

## **Purchasing Gift Cards with Government of Ontario Funding Questions and Answers for Regions**

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This document does not apply to the Performance-based Funding earned by Service System Managers.

### **1. When is the use of gift cards appropriate?**

- a. Gift cards may be used in exceptional circumstances to address specific needs of clients who are facing barriers in reaching their employment goals. An exceptional circumstance includes, but is not limited to, clients that are facing immediate financial hardship and require the urgent purchase of resources. Decisions should always be based on value for money.

### **2. What type of documentation is required when using gift cards?**

- a. Service providers must obtain itemized receipts verifying that gift cards were used to purchase eligible items. All receipts must be retained in the client file.

### **3. What if the cost of an item seems unreasonably high?**

- a. In this case, service providers are encouraged to purchase the item for the client.

### **4. Can gift cards be used to reward clients for attending workshops or to answer surveys?**

- a. No, gift cards may not be used to reward clients for participating in Employment Ontario activities.

### **5. Are gas gift cards allowable?**

- a. Gift cards for gas may be considered as a last resort if public transportation is not available, for example, in rural or remote communities. They should not be purchased in bulk and may not be purchased in denominations greater than \$100. Receipts for gas cards must be retained, and if possible, receipts for the gas purchases should be obtained as well.

**6. What about the use of gift cards for client supports from places such as Staples, Amazon and Mark's Work Warehouse?**

- a. Service providers may use gift cards from these stores in exceptional circumstances and must ensure they obtain receipts verifying that gift cards were used to purchase eligible items. All receipts must be retained in the client file. However, the recommended approach would be for the service provider to purchase supports with their corporate account on behalf of the client.

**7. Can gift cards be purchased in bulk in anticipation of client needs?**

- a. No, gift cards should only be purchased as needed.

**8. What should be done with gift cards that have already been purchased in bulk?**

- a. These gift cards may be used in exceptional circumstances to address the specific needs of clients who are facing barriers in reaching their employment goals. Service providers must obtain receipts verifying that gift cards were used to purchase eligible items. All receipts must be retained in the client file.

**9. What should be done with gift cards that have already been distributed to clients?**

- a. Service providers must obtain receipts verifying that gift cards were used to purchase eligible items. All receipts must be retained in the client file.

**10. What should be done if a receipt cannot be obtained from a client?**

- a. Service providers must attempt to recover the funds for the unverified purchase pursuant to the wrongdoing clauses in their transfer payment agreements.

**11. What if a client makes an ineligible purchase with a gift card?**

- a. Service providers must attempt to recover the funds for the value of the ineligible purchase pursuant to the wrongdoing clauses in their transfer payment agreements.

**12. What if the full value of a gift card has not been used?**

- a. A client with a balance remaining on their gift card must return it to the service provider.

**13. Will the ministry provide service providers with a list of items that are eligible for purchase with a gift card?**

- a. No, service providers should review the Audit and Accountability Requirements (Schedule “H”) of their transfer payment agreements to determine appropriate program-specific use of financial supports.