where can I find the application documents online?

The Application Guide and all Supplementary Attachments can be found on the [Transfer Payments Ontario \(TPON\) website](#). Other RFA resources may be found on the [Employment Ontario Partners' Gateway \(EOPG\)](#).

Q4. How do I submit my application?

Applications are to be submitted through TPON. Applicants must create an account on the TPON system to access the documents and apply. Documents not submitted through TPON will not be considered.

Q5. Can one organization that has a range of offerings submit more than one project application?

Yes. organizations with a range of offerings can submit an application for each project they are seeking to offer.

Q6. Can we schedule a phone call with a ministry consultant if we have specific questions about our program model for the purpose of consulting and getting feedback during the application writing process?

Applicants may submit questions regarding the OBTP via email to bridgetraining@ontario.ca between February 16 and March 5, 2021. The ministry will answer all questions and post an answers document on March 22nd, 2021 in response to all questions submitted.

Additionally, the ministry hosted a webinar on February 11th, 2021. Information that was shared at the webinar can be found on the [EOPG](#).

Q7. Can the two project categories be covered under one application?

Applicants must submit one application per project. If you wish to apply for more than one project you must submit a separate application for each project. One application submission cannot cover more than one project proposal.

Applicant Eligibility

Q8. Can post-secondary institutions apply as the lead applicant?

Yes, eligible post-secondary institutions can apply as the lead applicant.

Q9. What type of training can post-secondary institutions provide?

Post-secondary institutions can provide the range of training and services required of an OBTP project. They might choose to partner with relevant organizations to provide the full suite of required training and services.

Q10. Can Private Career Colleges submit applications?

Private Career Colleges that meet the applicant eligibility requirements for the OBTP can submit applications. Please review Section 4.3 of the RFA [Application Guidelines](#).

Q11. Can organizations that offer two-year certificate programs apply?

OBTP helps highly skilled internationally trained immigrants obtain certification/registration and find a job in their field or in a related field without having to duplicate their previous education and training. A key objective of OBTP is that candidates achieve licensure/registration and/or employment in a timely manner.

All OBTP projects that serve the needs of highly skilled immigrants to gain commensurate employment (including licensure/registration) must provide occupation-specific technical or academic training, essential skills training and employment services.

Please review the RFA [Application Guidelines](#), paying special attention to information on participant-facing service components (Section 3.1.1.2), participant eligibility (Section 3.1.2), and applicant eligibility (Section 4.3). OBTP projects are required to provide an identified suite of programming and services.

All application submissions that are eligible for funding, and that are recommended for funding, must be approved by the ministry.

Q12. We are a smaller regulated health profession. Would this impact on qualifying?

The size of an applicant organization would not impact on qualifying for funding providing that all eligibility requirements are met. Please see Section 4.3 of the RFA [Application Guidelines](#) for eligibility requirements.

Q13. Will applications be approved for institutions with only domestic experience?

All institutions that meet the eligibility criteria will be able to apply under the ministry's RFA. Please review Section 4.3 of the RFA [Application Guidelines](#) for further direction.

Approvals

Q14. When will we hear about the approval of the applications?

It is estimated that applicants will be notified about the approval of applications Summer 2021.

Q15. Will there be any consideration given to distribution of projects geographically across the province and/or by sector/occupation, or is the awarding of contracts solely based on the final ranking?

The awarding of contracts will be based on the final ranking of applications with consideration for meeting the registration and employment needs of highly skilled immigrants across the province. Applicants will be expected to demonstrate a labour market need in the occupation/sector they are proposing. In that way, occupations/sectors in all geographical areas will be taken into account in the evaluation of proposals. Please see the RFA [Application Guidelines](#) for further information on priority projects (Section 2.1) and final assessment and scoring (Section 5.2).

Q16. Is this a competitive process? Is there a maximum of programs/projects that will be approved? Or a maximum budget?

The RFA is a competitive process. There is no maximum for the number of projects that will be approved. Nor is there a maximum budget per project. The ministry will fund as

many successful Category A and B applications as it can without exceeding its funding allocation for the program.

Renewal of Current Programs

Q17. What is the MLTSD position on applications for funding renewal if the existing program is adapted for pandemic response?

The current RFA does not include a separate application for renewal projects. Current providers are advised to review the RFA [Application Guidelines](#) to determine opportunities for submitting an application for priority projects (Section 2.1).

Q18. Will the request for applications differentiate between new and renewal projects as in the past?

The current RFA does not include a separate application for renewal projects.

Project Duration

Q19. What is the project duration, can we submit a one-year, three-year, or five-year project application?

Projects can be up to three years. Duration may vary, depending on the exact occupation and training provided, but agreements will not extend beyond three years.

Q20. How long will the agreement for this initiative be?

The transfer payment agreement (TPA) is typically for a three-year period, but it can be shorter depending on the project.

Program Delivery

Q21. Are all projects required to offer the full spectrum of services - can some components be optional as not all internationally trained immigrants need all the components?

Category A - Service Delivery projects have ten components - three non-service components and seven participant-facing service components. 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.

Q22. We will have clients who are only interested and only want to take a course to prepare for requirements for licensure. Some may already be working in a commensurate job and do not need our employment services. Conversely, we have clients that want to take our employment services and related course and do not want a licence nor take courses to prepare for licensure. So, will clients be able to optionally take certain components in the overall 7 service components or must they apply to take all 7?

Each OBTP project will emphasize certain participant-facing service components based on the occupation's or trade's unique requirements; however, in order to be effective, OBTP projects are expected to have all participant-facing service components available to participants.

Service providers must develop individual participant service plans that include all the participant-facing service components based on participant needs and goals. It is expected that projects organize these service components to best meet their participants' needs and goals.

Q23. Do all projects need to have each of these categories, or are they separate categories?

There are two separate Project Categories: Category A – Service Delivery and Category B – Changing the System. An applicant can submit an application for an OBTP project under one or the other category. If an applicant chooses to apply under both categories, they are to submit two separate applications.

Q24. You said that OBTP will not fund Category B – Changing the System projects that have a local focus. How local, is a "local focus"?

Category B - Changing the System projects aim to achieve systemic and sector-wide impact and outcomes. Such initiatives may include projects that assist groups of employers, occupational regulatory bodies, or post-secondary educational institutions to enhance their capacity to integrate internationally trained immigrants effectively and in a fair and transparent manner. As such, they cannot be limited to a specific region or city. Stakeholders wanting to develop locally focused Changing the System projects should explore the [Ontario Labour Market Partnerships Program](#) for funding.

Q25. Are there preferred areas of study? Are there any excluded areas of study?

The OBTP is not organized around preferred or excluded areas of study. The OBTP is organized to offer training and services to highly skilled immigrants so that they find commensurate employment (licensure and registration in the case of the regulated occupations). However, at this time and in response to the pandemic the ministry has indicated that it will place priority on projects that serve occupations having a direct contribution toward addressing the COVID-19 pandemic. Please review the RFA [Application Guidelines](#) (Section 2.1) for further direction.

Q26. Can one project serve multiple sectors?

One project can serve multiple occupations, but it is recommended that a separate application be submitted for each occupation that the applicant wishes to serve. Please read the RFA [Application Guidelines](#) carefully to inform your decision.

Q27. What type of training can we provide?

An OBTP project is expected to provide all client-facing components as described in Section 3.1.1.2 of the RFA [Application Guidelines](#). One of these components is occupation-specific technical and essential skills training. An applicant that is not able to provide all client-facing components could consider partnering with a qualified organization to provide the full suite of training and services.

Q28. Is technical training mandated or optional?

An OBTP project is expected to provide all client-facing components as described in Section 3.1.1.2 of the RFA [Application Guidelines](#), based on client needs. Occupation-specific technical and essential skills training is identified as a client-facing component of client services.

Q29. Do we need to have programs available or can they be in the process of approval? Do the programs offered need to be approved by the ministry?

The current RFA is seeking application submissions for new projects that meet the needs of highly skilled immigrants with post-secondary qualifications (degree or diploma) for employment or registration and employment. The RFA is seeking applications that propose to develop targeted training and wrap-around service components.

RFA submissions for OBTP funding will be approved by the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development (MLTSD).

Q30. How many years will a newcomer be considered as an eligible newcomer for this Bridge Training?

The OBTP is open to internationally trained immigrants who meet the following criteria, regardless of the number of years they have lived in Canada:

- Be at least 18 years old and a resident of Ontario
- Have international postsecondary education (degree, diploma)
- Have international work experience in a high skilled occupation
- Have language proficiency of Canadian Language Benchmark (CLB) Level 7 or higher
- Be one of the following:
 - a refugee claimant with a valid work permit
 - a permanent resident,
 - a Convention refugee, or
 - a naturalized Canadian citizen.

The key consideration is for the internationally trained individuals who need supports and services to obtain certification/licensure and commensurate employment in their respective field of training/expertise or related field in a timely manner.

Q31. Is this also applicable to train Personal Support Workers (PSWs)?

The OBTP is designed to serve highly skilled professionals to gain employment in their field of expertise or related field that is aligned with their education and/or experience. A key requirement for participant eligibility in an OBTP project is that they have a post secondary degree or diploma. While personal support workers deliver critical services to Ontarians, there currently is no requirement for a post-secondary degree or diploma to work in that occupation. For that reason, the PSW occupation is not included in the OBTP.

Q32. Can you please clarify what happens to programs that currently focus on employer engagement which involve long term relationships in building employer capacity to hire immigrants into commensurate employment?

These projects typically would fall under the Category B – Changing the System project category. Funding applications for Changing the System projects are eligible for one-time funding in this category. These projects are expected to achieve sustainability by

the conclusion of the three-year funding period.

Q33. Can agencies subcontract with other providers for some project components? Otherwise, the ministry would be duplicating services that already exist in communities and regions.

Partnerships are encouraged for program components where the applicant cannot provide a certain component, e.g. mentoring services. Please note that the RFA [Application Guidelines](#) encourage the development of appropriate partnerships (Section 4.5). Applicants' ability to build appropriate partnerships to deliver complete service components will be assessed at the time of application. There can only be one lead applicant per project.

Program Funding and Expenditure

Q34. Is there a funding limit per application?

There is not a funding limit per application.

Q35. What is the average or maximum budget for each project?

There is no average or maximum budget for each project. The ministry is seeking projects that can provide value for money and compares budgets that serve projects that are similar in occupations and numbers of clients served

Q36. Will the total funding amount be the same, more, or less than last time?

The overall funding allocation for OBTP has not changed.

Q37. Is the funding going to be for a one-year project or three-year project?

Funding is available for up to three years.

Q38. Is there a notional breakdown of overall funding between service delivery and changing the system programs? What percentage of funding will be for the A and B streams?

There is no notional breakdown of overall funding between service delivery and changing the system programs. There is no pre-determined percentage of funding for the A and B categories.

Q39. Is there a budget template we must use, or do we just design our own budget in excel?

The budget template for each category is included in the Application and must be filled and submitted along with the application.

Q40. Will there be funding guidelines available, such as what will be an allowed expense?

Yes, funding guidelines are provided in the budget instructions provided in the RFA Guidelines, the RFA Application, and on the TPO site.

Q41. What is the suggested amount of tuition?

There is no suggested figure for tuition. Tuition is dependent upon the training program and the training organization.

Q42. Is there a cap on the fees for academic training? Can MLSTD funding be used towards ensuring affordable fees for 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. The ministry expects OBTP projects to pursue alternative funding from other sources (such as employer contributions/sponsorship, grants, etc.) in order to offset program delivery costs.

Wherever possible, OBTP projects should provide participants with access to financial supports to reduce the burden of tuition fees. This includes the Ontario Bridging Participant Assistance Program (OBPA), Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP) and any other financial assistance that may be available to program participants, such as private sector loan programs, other program bursaries or scholarships. Ministry funding cannot be used to offer direct financial transfers to participants to offset tuition costs.

Q43. Can you explain the point made about elimination of fees for training?

Tuition can be charged for academic or technical training. Tuition or fees cannot be charged for employment services.

Q44. Are there opportunities for funding to assist health regulators in their delivery of prior learning assessment examinations, either after completion of OBTP or in replacement of OBTP?

This would be a be a Category B - Changing the System project. Funding applications for systems change projects are eligible for one-time funding in this category.

Financial Support for Participants

Q45. Will the Ontario Bridging Participant Assistance Program (OBPAP) be available?

OBPAP will be available.

Q46. Will the amount of OBPAP granted per program be done for the whole three-year contract or will we be required to apply each year?

OBPAP funding is determined for one fiscal year at a time.

Q47. Is there financial assistance available outside of OBPAP?

Service providers are expected to make information about financial assistance available to potential clients/students. In addition to the OBPAP, financial assistance opportunities might include OSAP and private loan programs (to be researched and determined by service provider).

Ministry funding cannot be provided to participants to offset tuition costs.

Q48. Will financial supports to low income participants be provided in form of credential assessment, transportation, emergency childcare etc. by the project's budget or through separate funds and service?

Financial supports to low income participants will be allocated through the project budget. Applicants must build that estimate into proposed project budgets.

Financial supports are available to participants whose household income falls within the Low Income "Market Basket Measure Thresholds by Region". This threshold information is maintained by the federal government.

The maximum funding allocation for financial supports per participant is \$1,000 for every 12 months of an OBTP project in which they are registered. If an OBTP project is less than 12 months long, the amount will be pro-rated.

Please note that not all participants will require financial supports.

Q49. Technical skills training through colleges and Universities tends to be very expensive, do participants get subsidies/ stipend as part of the funding?

OBTP participants do not get subsidies/stipends as part of OBTP funding. OBTP participants may be eligible for bursaries through OBPAP, OSAP or private loan programs.

Q50. Is it expected that all services are to be provided at no cost to the client?

The ministry encourages service providers to charge tuition fees to participants for academic and technical training and to use this revenue for delivery and continuous improvements to the program. Employment-focused services must be provided to participants free of charge

Transfer Payment Ontario (TPON) Questions

Q51. In large organizations where many departments may apply to the same RFA, is there one TPON account per organization, or can an organization have multiple TPON accounts?

Yes, an organization can have multiple TPON accounts.

Q52. Will a draft application be saved automatically?

Yes, you can click on 'Control-S' at anytime during the application process to save as draft

Q53. Can we review the status of application on TPON?

Yes, you can review the status of application on TPON.

Q54. Is there a limit to the amount of partnership letters we can submit?

There is no limit, however applicants are encouraged to scan multiple partnership letters together as one file for easy uploading.

Q55. Can uploaded applications / forms be deleted if changes have to be made?

Yes, as long as the application has not been officially submitted.

Q56. Is the TPON account for applicant organizations only or can consultants create an account for client applications as well?

The TPON account is for applicant organizations only.

Q57. When will the new forms/templates available through TPON?

The new forms/templates are currently available on the [TPON website](#).