Ontario ⬤

Ontario Job Creation Partnerships

Sponsor Application Guide

Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development

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1.   Purpose

The purpose of the Ontario Job Creation Partnerships (OJCP) Sponsor Application Guide is to provide instructions and support for employers who wish to apply to the Ministry for funding for an OJCP project.

Employers that wish to apply for funding for a project under OJCP must submit an online OJCP Sponsor Application for Funding, available on the Ontario.ca OJCP web page.

1.1.   Overview

The OJCP program is designed to support projects that create opportunities for eligible participants to gain meaningful work experience. Project activities should benefit both the participant and the community; however, the primary focus must be on the participant, not the sponsor or the community.

1.2.   Objective

The primary objective of OJCP is to give participants the opportunity to develop new skills and gain valuable work experience.

As a result of their involvement in an OJCP project, participants will have recent work experience to add to their resumes. OJCP participants will develop and/or enhance their employability skills through this work experience opportunity. This experience, together with the networking which participants do while on a project, may increase their chances of successfully finding ongoing employment.

2.   Project Criteria

OJCP projects must focus on the following areas:

- Participant(s) must gain meaningful work experience that will increase their chances of finding successfully sustainable employment;
- The project activities must benefit the community or the local economy;
- The project activities must be distinct and not part of the organization's day-to-day operations;
- Activities must be finite in nature, that is they have a defined start and end date.

OJCP cannot be used to:

- Provide or supplement an organization's core funding;

- Replace existing employees or volunteers;
- Replace any employee on lay-off and/or awaiting notice of recall;
- Replace an employee absence, as a result of a labour stoppage or labour-management dispute;
- Duplicate or compete with existing services, or provide an unfair competitive advantage to a sponsor;
- Create a funding dependency.

2.1. Project Duration

Projects must not exceed 52 weeks in duration. Note: The project length must include time for participant recruitment.

2.2. Sponsor Eligibility

The following organizations can apply for funding:

- businesses
- not-for-profit organizations
- municipalities
- Indigenous councils
- public health and educational institutions

2.3. Funding

Successful applicants will receive funding for eligible costs that the applicant cannot raise on their own or through other partnership sources.

The financial assistance will vary depending on the project scope, duration, participant activities, and contributions from the sponsor and other partners.

2.4. Proposed Budget

The applicant must complete a detailed budget of forecasted project costs, including the applicant and partners anticipated financial or in-kind contributions, and the amount of funding requested from the Ministry.

Financial contributions are the direct dollar contributions to the project.

In-kind contributions mean non-monetary resources that applicants and partners, if applicable, provide to support the project. In-kind contributions could be in the form of cash-equivalent goods or services, that, if not donated, would have to be purchased with project funds.

The following are not considered as in-kind contributions / expenditures:

- Donations in the form of goodwill and other such intangibles
- Opportunity costs
- Standard discounts
- Interest charges
- Any items or services not directly related to the project.

Successful applicants are required to maintain documentation of financial and in-kind contributions for audit purposes.

2.5. Eligible Expenditures

Eligible expenditures shall be claimed to the extent that they are reasonable and are within the intent of the project agreement in the opinion of the Ministry. Such expenditures are actual cash outlays that can be documented through invoices or receipts. Evidence of payment must be maintained for audit purposes.

Eligible expenditures are directly related to the development and delivery of the approved project which include but are not limited to the following examples:

- wages and employment-related costs; (for project staff who are not project participants but are employees of the sponsor – which may include experienced supervisory staff)
- licenses
- permits
- professional service fees
- leasing or purchase of equipment
- disbursements for research or technical studies
- travel
- utilities
- rental of premises
- audits, evaluations and assessments
- special needs of persons with disabilities; (accommodations such as a ramp or an ergonomic chair)
- limited costs related to participant orientation. OJCP projects are not intended to provide training, however a minimal level of orientation may be needed so that the participant can participate effectively in the project. Examples of such types of orientation are: first aid, working with hazardous materials or specialized equipment orientation.

- bank interest
- materials
- supplies
- insurance

Note: Eligible costs may also include capital costs. Assistance may be provided for capital costs to the extent that such costs are essential to the achievement of the objectives. For OJCP projects, all assistance provided for capital costs must be on a cost-shared basis.

2.6. Project Activities

Project Activities must:

- be completed during the duration of the project
- be appropriate to the needs and skills of unemployed EI eligible workers
- help develop the community
- be in line with community economic plans

Examples of Allowable Project Activities include, but not limited to:

- a one-time research project
- the development of a database
- a sponsor wanting to manufacture a new product (not for business start-up)
- the sponsor wishes to provide a new, short-term service in the community
- community-based requests for funding of infrastructure (buildings, parks, wharves, etc.) is supportable; however, the primary focus must be on the participants and not local economic development.

Examples of Non-Allowable Project Activities include, but not limited to:

- infrastructure projects based solely on benefiting a sponsor's marketing position or financial worth are not acceptable
- increasing output of currently manufactured products or services or similar research studies conducted yearly
- start-up costs for new organizations are not eligible

3. Project Participants

3.1 Minimum Number of Participants

There are no restrictions regarding the number of participants that can take part in any single OJCP project.

3.2 Participant Eligibility

To be eligible for OJCP, individuals must:

- be a resident of Ontario
- meet the EI Act's definition of an "insured participant", who at the time of requesting assistance:
    - has an active Employment Insurance (EI) claim; or
    - has had an EI benefit period that ended within the previous 5 years; or
    - has paid employee premiums in at least 5 of the previous 10 years (where earnings have been at least $2000 in each of those years).

- be unemployed. Individuals will be considered unemployed if they meet the definition of an Insured Participant and;
    - are working less than an average of 20 hours per week
    - are actively seeking full-time employment

3.3 Participant Funding

Funding for individual participants performing activities under an OJCP project comes from two sources:

- Employment Insurance benefits (EI Part I) for those participants who are active EI claimants.
- OJCP financial support from the province of Ontario.

3.3.1 Top-Up

- Sponsors are encouraged to top up a participant's wages and provide a top-up between the maximum benefit rate and the prevailing wage rate for the work being performed.

- This may be appropriate when the job requirements specify a skillset, work experience or educational credential that demands a higher wage in order to attract the participants to the project.

- In these cases, participants will receive additional wages from the sponsor.

3.3.2 Participant Work Hours

* The number of hours a participant works on a project should be addressed in the initial negotiation of the agreement with the sponsor.

* Participants will work what is full time for that sponsor.

* Although 40 hours per week is used to calculate OJCP financial support (40 hours multiplied by minimum wage), there is no requirement that participants must work 40 hours per week. OJCP participants should work the number of hours worked by others in the workplace doing similar work and must not exceed Ontario labour legislation as it appears in the Employment Standards Act.

* Part-time work may also be acceptable if it is substantial enough for the participant to gain valuable work experience. As it may be difficult to ascertain the value gained by working part-time hours, it is preferable that projects consist of full-time employment only.

3.3.3 Overtime Hours

* Any hours worked above the total stated in the Agreement shall be considered as overtime (extra duty).

* The Ministry does not contribute to overtime.

* If the sponsor wishes the participant to work overtime, the sponsor must make a separate agreement with the participant. This would constitute regular employment for which the sponsor must pay the wages and all mandatory related employment costs.

* For the participant this would constitute a part-time job and as such the income would have to be reported if the participant was in receipt of Employment Insurance (EI) Part I Benefits.

* Pay for overtime work is not considered a top-up.

3.3.4 Participant Recruitment

* Once a project is approved the sponsor must commence the recruitment process for participants.

* A participant can only access an OJCP project after:

- o an assessment is completed by an Employment Service provider or a Service System Manager; and
- o the Ministry confirms participant eligibility.

4. Project Partners

Project partners are not mandatory; however, partnerships are encouraged as it ensures a greater commitment from the community partners to help ensure a project's success.

Activities should be based on community plans, supporting the local priorities agreed to and supported by the community.

All project partners are encouraged to contribute in some material way to the project.

Partnership contributions may be in the form of cash or in-kind contributions depending on the nature of the activities and the capacity of the partners.

5. Sponsor Responsibilities

Applicant responsibilities pre-agreement (application stage) include, but are not limited to:

- Obtaining all required permits and licenses and ensuring an environmental assessment of the project is completed, should it be required by legislation.
- If the worksite is unionized, the union must concur with the proposed project and a letter of support from the union must accompany the application.
- Providing mandatory workplace safety insurance coverage for the participant(s).

Once the project is approved, the sponsor will have to sign an agreement with the Ministry, which will outline all sponsor responsibilities.

Sponsor responsibilities post-agreement (project stage) include, but are not limited to:

- Recruiting and selecting eligible participants once the application is approved.
- Providing daily support and supervision to participants.
- Keeping accurate financial records.
- Tracking and reporting participant information to the Ministry.

- Ensuring that the project activities comply with all applicable federal, provincial, and municipal laws.
- Allow participants reasonable time off to attend job interviews and participate in other job search related activities (for example, one to two days off in a two-week period).
- Ensuring that its facilities are accessible to persons with disabilities, and in compliance with all applicable federal, provincial and municipal statutes and codes.

Appendix A: Proposal Description

The proposal description will provide you with assistance on how to develop and complete your OJCP Sponsor Application for Funding.

Project Title
The project title should be clearly stated.

Proposed Project Start and End Dates
The project must not exceed 52 weeks in length.

Note: The project length must include time for participant recruitment.

Project Objectives
Projects benefit the job seeker, community and the local economy; however, the primary focus must be on helping the job seeker with opportunities to gain meaningful work experience.

Participant Benefit
How does the project benefit the participant(s)?

Note: What skills will they acquire? How will it impact their employability? For example: "The objective is to provide work experience to EI eligible participant(s) to assist them in the development of new skills (could list the potential skills participant(s) will learn) which will enhance their ability to find employment."

Community Benefit
Describe how the community will benefit from this OJCP project.

Participant(s) Job title, Job description, and top up details
Provide the number of expected participants per job category, a description of their duties and if top up (financial support) will be provided.

Progress of Participants
Describe how you will evaluate the progress of the participants throughout the project.

Organizational Capacity
Describe your organization's mandate and expertise in carrying out the project. Describe any past projects funded by the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development, formerly Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Project Plan

A detailed description of your project. How the project activities are incremental and not part of your organization's day-to-day operations.

Project Activities
Activities and Timelines

Describe the key activities to be undertaken by the participant(s) and the timelines required to complete them.

Outcomes/Expected Results

Provide the anticipated outcomes/expected results the project will achieve.
The expected results and outcomes must clearly detail the impact of the project on the participant(s) and their work experience and skills gained upon completion.

Expected results define the outcomes to be achieved and must relate to the project objectives.

- Relate outcomes to the activities of the project.
- State results in qualitative and/or quantitative terms.

Evaluation Plan

Describe how you will evaluate the success of the project.
The evaluation plan should identify the objectives of the evaluation, on what the evaluation will achieve. This plan is meant as an enhancement to provide additional detail, clarification, and best practice considerations in support of an effective evaluation.

Partner Support

If applicable, list all partner support and their role in and how it will contribute to the project objectives.
List all partner organizations and identify their roles and responsibilities with respect to the project activities. Please list the Partners: legal name of organization, address, telephone number, email address and contact name.

Budget

An excel budget template has been provided for applicants to complete and include with their application submission. In each budget line, provide a detailed rationale to support the requested costs that are specific and necessary to the activities of the project. Identify how the cost was determined and calculated.

Funding Categories (Budget Lines)
- Project Related Costs
- Participant Related Costs
- Capital Costs

In the Partnership Contribution for in-kind and cash contributions include a breakdown of the dollar value for each contribution, how the value was determined, what it will be used for and which cost categories the contribution falls under.

Save a copy of the completed excel budget template locally to your desktop, personal drive, etc., as the Ministry will be in contact and this document may require changes to specific budget line items.

Note: To assist in the timely processing of your application, please convert the excel budget template into a PDF prior to uploading it to your application. If you do not perform this step, you will receive an error message. Please see Appendix B for instructions on how to convert an excel file into a PDF.

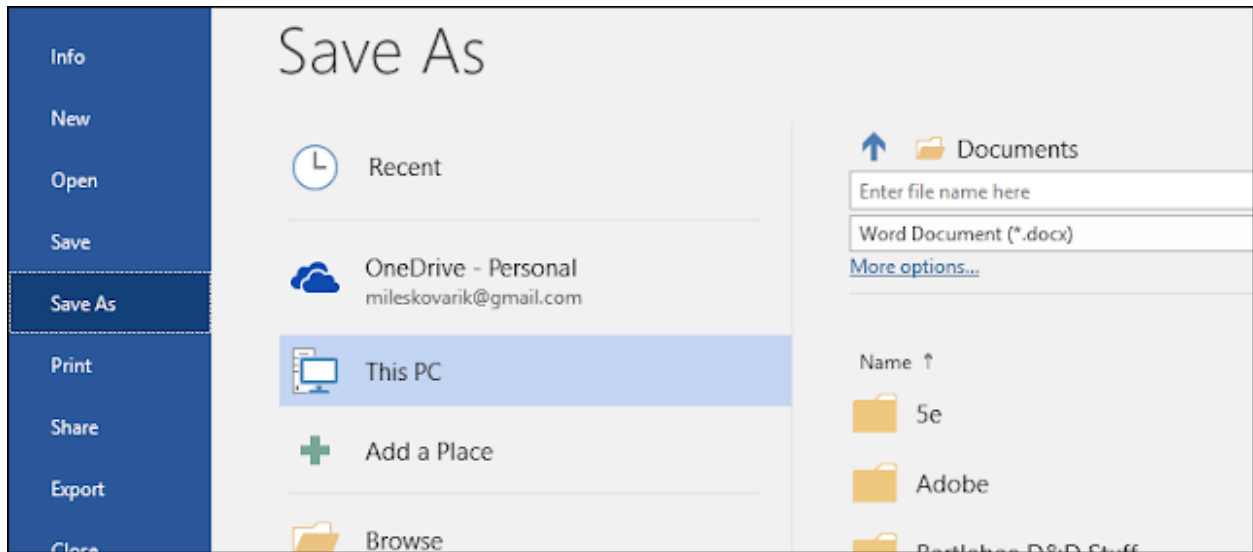**Appendix B: Instructions on How to Convert an Excel or Microsoft Word Document to a PDF File**

Step 1: Open the document you want to convert, and then click the "File" tab.
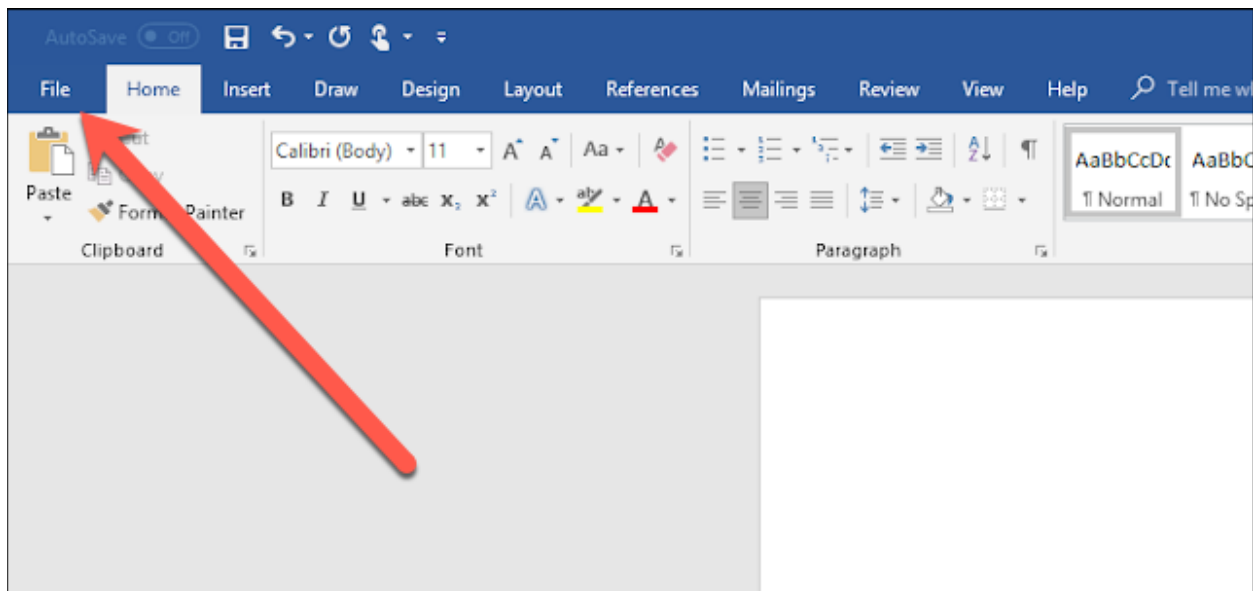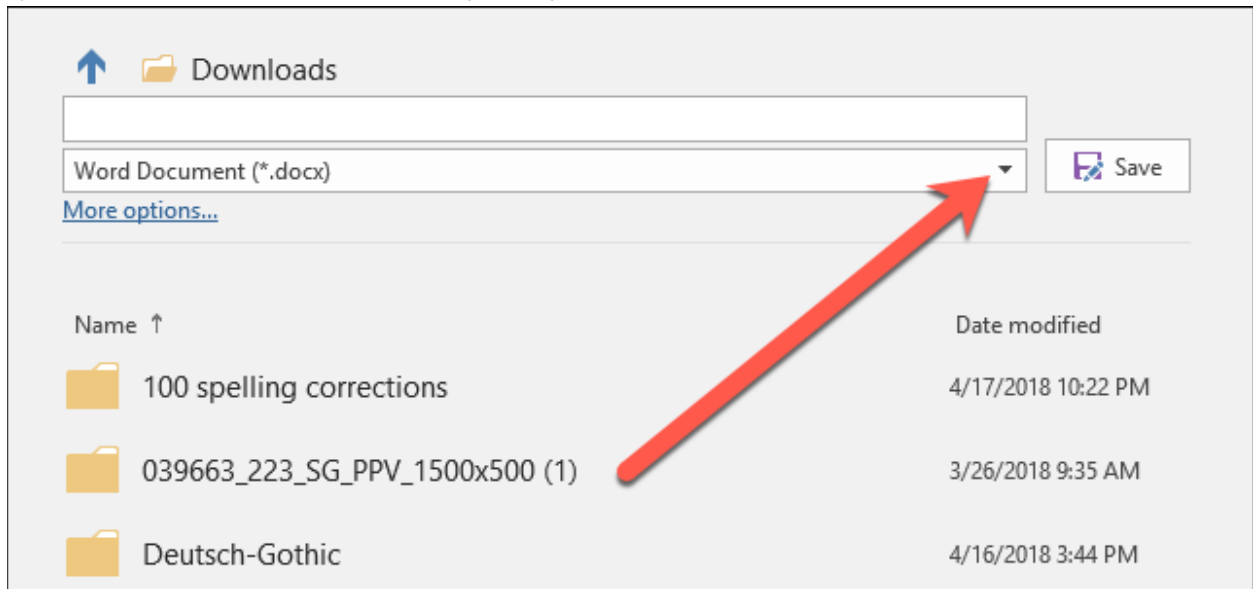

Step 2: On the backstage screen, select "Save As" from the list on the left.
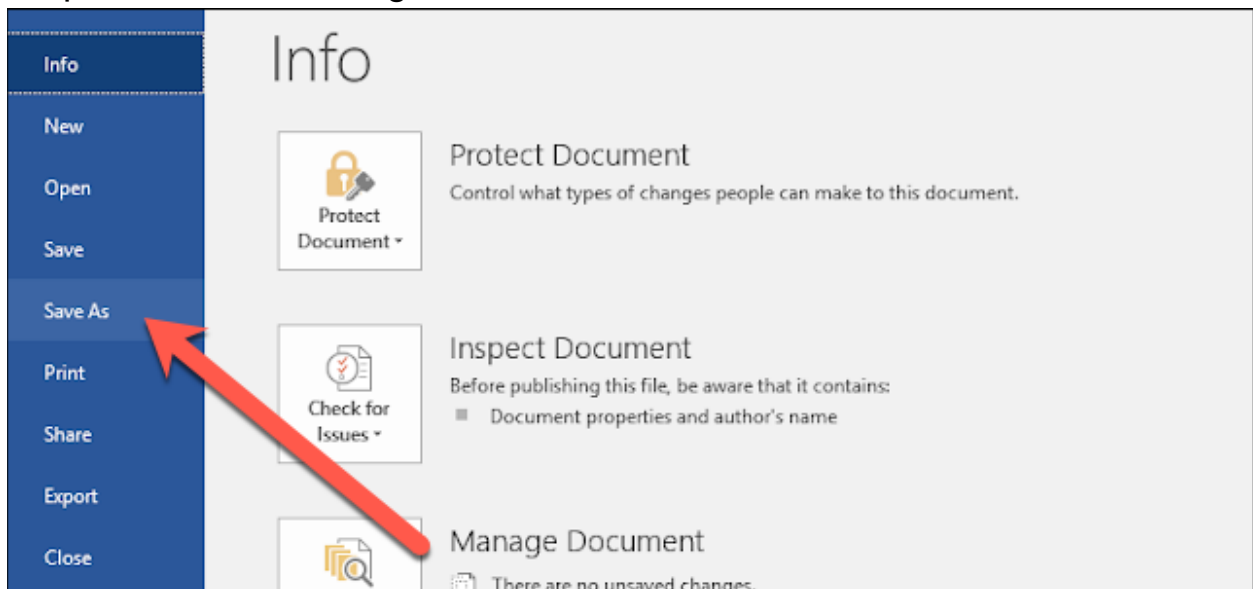
Step 3: On the Save As screen, select where you would like the PDF to be saved (OneDrive, your PC, a particular folder, etc.).

Step 4: Next, click the dropdown arrow on the right side of the "Save as type" box, and select "PDF (*.pdf)" from the dropdown menu.

Step 5: After saving the PDF, you'll be returned to your Word document, and the new PDF will open automatically in your default PDF viewer.

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