

Call for Proposal - Guidelines

Workplace Literacy & Essential Skills Projects

Issued: March 26, 2010

Submission Deadline: 12 pm/noon (Toronto time) on April 19, 2010

Background

1.0 BACKGROUND

Literacy and essential skills provide the foundation for all other learning and skills development. "They form the basis for further education and training and increased productivity and performance in the workplace. Research has shown that improving the literacy and essential skills of the workforce results in tangible results, including improved health and safety records."

The 2009 Ontario Budget announced an investment of \$90 million over two years (2009-10 and 2010-11) to expand literacy and basic skills training, including funding for community projects, distance learning and workplace literacy as a key component of Ontario's economic strategy. This funding will help over 13,000 laid-off workers and other adult learners to access more technical training and highly skilled jobs in 2009-10 and 2010-11.

On July 2, 2009 the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU) announced the investment of \$25 million through the delivery of the Literacy and Basic Skills Program offered in colleges, school boards and community organizations in the Employment Ontario network. In addition, \$5 million was provided to expand on-line literacy training to create more opportunities for learners living in remote communities.

This Call for Proposals (CFP) is the second CFP stemming from the 2009 Ontario Budget and from the enhancements to the Canada-Ontario Labour Market Agreement. The first CFP was released on September 10, 2009 and resulted in the funding of 35 pilot projects delivering both workplace and community workforce literacy. This CFP is focussed specifically on pilot projects delivering literacy and essential skills services in the workplace. Projects approved under this CFP will end on March 31, 2011.

The projects funded through this Call for Proposals will contribute significant knowledge to all stakeholders invested in adult literacy and essential skills training, as well as MTCU. This initiative is designed and structured to enable an independent evaluation of the project services, outcomes and impact against the Ontario government's strategic goals. The evaluation will provide information regarding effective practices being delivered in workplaces and highlight new and innovative approaches to literacy and essential skills training in the workplace. It will also point to service needs and models of delivery that need to be developed to provide access to the foundational training needed by individuals to participate in the emerging economy.

** Conference Board of Canada, All Signs Point to Yes: Literacy's Impact on Workplace Health and Safety, pg. 16, Alison Campbell.

1.1 STRATEGIC GOALS OF THE INITIATIVE

- Meeting the training expectations of employers who require workers to have solid literacy and essential skills to work effectively and safely
- Establishing better linkages between literacy and essential skills training and Ontario's apprenticeship system to support greater completion rates for apprentices
- Integrating literacy and essential skills into workplace and technical training to provide a context for learning and to improve workplace performance
- Meeting the training expectations of adults who have been adversely impacted by economic conditions in the province and need to improve their literacy and/or essential skills to be successful in their employment and career goals
- Providing government with effective delivery models of workplace literacy and essential skills to inform future policy and program design

2.0 Information

2.1 PURPOSE OF THE PROPOSAL APPLICATION:

The purpose of this application is to fund projects that will deliver workplace literacy and essential skills training starting May 2010 up to March 31 2011.

2.2 DEFINITIONS

Literacy and Essential Skills Training is any combination of training in:

- reading text, document use, numeracy, writing, oral communication, working with others, continuous learning, thinking skills, computer skills

Workplace Literacy and Essential Skills training:

- is employer based training designed to ensure that employees have the foundational skills to function effectively, efficiently and safely in their jobs;
- is delivered in or supported by the workplace, e.g.. union training centres,;
- includes workforce upgrading, occupational and job-specific training.

3.0 Design Of The Projects

3.1 OBJECTIVES

Workplace projects will:

- address needs of employers to retain workers with literacy and essential skills necessary for business needs and the new economy;
- provide existing employees with the necessary literacy and essential skills to adequately perform job tasks and to adapt to changes in the workplace i.e. perform new job tasks;
- develop innovative models of delivery tailored to specific circumstances and needs of employers and workers; and,
- define better linkages between Literacy and Essential Skills training and Ontario's apprenticeship system

3.2 TARGETED CLIENTS

Given the strategic goals of the initiative and the project objectives, eligible participants in the projects are:

- employers in Ontario who have identified the need to increase their employees' skills so they can adequately perform their job duties and contribute to overall better business performance; and,
- employed adults 18 years of age and over who require literacy and essential skills training and/or occupation specific literacy and essential skills training to retain employment or advance to higher skill jobs

In addition, projects may target services to individuals such as:

- adults with less than grade 12 education;
- adults who may have educational credentials but have experienced skills loss resulting in literacy and essential skills proficiency level falling below grade 12;
- adults who voluntarily identify themselves as being from groups who are under represented in the workforce:
 - Aboriginal people, persons with disabilities;
 - adult immigrants whose mother tongue is English or French who need to improve their literacy skills;
 - adult immigrants whose first language is neither English nor French who may have highly developed oral communications skills (listening / speaking) in English or French but still require improvements in foundational skills (reading, writing, numeracy, etc)
- employed adults who have received notice of lay off.

And to employers such as those in:

- at risk sectors (e.g. manufacturing and forestry)
- communities experiencing economic downturn

- emerging and growing sectors (e.g. green jobs, mining)

3.3 SERVICES EXPECTED

Funding can support both the delivery of literacy and essential skills training to achieve defined outcomes and the development and delivery of innovative, customer-centered tools, approaches and models. The following are examples of services that may be funded:

Services for employers

- Development of an employer's Workplace Literacy and Essential Skill Training Needs Assessment (business needs)
- Assessment of literacy and essential skills training needs and development of effective training responses to specific employer needs and/or sectoral needs
- Support for access to information about resources and supports for workplace training information (i.e. employer tax credits, program resources, education and/or training services), including relevant workplace literacy and essential skills resources and tools
- Ongoing support for individuals and employers during training (e.g. one-to-one help or educational counselling, referrals to other community services)
- Facilitated linkages to other employers interested/involved in workplace training
- Development/adaptation of learning tools and models

Services for individuals

- Identification of the individual's literacy and essential skills levels and goals related to employment
- Participation and success in literacy and essential skills training
- Supported access to further education or training or employment services
- Provision of literacy and essential skills training
- Targeting and outreach strategies that do not expose employees to ridicule or reprisal whether they choose or not to participate in the workplace project
- Development and delivery of referral protocols that link individuals to community services (example: housing, income support, social services)

Examples of Models of Workplace Literacy and Essential Skills (WLES) Training:

- WLES embedded in technical skills training in the workplace or in a workplace training centre or setting.
- WLES tailored to specific trades and occupations to increase access to higher skill training and employment, such as apprenticeship,
- Sectoral approaches to WLES where standardized LES materials are customized to specific occupations within a sector using authentic workplace materials.
- The use of LES in assessment and HR processes: recruitment, training, promotions etc.

- General LES provision to employees to assist with upgrading of computer skills, reading, math, GED preparation etc.
- Customized approaches to WLES that are tailored to the needs of small and medium sized employers; materials are customized to employee skill levels and job requirements and reflect authentic workplace materials
- WLES training and teaching materials to support LES trainers to deliver effective WLES training

3.4 OUTCOMES/EXPECTED RESULTS

For employers:

- Employees have the foundational skills to function effectively, efficiently and safely in their jobs

For individuals:

- Have improved performance in job duties or advanced to higher skills employment
- Can see their skill gain through measurement of their progress
- Have completed their project training plan

4.0 Project Funding

Proposals for Workplace Literacy and Essential Skills projects **must** include a contribution from the employer to the cost of delivering the project. That may include:

- Cash or in kind contributions to direct operating costs or training support allowances
- Covering wages of staff who are released from work during working hours to participate in training
- Providing space/facilities for training in the workplace
- Meals/refreshments for training that takes place after work

There are two types of project funding:

- Operating Budget
- Training Support Allowances

4.1 OPERATING BUDGET FUNDING

Funding is based on the number of individuals who participate in the projects. The following table highlights the operating budget funding ranges. These ranges provide funding guidelines for proponents that take into account the different service needs of learners and employers, models of delivery, and the range and level of literacy and essential skills training:

- The number of learners determines the range level
- The profile of learners, type of training and projected outcomes of learning will determine where funding is approved within the level

Learner Service Activity Levels Number of participants	Operating Budget Funding Range
Up to 50	\$25,000 - \$225,000
51 to 100	\$90,000 - \$375,000
101 and up	\$101,000 – \$550,000

4.2 ELIGIBLE FUNDING

Direct Operating Expenditures: to cover the costs directly related to delivering and meeting the reporting and documentation requirements of the project.

- Staff and management salaries
- Staff orientation and training
- Outreach, marketing and service referrals
- Facilities

- Learning materials
- Equipment and furniture directly related to the project

Indirect Expenditures: Administrative fees or overhead costs no greater than 15% of the direct operating budget.

Project funds cannot be used for capital expenditures such as the purchase, construction or renovation of facilities.

Training Support Allowances:

The Ministry anticipates that some individuals may need financial supports to remove barriers to participation and support learning. In such circumstances, the projects may provide up to \$500 to those individuals during their participation in the projects to offset costs of:

- transportation, temporary childcare, examination or certification.

Project deliverers will determine eligibility for supports using the Low Income Cut-Off levels for their community/area and will determine the level of support needed based on individual circumstances. MTCU assumes that not all participants will be eligible for or require Training Support Allowances.

5.0 Mandatory Requirements For Proponents Submitting Proposals for Workplace Literacy and Essential Skills Projects

Only proposals that meet the mandatory requirements will be scored against the Evaluation Criteria (see Section 6.0)

5.1 TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

- Projects **must** be submitted as partnership proposals. The application **must** include a description of roles and responsibility for each partner to the proposal, and a letter of agreement signed by all partners
- Depending on the scope and focus of the proposed projects, the partnerships **must** include representation from relevant combinations of such stakeholders as: employers, employment services, labour organizations at the workplace, labour training centres, colleges, school- boards, cultural and community-based organizations
- Projects **must** include an employer as a partner to the proposal, and **must** indicate a contribution of resources from the employer
- At least one of the partners to the proposal **must** currently be under LBS contract with MTCU through Employment Ontario

5.2 SERVICE REQUIREMENTS

Projects **must** commit to measuring learner skill gain with assessment tools that demonstrate a record of success in measuring learning progress i.e.:

- the Test of Workplace Essential Skills (TOWES) tool or;
- the Prose Document and Quantitative Profile Series (PDQPS) tool; and,
- recognized International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) tools

6.0 Evaluation Criteria

A panel of MTCU representatives will evaluate the proposals based on the following evaluation criteria. All decisions relative to the degree to which an application meets the evaluation criteria are the sole judgement of MTCU.

Effectiveness (50 points)

- The proposed services are aligned with the strategic goals of the initiative and objectives of the project
- There is evidence of experience in delivering literacy and essential skills training with a focus on achieving employment results
- There is evidence of systems that support measurement of progress and results as well as planning and allocation of resources to meet contracted commitments
- There is a commitment to a level of outcomes relative to proposed target group and services

Customer Service (30 points)

- There is evidence of need for the proposed project
- There is evidence that services are responsive to the needs of workers and employers
- There is evidence of a commitment to tracking customer feedback (such as a customer service charter that stipulates customer service policies)
- There is evidence that the proponent has a publicly available privacy policy based on the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act, if applicable, or the Canadian Standards Association Model Privacy Code
- There is evidence that the proponent has an experienced official responsible for ensuring compliance with the privacy policy, including providing individuals with access to their own personal information

Efficiency (20 points)

- There is a commitment to provide services to a number of learners within the funding ranges identified in the CFP
- Proposed costs are aligned with eligible expenses identified in the CFP

7.0 Communications

To ensure fairness and transparency in the CFP process, all questions will be compiled and answered through a single method. All questions regarding the CFP must be sent to:

sande.minke@ontario.ca or by fax 416 325-6162

By Tuesday, April 6, 2010, by 5:00 pm. (Toronto time).

Answers will be posted to the Employment Ontario Partners Gateway website, www.eopg.ca
by Tuesday, April 13, 2010, 5:00 pm. (Toronto time).

No questions will be accepted by phone, and individual email responses will not be provided.

8.0 Submission Requirements

8.1

Proponent **must** be an approved MTCU service provider.

Each proponent will submit one electronic and two signed original copies of the proposal (including the supporting documents, specifically: a letter of agreement to be a partner to the project signed by all potential partners, a document that stipulates customer service policies, and a copy of their privacy policy).

The electronic and paper copies must be submitted
by 12:00 p.m. (noon) (Toronto time) on April 19, 2010 to:

Sande.Minke@ontario.ca

**Service Delivery Branch
Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities
33 Bloor St. E. Suite 200
Toronto, ON M7A 2S3
Attention: Sande Minke**

Any proposals received after the deadline will NOT be considered.

Proposals submitted in any other manner will NOT be considered.

9.0 Schedule Of Events

EVENT	DATE
Guidelines and Proposal Application Issued	March 26, 2010
Deadline to fax/e-mail questions to Ministry	April 6, 2010
Ministry response to questions posted to www.eopg.ca	April 13, 2010
Application closing date	April 19, 2010

Note: At its sole discretion, the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities reserves the right to modify or cancel any of the scheduled dates and the right to modify or cancel this proposal application process at any time for any reason.

The Ministry is not responsible for any costs incurred by proponents for the preparation of proposal applications.

This Proposal Application neither expresses nor implies any obligations on the part of the Ministry to enter into an agreement with an organization submitting a proposal. The Ministry reserves the right to accept or reject any or all proposals, in whole or in part, in its absolute discretion.

10.0 Additional Requirements

10.1 NEGOTIATION OF AGREEMENT

No program services/activities will be delivered before reaching an agreement with MTCU for the provision of the approved services/activities. The agreement will be in a format provided by the Ministry.

10.2 REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

The Ministry will require successful proponents to regularly collect and submit in a timely manner required data/information. The Ministry will provide relevant instructions, forms and will detail the data/tracking requirements.

10.3 AUDIT REQUIREMENTS

All projects totalling \$100,000 and over will be required to submit a final detailed accounting statement that has been independently audited within 90 days of project completion.

10.4 FREEDOM OF INFORMATION AND PROTECTION OF PRIVACY ACT (FIPPA)

FIPPA applies to information in the custody or under the control of the Ministry and any information provided by a proponent can be the subject of an access request. A proponent should identify any information in its proposal or any accompanying documentation supplied in confidence for which confidentiality is to be maintained by the Ministry. The confidentiality of such information will be maintained by the Ministry except as otherwise required by law or by order of a court or tribunal, including the Information and Privacy Commissioner. Proponents are advised that their proposals will, as necessary, be disclosed on a confidential basis, to the Ministry's advisers retained for the purpose of evaluating or participating in the evaluation of their proposals.

10.5 CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Conflict of interest includes, but is not limited to, any situation or circumstances where the Proponent, or any of its respective advisors, partners, members, directors, officers, employees, agents and volunteers

Has/have:

- a. an unfair advantage or engages in conduct, directly or indirectly, that may give it an unfair advantage;
- b. other commitments, relationships or financial interest that (i) could or could be seen to exercise an improper influence over the objective, unbiased and impartial exercise of its independence; or (ii) could or could be seen to compromise, impair or become incompatible with the effective carrying out of its proposed project; and,
- c. used confidential information of the Ministry without the Ministry's written consent; or direct or indirect benefit from the carrying out of the project.

The proponent must disclose any information pertaining to any situation that may be a conflict of interest in submitting the proposal or, if selected, the contractual obligations.

10.6 COMPREHENSIVE GENERAL LIABILITY INSURANCE

The proponent who will sign the agreement (the successful proponent) must secure comprehensive general liability insurance to an inclusive limit not less than two million dollars (\$2,000,000) per occurrence on property damage, bodily injury and personal injury prior to receiving the funds.

10.7 MEDIA COMMUNICATIONS

Organizations may not at any time directly or indirectly communicate with the media in relation to this proposal application or the awarding of the same or any resulting agreement(s) without the prior written consent of the MTCU and then only in coordination with the MTCU.

Marketing and Promotional Materials:

- Full acknowledgement of Ontario government support must be provided in all marketing and promotional material