

Skills for Success (SFS)

External Questions and Answers - May 2023

PARTICIPANT ELIGIBILITY

1. Must the Ontario Adult Curriculum Framework (OALCF) be followed for the delivery of Skills for Success (SFS)?

Skills for Success (SFS) is being delivered through the Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) program. It is not a separate program. As such, the OALCF must be followed, and SFS participants must meet the eligibility criteria for LBS learners.

2. Will the LBS age requirement also apply to SFS participants (i.e., 19 years of age or older)? Will there be any exceptions?

As SFS is part of LBS, the same eligibility conditions would apply. LBS exceptions are limited to 10% of total participant numbers.

3. Can an LBS service plan be open at the same time as an SFS service plan?

If the client has an active LBS service plan, an SFS service plan cannot be created until the LBS service plan has been closed. An error message will appear if an SFS service plan is attempted.

4. What learners will SFS be targeting?

The intent of SFS is to create new learning opportunities for adults who have never accessed LBS before. However, SFS pilot participants should be welcomed into the LBS delivery system, should they wish to continue their learning at the conclusion of their participation in a pilot.

5. Can learners participating in Corrections Literacy Initiative (CLI) participate in an SFS under-represented groups pilot?

Corrections Literacy Initiative (CLI) learners will not be able to participate in SFS under-represented groups pilots. That said, CLI learners could participate in Better Jobs Ontario, Apprenticeship, and/or LBS once they've exited the CLI program.

PROJECT SPECIFIC:

1. How is the duration and size of the pilots determined?

Service delivery sites determine pilot training duration and learner numbers based on their capacity and their understanding of the needs of potential participants, their community, and the context of the delivery. The ministry is recommending that pilots should have a minimum ten participants; however, it is understood that the number of participants planned for a pilot will vary and could be less than ten depending on the cultural stream and/or learning context.

The duration of pilots will vary to maintain flexibility. Pilots should be of a sufficient intensity and duration for the targeted participant population to be able to achieve or demonstrate meaningful progress toward their learning goals. There can be multiple intakes per pilot, but all pilot activities must finish by March 31, 2024.

2. Is there a specific definition of 'under-represented groups'?

A definition of "under-represented groups" was shared in the 2022-23 literacy service planning template. It is defined as "a subset in a population that holds a smaller percentage within a specific subgroup than the subset holds in the general population. In the subgroup of individuals who participate in the labour market, examples of Under-represented groups include women, Indigenous persons, visible minorities, immigrants,

persons with disabilities, racialized groups and youth. The list of under-represented groups can vary based on the local labour market or within a specific sector.”

3. Regarding SFS under-represented pilots, can colleges that typically serve learners completing OALCF Level 2 and 3 tasks work with eligible and suitable SFS participants that would be working on tasks that are at Level 1?

For SFS specifically, colleges can work with eligible and suitable SFS participants who would be working on tasks that are at Level 1.

4. Has consideration been given to potential overlap of workplace literacy pilots with Canada Ontario Job Grant (COJG), especially for service delivery sites that deliver both?

While there are a number of similarities between the two programs, the fundamental differences are participant eligibility and the focus and breadth of services that will be provided through the SFS workplace literacy pilots.

SFS participants must be eligible for LBS and assessed at intake as being less than the end of OALCF Level 3 in one or more of the following OALCF competencies:

- Find and Use Information
- Communicate ideas and information
- Understand and use numbers

SFS workplace literacy pilots are focused on providing existing employees with the literacy and transferable/foundational skills necessary to adequately perform job tasks and to adapt to changes in their workplace i.e., perform new job tasks.

5. For Better Jobs Ontario (BJO) participants, are the “readiness to learn” pilots onsite at the BJO sites?

Pilots can be delivered anywhere that makes sense in the context of the specific pilot and community. There is nothing to preclude pilots being delivered at a particular location where individuals are accessing training funded through BJO, should there be sufficient proponents assessed (at that location) as needing the training offered through the pilot.

ORGANIZATIONAL NEEDS ASSESSMENT (ONA)

1. Will there be funding made available in 2023-24 for regional networks to do more organizational needs assessments (ONAs)?

There is additional funding available for regional networks to complete more ONAs during the 2023-24 fiscal year. Regional networks may submit a Phase 2 – Round 2 application to request this funding.

For ONAs completed later in the fiscal year, regional networks are encouraged to explore other options for the delivery of subsequent workplace literacy training, should there be insufficient time or funding for training to be delivered through SFS pilots.

2. Is the ONA process standard for each support organization and regional network? Or is each organization assessing something different?

Regional networks participating in SFS have received funding to collaborate to develop processes and tools to support the completion of ONAs and the development of workplace literacy service delivery pilots. The ministry anticipates that this will result in the creation of a variety of tools and processes to meet the diversity of employer and community needs.

The workplace literacy community of practice creates opportunities for information sharing and capacity building to support consistent understanding and application of these tools and resources.

3. With regards to workplace literacy, will LBS service providers need to find the employers for the pilots or just deliver the training?

Service providers are encouraged to engage with their regional networks to inform their plans for workplace literacy pilot delivery. Participating regional networks are being funded to expand and enhance local planning and coordination to support this initiative, including connecting with key community stakeholders e.g., employers; however, both service providers and regional networks are encouraged to identify potential employers to participate in pilots.

ONAs will need to be completed prior to the delivery of all workplace literacy pilots in 2023-24. Once the ONAs are completed, service providers may need to adjust the number of participants and or intakes for a pilot, and/or may be able to negotiate amendments to their agreements should additional resources be required and are available. ONAs will continue to be funded in 2023-24 to support additional opportunities for pilot delivery.

FUNDING and ELIGIBLE COSTS

1. To what can the Phase 2 – Round 2 funding for SFS be applied? Will it be for new projects only, or can it be used to expand existing SFS pilots/initiatives?

Phase 2 – Round 2 funding can be used to fund new projects or to expand existing initiatives.

2. What should service providers do if they need additional funds to run their existing SFS project i.e., no additional activities, no expansion, no additional participants?

Service providers are expected to manage their funds within their budgets. There may be increased expenses in one cost category but there may be slippage in another.

However, if significant unanticipated costs occur that would hinder the delivery of the SFS project (e.g., related to inflation or inability to hire staff at the rates originally offered), the service provider should have a thorough discussion with their ETC. If additional funding is merited, an agreement amendment would be required, as the service provider would have to account for the funding through their EER and SRER.

3. Can regional networks request additional funds to develop an SFS overview resource for external users, to explain what SFS is, so employers and participants are aware and to increase buy-in and participation to workplace literacy pilots? Whose responsibility is it to create the SFS overview that would be shared with external users?

Yes, this can be approved.

Participating regional networks are responsible for enhanced planning and coordination. This includes connecting with key community stakeholders (which will vary with each of the initiatives) to identify training needs and opportunities, inform the development of curriculum resources and new programming and partnerships, and develop referral protocols. The development of an SFS overview resource as described here would be integral to this work. Once funded, there is an expectation that regional networks will coordinate the development and sharing of these kinds of tools and resources through the initiative specific communities of practice.

4. Can capacity building activities and costs can be included in support organization SFS deliverables?

Yes. While professional development is only specifically referenced in the 'enhancing digital delivery' deliverable description, the ministry recognizes that in order to support practitioners to develop, pilot and ultimately deliver the new curriculum resources for any of the SFS initiatives, support organizations may need to include funding in their SFS deliverable budget to support capacity building (and this could include professional development).

For example, as the expectation is that the new curriculum resources will include the 'new' SFS (meaning the social emotional skills not explicitly included in the Essential Skills framework or in the OALCF), practitioners may well need to learn more about how to teach and facilitate learning of these skills.

For SFS initiatives to be successful, practitioners may also need to learn more about the learning contexts and participants the ministry has prioritized with the SFS funding, for example teaching and learning at work or program development and teaching methodologies to meet the needs of specific under-represented groups.

Support organizations can apply to continue the work of Phase 1 with additional funding, if they can demonstrate to their ETC that they have expended funding for the deliverables outlined in their 2022-23 amended agreements.

5. Will SFS funding be subject to an audit?

Audits are required for the LBS program funding as a whole. LBS and SFS funding are considered total LBS funding.

If an LBS organization's budget is already \$150K or more, they will already be required to undertake an audit. These costs will already have been included in the LBS Operating Funds, so technically speaking, the costs for SFS should be covered under these audit costs. If the SFS funding pushes the total LBS budget over \$150K, an audit will be required (please refer to the Transfer Payment Agreement for any exceptions to this rule). SFS costs are **NOT** to be included in the LBS Operating Budget line. To incorporate the audit costs under SFS:

Support Organizations

- In the Phase 2 – Round 2 application, the support organization will pick **one** of the SFS deliverables/initiatives, then will include the audit cost under the

“Recommended Deliverable Cost” and will add a comment to the narrative that this amount includes the additional audit cost.

Service Delivery Sites

- In the Phase 2 – Round 2 application, Q7, the service provider can include that the audit costs have been added to the budget costs of **one** of the SFS pilot proposals, including an explanation in the text box and the amount.

If the organization is already fulfilling the audit requirements (because their budget is over \$150K) but thinks it will need to pay additional funds for an audit to include SFS, they can estimate the additional costs and follow the outlined approach, based on the type of organization they are i.e., support organization or service delivery site.

6. Can support organizations include costs associated with their participation in the initiative specific communities of practice in their SFS deliverable budgets?

Yes. All recipients of SFS project funding are required to collaborate to organize and participate in communities of practice related to each of the initiatives to strengthen their collective capacity, coordinate work, avoid duplication, maximize learning opportunities, and support evaluation.

In 2022-23, the cost of this participation was included in the ministry recommended costs for each deliverable. For 2023-24, support organizations are required to develop the costing for their SFS deliverables based on their experience this fiscal year. The ministry recognizes that support organizations are taking on a variety of roles and responsibilities within the community of practice structures, and as a result, we can expect that the costs related to their participation in the community of practice will vary.

Employment and Training Consultants (ETCs) are encouraged to discuss their support organization’s roles and responsibilities within the community of practice, to help

understand community of practice related costs included in each SFS deliverable. This should be completed before amendment negotiations are finalized.

7. Can training supports or any other cost category (e.g., Operating Funds) be used to provide incentives, such as stipends, directly to participants and/or employers?

Employer and participant incentives, such as stipends, would not be covered under any SFS initiative.

Workplace literacy pilots are designed to meet the organizational needs of the employer by addressing the identified foundational and transferable skills gaps of employees. These pilots, delivered free of charge, are intended to be a long-term gain for the employers, in that employees would be better equipped with the necessary literacy and essential skills to adequately perform job tasks to adapt to changes in the workplace.

Employers who choose to participate would be expected to support the initiative by providing in-kind contributions as required (e.g., access to space, scheduling flexibility). This approach would demonstrate employer buy-in.

It is the ministry's responsibility to maintain transparency and accountability for provincial funding. LBS funds, including SFS, are not intended to incentivize participation, by both employers and employees.

DELIVERY

1. Can a service provider provide services across the province if they're offering online services under SFS or are they restricted to the region where they're physically located?

The fact the service provider wants to work in a different community to build partnerships and offer services is great. That said, the ministry recommends they keep in touch with their regional network about this, and maybe even the community of practice that is responsible for the digital delivery initiative. In addition, the regional network may want to build this connection/work into their literacy service plan.

2. What will this look like if the participant continues to participate in LBS after SFS?

If the participant continues in LBS after they've completed SFS, and their CaMS file has been closed, the service delivery site would follow regular LBS intake procedures to serve this participant.

3. Will pilot participants be required to complete the same LBS Participant Registration Form (PRF) as the 'regular' LBS learners? Will the PRF be modified to capture that a person is participating in SFS? Does the information on the form reflect everything that is needed from a collection of data and consent perspective?

SFS is being delivered through the LBS program in Ontario. It is not a separate program. The current Employment Ontario Participant Registration Form (PRF) is suitable for SFS purposes and will not be modified. The Notice of Collection and Consent on the current form is suitable for SFS purposes.

Service providers may want to identify SFS on the PRF (e.g., writing SFS across the top of the form) to ensure those performing data entry remember to check off the SFS box in CaMS, when appropriate.

4. To register an SFS participant, the LBS Participant Registration Form is filled out and a service plan is opened in CaMS. Is the service provider required to input sub-goals and plan items into the learner plan?

Because SFS is being delivered through the LBS program, all SFS participants are expected to receive all LBS services, except for follow-up, and service providers are expected to document learner activity in CaMS, through to their exit.

Participants need to have a learner plan outside of CaMS to guide their learning, and a service plan will need to be created in CaMS to record this. SFS plan items and sub-goals will be understood and entered in the same manner as they would for LBS with sub-goals including competencies, service coordination and training supports, and Plan Items including the OALCF task groups, levels and milestones.

5. Will service delivery sites be required to complete 3-, 6-, and 12-month follow-ups?

Service delivery sites will not be funded or expected to provide follow-up services for SFS participants.

CURRICULUM RESOURCES

1. Is compensation for development of SFS curriculum resources allowed?

Support organizations that have been contracted to develop new SFS curriculum resources may have limited resources to achieve their contracted commitments. To overcome these gaps, support organizations often contract LBS practitioners, who are experts in the field, to develop the resources. This is a standard approach used since the LBS program inception.

LBS practitioners who are contracted by the support organizations for these purposes may be compensated accordingly. It is not the service delivery site that is being compensated; it is the practitioner (who may work at the service delivery site).

2. How do service delivery sites report funds they receive from support organizations to pilot curriculum resource as part of Phase 1 and potentially Phase 2 activities?

Service delivery sites are not required to report directly to the ministry on other income sources. Service delivery sites that receive funding from support organizations to test, evaluate, or pilot newly developed curriculum resources may be required to provide information to support organizations regarding this funding, as the support organizations may need to share this information with the ministry. The service delivery sites and support organizations would need to discuss these requirements as part of the agreement for receiving funding.

3. Is adaptation and translation required for SFS resources?

Adaptation/translation is required to ensure that the newly created SFS resources are publicly available and posted in both French and English, as per ministry guidelines.

Stream support organizations were encouraged build these costs into their SFS budgets for 2023-24.

The ministry also anticipates that the Deaf and Indigenous streams may want to adapt some of the new resources to be relevant to and meet the needs of participants in their cultural streams. In these cases, SFS funding is available through Phase 2 – Round 2 applications for this adaptation, including the addition of American Sign Language in Deaf stream resources.

4. Are support organizations able to share the newly developed SFS curriculum resources with their service delivery sites as the resources are completed, rather than waiting until they are posted centrally in 2023-24?

Support organizations are encouraged to share their newly developed SFS curriculum resources with their service delivery sites as soon as they are completed, as this will support a more fulsome evaluation of these resources. There is no need to wait until they are posted centrally.

5. Where will the new SFS curriculum resources be housed?

Contact North will create a public repository to house the new SFS curriculum resources and develop a plan for the repository's ongoing maintenance.

6. Will there be a requirement for these resources to be shared with Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC), as part of the ministry's deliverables for this project?

There is no requirement to share the resources directly with ESDC, our federal funder. That said, it is our intention for the repository to be public-facing and available to anyone who would like to access the resources.

PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT AND MONITORING:

1. What will happen if a service provider makes slight changes to the plan they provided at business planning (such as start date of pilot, change to # of participants, etc.)?

If a service provider wants to change dates, number of participants, etc., they'll need to have discussions with their ETC. Pilot start dates are not part of the transfer payment agreement (TPA), but number of participants are. If the participant number change is substantial, a TPA amendment would be required.

2. What are the next steps once the TPAs are signed and the new fiscal year has started?

The additional requirements for SFS in CaMS will be minimal and will simply require that, upon participant registration, the service provider checks a box to indicate in CaMS whether the client is an SFS participant. SFS captures the same status quo information as other LBS clients. This change has been made so SFS participants will not be included in the calculation for a service provider's Service Quality Score (SQS) or learner targets in regular LBS but will allow the ministry to collect the necessary data regarding SFS participants.

All financial reporting remains status quo, and SFS is simply a new line item on the service provider's TPA that should follow standard business procedures when reporting on estimates in SP Connect.

The ministry is currently exploring different options outside of SP Connect to collect more detailed information on activities, performance measures, and financial expenditures related to SFS. Further details will be provided in the future. This information collection may be separate from the regular interim and final reports. The network would be given ample time to complete any additional reporting.

3. How will performance be measured?

Performance of SFS deliverables will be understood and measured in the context of the LBS program. SFS service delivery pilot activity will be funded and tracked separately from other LBS learners in CaMS; this activity will not be incorporated into existing service quality reports. This approach will support evaluation of the pilots and will encourage innovation and collaboration and not penalize service delivery sites if SFS participant targets are not met. SFS pilots are intended to create new learning opportunities for adults not currently participating in LBS training.

4. SFS pilot participants are not counted towards the regular LBS “Learners Served” target. Has the ministry considered that participation in pilots may affect service delivery sites in meeting their annual performance commitment?

Participation in SFS pilots is optional. Service delivery sites are not obliged to participate if they feel they do not have the capacity. If a service delivery site foresees any issues in meeting their annual LBS performance commitments by participating in SFS, they should discuss this matter with their respective Employment and Training Consultant (ETC).

Service delivery sites can use their base LBS funding to respond to any of the needs and opportunities identified through the SFS-funded enhanced local planning and coordination activities undertaken by the regional networks. The ministry’s expectation is that LBS and SFS funded service delivery will be coordinated with other local service delivery sites through processes facilitated by the regional networks.

SFS funds cannot be used to support service delivery to LBS learners. However, SFS participants who wish to continue their learning after exiting a pilot should be welcomed into the LBS system as new learners.

5. Will SFS monitoring be part of LBS annual monitoring or a separate activity?

The ministry is currently exploring different options outside of SP Connect for 2023-24 SFS monitoring. Further details will be provided in the future. This information collection may be separate from the regular interim and final reports. The network would be given ample time to complete any additional reporting.

REPORTING

1. Will there be any other data that must be collected/reported on for the pilots, like cost tracking?

The ministry intends to use the information and outcomes from the SFS-funded pilots to inform its thinking about how it defines and funds service delivery going forward. To this end, the ministry will be asking SFS recipients to track and report on actual costs related to their activities for each initiative. The cost of doing this should be included in SFS administration costs.

Support organizations are collaborating to establish and coordinate initiative specific communities of practice. All SFS pilot project funding recipients are expected to collaborate with communities of practice related to each of the initiatives to strengthen their collective capacity, coordinate work, avoid duplication, maximize learning opportunities, and support evaluation. To create understanding and contribute to broader LBS program development, communities of practice may request information about pilot development and delivery from service delivery sites.

2. What is the ministry required to report on to ESDC in terms of “tracking” for the SFS project? Having this information will help us determine if/how we can support tracking of these elements/outcomes.

The objectives of the ministry’s SFS proposal are to:

- Develop new curriculum resources

- Increase the number of adult learners and learners from under-represented groups that upgrade their foundational and transferable skills (we can extract this from CaMS)
- Provide evidence on the effectiveness and efficiency of integrated foundational skills delivery program models (looking to the communities of practice to provide this evidence)
- Increase the number of employers that participate in workplace literacy and other foundational skills training (service provider reporting)
- Provide evidence on the effectiveness of partnered service delivery for under-represented groups (looking to the communities of practice to provide this evidence)
- Increase outreach, targeted service planning and strategic partnerships positively impacting participation and outcomes of under-represented groups in literacy and foundation skills training (looking to the communities of practice to provide this evidence)

The ministry provides quarterly updates to ESDC on the progress of our project to achieve these objectives and will need the final numbers (participants, participant demographics, number of curriculum resources, etc.) in the first quarter of 2024-25.

3. The LBS Support Organisation TPA states: “The Statement of Revenue and Expenditures (SRER) will require a breakdown of the top three Administrative Costs charged to the Project”. What does this mean?

This new reporting requirement is a response to a recommendation made by Ontario’s Internal Audit Division to improve TPA accountability and ensure that the ministry has a clear understanding of what funding recipients are classifying as administrative costs.

The changes to the TPA were communicated to the network via a [memo dated January 27, 2023](#).

GENERAL:

1. What progress has the ministry made in terms of the funding model development and full implementation of the LBS performance management framework?

The ministry will continue to advance its program renewal interests this fiscal year through Phase 2 SFS initiatives that are designed to continue building capacity, improving employment and apprenticeship outcomes, enhancing LBS digital delivery and improving the integration of LBS services with the broader workforce development system.

This phase includes service delivery pilots, the results of which will inform the ministry's efforts to fully implement the LBS performance management framework and develop an LBS funding model by providing information about integrated delivery, fully remote and blended learning, actual service delivery costs, funding constraints, and program opportunities.

The SFS initiatives have been structured to include initiative specific communities of practice. These communities of practice have created opportunities for information sharing and capacity building and are supporting the evaluation of the initiatives. The ministry will continue to liaise with the communities of practice throughout Phase 2 to support the success of the SFS investments and inform program renewal.

2. What does the implementation of SFS mean for future funding in LBS? What is the overall strategic plan for LBS?

The ministry has secured SFS funding from ESDC for the 2022-23 and 2023-24 fiscal years. The ministry will use this one-time funding to build capacity across the LBS system, advance LBS program renewal objectives, and inform the evolution of Ontario's workforce development system.

LBS program renewal policy objectives include:

- Capacity-building across cultural streams and delivery sectors and the continuous improvement of service delivery
- Improved employment and apprenticeship outcomes
- The delivery of more services remotely and expanded and enhanced blended learning
- Better integration of LBS services with Ontario's workforce development system
- The full implementation of the LBS Performance Management Framework
- The creation of a performance-based funding model

3. What criteria do support organizations and service delivery sites need to follow for external communication to stakeholders about the SFS Initiative projects?

Organizations should be referring to the Visual Identity and Communications Guidelines for Service delivery sites found on the [Employment Ontario Partners' Gateway \(EOPG\)](#).