

SkillsAdvance Ontario Pilot

Questions and Answers for Service Providers

GENERAL

1. What is SkillsAdvance Ontario?

SkillsAdvance Ontario (SAO) is a new sector-focused workforce development pilot. It will support 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.

This pilot will also support jobseekers who are further from the labour market to obtain and subsequently advance in employment. The pilot will provide them with sector-specific employment and training services and connect them to employers with identified vacancies in low- and medium-skilled occupations that do not require a postsecondary-level diploma.

2. Why is the government launching another pilot?

Ontario's 2014 Budget described an employment and training system that would offer a variety of modern services and supports, including a series of new skills training programs that are developed in partnership with local employers and tailored to industry needs.

These include sector-specific skills and training that lead to industry-recognized credentials, as well as pre- and post-employment supports for unemployed individuals.

Ontario Budgets 2015 and 2016, and the recent [2016 Ontario Economic Outlook and Fiscal Review](#) reaffirmed the government's interest in employer-driven skills training, and investigating new ways of working with employers to provide flexible, short-term training. The SkillsAdvance Ontario pilot, based on the WorkAdvance model, will allow the government to bring these proposals to life.

3. What is the WorkAdvance model?

The WorkAdvance model was developed by the New York City Center for Economic Opportunity, and first piloted in New York, Ohio, and Oklahoma.

Based on research from the 1980s through the early 2000s, the WorkAdvance model was designed to bring together the benefits of intensive employment services (immediate employment outcomes) with sector-focused skills training (increased earnings and opportunities for advancement).

More information on the original model can be found [here](#).

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4. In which sectors will the ministry be piloting SAO?

This fall, the ministry is piloting sector-focussed projects in the construction, hospitality and general industrial manufacturing sectors.

5. How will this pilot serve employers?

The pilots will support participating employers through:

- Identification of workforce development needs, specifically entry-level vacancies to be filled and the employability, essential, and technical skills required to succeed them; and
- Matching and placing trained, job ready candidates to fill those vacancies.

6. How will this pilot serve jobseekers?

The pilots will help jobseekers obtain employment in participating sectors through:

- Sector-focused pre-employment preparation and skills training (resulting in an industry recognized certificate); and
- Intensive sector-focused employment services that help move participants from training into job and career opportunities.

7. How are the pilots being funded?

The ministry will enter into a transfer payment agreement with a lead organization from each pilot. This lead organization is responsible for managing and distributing operating funds to relevant delivery partners (accountable to the ministry on behalf of the partnership through its funding agreement).

Lead organizations may be existing service providers or other community and economic development organizations.

8. How long will the pilot operate?

The pilot will operate for two years.

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SELECTION APPROACH

9. How did the ministry select the organizations to deliver the pilot?

For the initial launch of the pilot, the ministry is working with several community organizations who have shown interest in piloting similar models, and who have demonstrated employer relationships, in delivering integrated, sector-focused employment and training services.

10. Will other community organizations have opportunity to participate in the future?

At this time, the ministry is supporting a limited number of projects before making any decisions about future sector-focused projects.

11. Will the ministry continue using targeted approach in the future?

The ministry is exploring options to ensure that we are able to respond to Ontario's evolving workforce development opportunities as they emerge. The evaluation of the pilot will help inform how the ministry approaches future project selection.

12. What will the service providers/community organizations do? How will they support the ministry in meeting its objectives?

The service provider/community organization is expected to build and demonstrate credibility with a range of stakeholders, including partner employers and delivery organizations, clients (both employers and jobseekers), industry, and any public or private sector investors.

The service provider/community organization will be accountable to the ministry on behalf of participating employers and delivery partners, and advise the ministry of how it is meeting sector requirements and program objectives, provide oversight to delivery partners in developing and delivering relevant sector-focused services, and provide leadership for ongoing workforce development activities.

Activities such as: refocus employment services and training curriculum to meet the needs of the sector; recruit, screen, and register participants, including orientation; and build sector-specific employability "soft skills" training and essential/technical "hard skills" training.

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IMPACT ON OTHER PROGRAMS AND INITIATIVES

13. How does this pilot differ from Canada-Ontario Job Grant (COJG)?

In contrast to the training-only COJG, the SAO will offer a more comprehensive range of services, including pre- and post-employment services. The pilot is also distinct from COJG in that it serves unemployed Ontarians that are further from the labour market preparing them for placements in sectors with entry-level vacancies, and supporting them to succeed in their new occupations.

These new sector-focused partnerships will also be led by service providers or workforce intermediaries, which could help reduce barriers to employer participation (e.g., administrative burden).

14. Does this pilot intersect with other Employment Ontario programs such as Literacy and Basic Skills and Employment Service?

The SAO brings together several types of services, some of which are available through other Employment Ontario programs, but with a sector-focused lens. For example, similar to Literacy and Basic Skills, the pilot offers essential skills training, but sector-focused and integrated with technical skills training to meet the specific skills requirements identified by employers.

15. What impact would the proposed pilot have on existing Employment Ontario programs?

The pilots will not have any immediate impact on the existing suite of Employment Ontario programs and services. It is intended to test a range of sector-focused services to support low-skilled jobseekers to obtain and advance in employment.

The future evaluation of SAO will provide the ministry with evidence to inform the future continuum of employment and training services available through the Employment Ontario network.

OTHER GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES

16. How will this pilot support the highly skilled workforce strategy?

The report entitled [Building the Workplace of Tomorrow: A Shared Responsibility](#) made recommendation on how the province can build on its world-class skills, education and training system to prepare the workforce to meet the demands of a technology-driven knowledge economy, such as:

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- Experiential learning and mentorship, including in apprenticeship, postsecondary education and for adult learners;
- Skills and competencies; and,
- Strategic investment in human capital.

With its strong focus on skills training and advancement, SAO will help develop Ontario's highly skilled workforce and support the province's highest priority – growing the economy and creating jobs.