

# **SECOND CAREER REDESIGN**

## **QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

### **GENERAL**

#### **1. What is Second Career?**

Second Career (SC) is a grant program that provides laid-off, unemployed individuals with skills training to help them find employment in high-demand occupations. The program provides qualified applicants with up to \$28,000 for eligible costs, including tuition, books, manuals, workbooks or other instructional costs, transportation, basic living allowance, and childcare.

#### **2. Why are you redesigning Second Career?**

The Second Career program is undergoing a redesign to ensure that Ontario's changing economy has a secure supply of talented workers – now and in the future. Ontario is committed to supporting workers whether they are searching for a new job, need retraining or to start a new career. We know that COVID-19 has resulted in job loss, and that more people could be at risk of long-term unemployment. The redesign will make the program more relevant for workers and businesses, more effective and responsive to labour market demands, and will contribute to the government's broader economic recovery efforts.

#### **3. What are the goals of the redesign?**

The Second Career redesign will contribute to workforce resiliency so that more people across Ontario have sustainable employment and prosperity. The redesign builds upon the government's commitment to strengthen and simplify the program, as well as respond to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. It will help more people to access training and get back to work faster, enabling the program to be more responsive to labour market conditions and assist in the economic recovery effort. As the economy recovers from the impacts of COVID-19, we want to ensure employers can find the workers they need.

#### **4. When will the Second Career redesign launch and what are the key changes?**

There are two phases to the Second Career program redesign. The first phase of the redesign launches December 17, 2020; these changes will be targeted to help workers laid off from sectors most impacted by COVID-19 re-enter the labour market quickly. The second phase of the redesign is expected to launch in Spring 2021; further changes to the program will be announced as they become available.

The changes to the Second Career program are part of a comprehensive effort to help get people back to work and contribute to Ontario's economic recovery, including a focus on the groups and sectors most impacted by the pandemic.

With Phase 1, the program will prioritize workers with lower skills, who have been laid-off as of March 1, 2020, from sectors that have been highly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The program will also:

- help more laid-off workers get training and return to work faster by shortening the maximum eligible training duration from 24 months to 52 weeks.
- help individuals train for occupations in demand in local communities and in priority areas, such as advanced manufacturing, life sciences, information & communications technology, and supportive health services.
- remove existing caps on the amount of funding available to cover tuition at Private Career Colleges.
- use the Request a Service Provider Appointment (RASP) online form to collect information on clients interested in accessing Second Career to connect them with local Employment Ontario providers. In Phase 2, the ministry will be working on further digitizing the program's application process.

#### **5. How will you prioritize clients impacted by job losses?**

Phase 1 will prioritize those laid-off workers with lower skills and whose employment has been most impacted by COVID-19. Eligible applicants who do not meet these criteria will still have access to the program through the regular application process. The program will also help individuals train for occupations in-demand in local communities

and in priority areas, such as advanced manufacturing, life sciences, information & communications technology, and supportive health services.

## **6. What jobs are in-demand at the local and sector level?**

More information on local communities and priority areas will be provided in documents on the Employment Ontario Partners' Gateway and will be adapted over time as the economy evolves.

The provincial priority areas include advanced manufacturing, information & communications technology, life sciences, and supportive health services.

Locally-driven priorities that have been identified using local intelligence and labour market information will also be considered as "local priority areas" to ensure the ministry is being responsive to local communities and supports the needs of specific populations and people with barriers to employment.

Clients who are seeking training in occupations which are not identified as in provincial or local priority areas will continue to be required to provide evidence of demand for their target occupation using existing processes.

The Second Career changes align with the work of Invest Ontario, a new agency focused on securing high-value business investments for the province. Invest Ontario will pursue investments that create jobs and new revenue streams for Ontario, with an initial focus on areas where Ontario has competitive advantages including: advanced manufacturing, information and communication technology and life sciences. Supportive health services has also been identified as a provincial priority area as a result of COVID-19.

## **7. How will Second Career clients be impacted by the redesign?**

Overall, the redesign will help clients access the program and receive support to develop new skills and re-enter the labour market quickly. Specifically, the redesigned program will help more laid-off workers get training and return to work faster by shortening the maximum eligible training duration from 24 months to 52 weeks. It will prioritize those laid-off workers with lower skills and whose employment has been most

impacted by COVID-19. It will also help individuals train for occupations in-demand in local communities and in priority areas, such as advanced manufacturing, life sciences, information & communications technology, and supportive health services.

To support clients in accessing short-term training that will help them return to work faster, clients will no longer be eligible to pursue two-year programs under Second Career. Diplomas that can be completed within one year will continue to be eligible (e.g. accelerated or fast-track diplomas). Those individuals wishing to pursue a two-year diploma program will continue to have the option of applying to the Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP) for a mix of grants and loans to help them pay for their post-secondary education.

In the coming months, the government will be improving the Second Career application process to make it less burdensome on clients. This revised application will create a straightforward, digital access point to help clients find the information they need. In Phase 2, the ministry will be working on further digitizing the program's application process.

#### **8. What if a client was in the process of finishing their Second Career application for a two-year diploma program before the redesign was launched?**

With the launch of the Second Career redesign, eligible training duration will be reduced from 24 months to 52 weeks. Applications for training over 52 weeks will no longer be eligible through the Second Career program. Individuals will continue to have the option of applying to the Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP) for a mix of grants and loans to help them pay for their post-secondary education.

To provide flexibility for individuals who will be submitting Second Career applications during the first phase of the redesign, the ministry will set a short grace period in which applications will still be eligible under the current rules.

This will apply to applications received from December 17, 2020 until January 8, 2021.

For an application to be eligible for the grace period, the training start date must take place on or before February 1, 2021.

## **9. How much faster will people get Second Career grants through these program changes?**

Several factors impact the speed at which people can access training through Second Career. When implemented, our redesign will significantly reduce the administrative burden for Second Career applicants and lead to a faster grant approval process.

Applicants who meet all criteria for fast-tracking will not be required to meet all of the administrative requirements of the program and will have their applications fast-tracked, helping them access training sooner.

Also, those applicants who identify as fee-payers (i.e. are paying their own training costs) will no longer have to meet the requirements associated with clients seeking funding through Second Career. This streamlined process will help these clients move forward into training sooner with less administration.

## **10. What kinds of training programs can Second Career clients take?**

Eligible clients will be able to take training programs that are under one year (52 weeks or less) in duration for occupations that are in demand in local communities and in priority areas (information & communications technology, life sciences, advanced manufacturing, and supportive health services).

Clients who want to train for a target occupation not identified as in a provincial or local priority area will continue to be required to provide evidence of demand for their target occupation using existing processes.

Training programs that are more than one year in duration will no longer be funded through the program. Clients will be supported to take up to 52 weeks of training leading to a credential, including micro-credentials, certificates, and accelerated diplomas.

Those individuals wishing to pursue a two-year diploma program will continue to have the option of applying to the Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP) for a mix of grants and loans to help them pay for their post-secondary education.

## **11. What is a micro-credential?**

There is no universal definition of “micro-credential”. Generally, micro-credentials are a kind of certification that recognizes more granular, specific competencies that typically require less time than standard certificate, diploma, or degree programs. They may be verified and shared digitally, for example, through digital badges, and may be stacked or combined into a larger credential or certificate.

For the purpose of Second Career, micro-credentials should provide a skill or set of skills that are in demand and are expected to lead to employment without a broader credential required, or that fill a gap for the client who has other skills relevant to the target occupation.

## **12. Will the Second Career redesign also consider the needs of specific populations and people with barriers to employment?**

Specifically, the redesigned program will help more laid-off workers get training and return to work faster by speeding up access for laid-off workers with lower skills and whose employment has been most impacted by COVID-19, and focusing on shorter duration training, including micro credentials. It will also help individuals train for occupations in demand in local communities and in provincial priority areas, such as advanced manufacturing, life sciences, information & communications technology, and supportive health services.

Locally-identified priorities that have been validated using local intelligence and labour market information will also be considered as “priority areas” to ensure the ministry is being responsive to labour market changes and supports the needs of specific populations and people with barriers to employment. Information on provincial and local priority areas will be provided in materials to be posted on the Employment Ontario Partners’ Gateway (EOPG) and will be adapted over time as the economy evolves.

## **13. What will happen next?**

Our goal is to have the changes that are focused on the impacts of COVID-19 implemented in Fall 2020 and to prioritize those whose employment was impacted by COVID-19. The second phase of the redesign is expected to launch in Spring 2021 and

will be informed by the first phase; further changes to the program will be announced as they become available.

## **TRAINING PARTNERS**

### **14. At what kind of institutions can Second Career clients access training?**

Second Career clients can train at publicly assisted colleges and Indigenous Institutes, private career colleges, and school boards across Ontario. As our work with the Ministry of Colleges and Universities on micro-credentials continues, we expect to see more eligible, employer-recognized short-duration training available across the province.

### **15. How are publicly assisted colleges and Indigenous Institutes, and private career colleges impacted by these redesign changes?**

Second Career clients will continue to train at publicly assisted colleges and Indigenous Institutes, and private career colleges across Ontario, which offer a great variety of programs that allow clients to access training and quickly return to work.

Training programs that are more than one year in duration will no longer be accessible through the program. Going forward, clients will be supported to take up to 52 weeks of training, including micro-credentials, certificates, and accelerated diplomas that are offered by a range of institutions. This redesign will help more people, especially those impacted by COVID-19, access training and get back to work faster.

Those individuals wishing to pursue a two-year diploma program will continue to have the option of applying to the Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP) for a mix of grants and loans to help them pay for their post-secondary education. Diplomas that can be completed within one year (e.g., accelerated diplomas) continue to be eligible.

## **FUNDING**

### **16. How much funding is available for clients?**

As in previous years, the program provides qualified applicants with up to \$28,000 for eligible costs, including tuition, books, manuals, workbooks or other instructional costs, transportation, basic living allowance, and childcare. Funding is determined on a case

by case basis. It is anticipated that the average cost per client will decrease as the time spent in training will be reduced to 52 weeks or less.

The current \$28,000 maximum funding amount covered through Second Career will not change during Phase 1 of Second Career redesign. The ministry will be reviewing all funding parameters as part of Phase 2. The ministry will consider any changes related to the funding maximum as part of Phase 2 of the redesign.

**17. What changes are you making to the funding caps for private career colleges (PCCs) tuition as part of the redesign?**

The ministry is removing caps on the portion of assistance that can be used to cover tuition for private career colleges.

The total client assistance maximum of \$28,000 for tuition and living costs combined continues to apply.

**18. Why are you making changes to the funding caps for private career colleges?**

The removal of tuition funding caps aligns with the government's commitment to simplify the program. The removal of tuition caps applies to new clients as well as funding applications that are still to be approved, if the client has not entered into a training agreement with a private career college.

Our government will also continue to review the Second Career program to make sure it is providing the right supports. We plan to make further improvements to the program in Spring 2021.

**19. How much money do you expect to save by changing the program?**

The redesign is not about cost-saving – the changes are about getting the best results for jobseekers, workers and employers. The redesign will contribute to workforce resiliency so that more people across Ontario have sustainable employment and prosperity. We want to optimize Second Career so that it achieves the best results for jobseekers, employers, and communities. We intend to monitor uptake closely throughout implementation to ensure that we're using resources wisely and the program is achieving its intended impacts.



**20. Will Second Career clients lose their Employment Insurance (EI) when they participate in the program?**

No. Section 25 of the *Employment Insurance Act* allows individuals who receive EI regular benefits to take part in training programs and other employment activities that will facilitate their return to the labour force by exempting them from their obligation to look and be available for work. The ministry has the authority to issue a Section 25 approval request under the Labour Market Development Agreement and already does so for clients participating in Second Career.

**CONNECTION TO OTHER GOVERNMENT WORK**

**21. How does this redesign align with the employment services transformation?**

The government is integrating and transforming the employment system to help the people of Ontario find employment in good jobs and help employers get the workers they need to grow their businesses. A stronger employment services system for all Ontarians, including those on social assistance and people with disabilities will be easy to use, more responsive to local conditions and create better outcomes for workers and communities. The employment services transformation aligns with the Second Career redesign by helping more Ontarians get the supports they need to develop new skills, and by supporting employers by helping them find the skilled workers they need to thrive.

**22. You are also doing a micro-credentials pilot (RapidSkills) – is there a connection to this Redesign?**

The RapidSkills micro-credentials pilot focused on the auto and advanced manufacturing sectors is currently underway, incentivizing the development of new industry-recognized, short-duration training programs and testing their potential to help underutilized Ontarians gain in-demand skills and get back to work quickly.

**23. What connections are there between the Second Career program and the Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP)?**

Both OSAP and Second Career support Ontarians to meet their skills development, training, and other educational goals. Second Career is a program that provides eligible, laid-off clients with financial grant support for tuition and other costs related to training linked directly to the clients' employment goals, and in support of in demand labour market needs. OSAP offers a mix of grants and loans to financially support people to take an eligible post-secondary program. OSAP does not have eligibility criteria related to employment goals or labour market need.

To support clients in accessing short-term training and return to work faster, clients will no longer be eligible to pursue two-year programs under Second Career (diplomas that can be completed within a year continue to be eligible). Those individuals wishing to pursue a two-year diploma program will continue to have the option of applying to the Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP) for a mix of grants and loans to help them pay for their post-secondary education.

#### **24. How will this program impact Ontarians who receive income support?**

The Second Career is already accessible to social assistance clients. The ministry is working to increase awareness of the Second Career program among the Social Assistance network and will continue to engage and work closely with our partners at the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services as Phase 2 of the Second Career redesign is developed.