

Call for Participation

Working Together to Improve and Expand Literacy and Essential Skills Services in Ontario

This **Call For Participation** builds on the recommendations in the [Literacy and Basic Skills program evaluation report](#) and continues the discussion started at the October 2017 Symposium with the Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) network. This discussion focused on strengthening the LBS program and improving and expanding literacy and other essential skills services in the province, in order to respond to the need for skills upgrading.

The Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development (MAESD) views collaboration as key to the success of this work. **Through partnership**, we can better **reach more** Ontarians, to **advance their skills** and unlock their own potential.

Invitation to Participate

From **now until December 4, 2017**, the ministry invites you to participate in **working tables** and **reference groups** that will build on the recommendations made in the Cathexis LBS evaluation report and at the LBS symposium, and work collaboratively to design and recommend LBS program changes and implementation plans.

This work will be part of a multi-year collaborative process to improve and expand the LBS program. Improving and expanding literacy and other essential skills programming is central to the province's commitment to provide opportunities for Ontarians to build and maintain critical foundational skills and participate in a knowledge-based economy and society.

Recommendations will be considered by a Steering Committee of LBS network and ministry representatives and then submitted to the ministry for consideration.

Participants on working tables and reference groups will be from **government and external organizations**. This will include LBS network representatives and other relevant partners, such as employers, who have knowledge and experience related to

adult literacy and other essential skills, adult education, employer and industry needs, and policy and program design.

Each Working Table will establish a meeting schedule to support it in achieving the expectations set out below. Working Tables will meet quarterly in person¹ and, as frequently as required (based on the established meeting schedule), using teleconference or webinar technologies.

MAESD will engage a consulting team to support and facilitate the efforts of the Working Tables and the Reference Groups.

Partnerships

The process of collaboratively developing recommended program enhancements and implementation plans for the ministry's consideration will involve service providers, support organizations and regional networks, partner ministries, employers and learners. The need for additional participants may also emerge. Working tables and reference groups will identify strategies to strengthen partnerships with employers and other industry partners. They will engage with learners on proposed changes.

Guiding Principles

The improvement and expansion process will be collaborative, learner-centred, evidence-based and inclusive. It is important that a diversity of voices is represented on the working tables and reference groups.

Scope

Building on the recommendations in the Literacy and Basic Skills program evaluation report and discussed at the October 5 and 6 symposium, the LBS Program improvement and expansion process will include:

- Program changes and implementation plans to strengthen training quality and learner outcomes.
- Program changes and implementation plans to expand the reach of literacy and other essential skills training.

¹ The ministry has set aside funds to support the expenses directly associated with participation in the Steering Committee, Working Tables and Reference Groups meetings. Funding is intended to offset some of the expenses organizations would otherwise incur by participating in quarterly in-person meetings. Travel, meals and accommodation expenses will be supported according to the rates set out in the [Travel, Meal and Hospitality Expenses Directive](#) and the Public Sector Expenses Review Act. Pre-approval of travel, meal and accommodation expenses will be required by the ministry prior to in-person Steering Committee, Working Tables and Reference Groups meetings.

- Updates to program guidelines and processes supporting program administration.

Governance Structure

MAESD is launching a multi-year process to improve and expand the LBS program in Ontario. The ministry recognizes the expertise that resides in the people who work to deliver LBS programming every day. The insights and advice provided by this group are essential to identifying an effective approach to improving the LBS program and expanding its reach so more Ontarians can benefit from skills upgrading.

There will be a Steering Committee, three (3) working tables and two (2) reference groups as follows:

Steering Committee

The Steering Committee will provide oversight for the project and offer the final recommendations to the ministry on the improvement and expansion of the LBS program. They will develop a plan for making regular project updates to the LBS network. They will also ensure learners are engaged throughout the work and make final recommendations to the ministry. The ministry will make final decisions regarding program changes.

The Committee will include representatives of the ministry and of organizations currently providing leadership in the LBS network and providing support to a diversity of LBS service delivery organizations. The ministry has invited leaders of the support organizations, as well as two regional networks to serve as members of the Steering Committee.

The Steering Committee will meet in-person quarterly.

Working Tables

Working tables will include a diversity of representatives from service delivery organizations, support organizations and regional networks, as well as representatives of the ministry. Building on the recommendations made in the Cathexis LBS evaluation report and at the LBS symposium, these bodies will work collaboratively to develop program design changes and implementation plans on key topics.

The working tables will work cooperatively to recommend program changes and implementation plans to support the improvement and expansion of literacy and essential skills programming for Ontario. Program changes and implementation plans

will be reviewed by the Steering Committee before being submitted to the ministry for final decision-making. The objectives, approximate timelines and anticipated deliverables are set out below for each working table.

It is expected that each working table and reference group will meet monthly via teleconference (half-day) and quarterly in person.

1. Working Table 1: The Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework (OALCF) and Learner Assessment

Objective

Building on the recommendations made in the Cathexis LBS evaluation report and at the LBS symposium, review and update the OALCF, learner assessment practices, curriculum resources and develop a strategy for ongoing management and improvement of the OALCF and learner assessment practices.

Seeking Participants

Up to eight LBS Network representatives including from service delivery (in person, blended and e-channel) and support organizations.

Timeframe

January 2018 to December 2018. It is anticipated that the table will meet monthly via teleconference (half-day) and quarterly for in person meetings (full-day).

Anticipated Deliverables

A) OALCF

Building on the recommendations made in the LBS program evaluation, provide recommendations to the Steering Committee and the ministry regarding:

- What specific opportunities exist with respect to enhancing the OALCF, including milestones and culminating tasks.
- Recommended changes to the OALCF and their implementation.
- How to better support the use of the OALCF to ensure programming is responsive to the cultural needs of a diversity of learners.
- How to better support the use of the OALCF to ensure programming accommodates a variety of learner goals.
- Develop a curriculum framework management strategy including:
 - Recommendations to ensure the framework is consistently improved upon and kept up-to-date.
 - Capacity building and training among users.

- How best to engage stakeholders on potential revisions or additions on an ongoing basis.

B) Learner Assessment and Learner Gains

Building on the recommendations made in the LBS program evaluation and with the support of the ministry and consultants:

- Compile existing research and evaluations on assessment tools and practices related to adult literacy and essential skills.
- Review the [program's current guidelines](#) related to assessment (pages 20-24) and recommend changes to strengthen consistency in the approach to learner assessment across the program.
- Recommend options for a suite of assessment tools for use by all LBS service providers that are suitable for literacy and essential skills programming in Ontario.
- Develop a framework for assessment to ensure ongoing management and improvement, taking into consideration the following:
 - Learners at various skill levels across the spectrum
 - Cultural and linguistic diversity, both in terms of learner profile and needs as well as the programming itself.
 - Learners with diverse goals, including further education and training, employment, and other goals.
 - Educational setting, including in-person “classroom” learning, online and blended learning, and learning in the workplace and other modes of delivery.
 - The relationship with assessment frameworks, specifically entry and exit assessment tools for other education and training programs, including Adult Credit (Secondary School), Language Training (Canadian Language Benchmarks), Apprenticeship, and college and university postsecondary.
 - Recommendations for maintenance and renewal of the proposed assessment framework.
 - The skills, expertise and/or qualifications required by service provider staff/practitioners to appropriately administer assessments and recommended strategies to further develop and maintain this expertise.

2. Working Table 2: Organizational Capacity and Professional Development

Objective

Building on the recommendations made in the Cathexis LBS evaluation report and at the LBS symposium:

- Identify organizational capacity needs and propose a plan to strengthen capacity across the network.
- Identify practitioner capacity needs and propose a plan to strengthen practitioner capacity through professional development.

Seeking Participants

Up to eight representatives of support organizations and regional networks.

Timeframe

January 2018 to December 2018. It is anticipated that the table will meet monthly via teleconference (half-day) and quarterly for in-person meetings (full-day).

Anticipated Deliverables

A) Organizational Capacity:

- Working with additional network representatives and key stakeholders (e.g. learners), develop a strategy to build organizational capacity, taking into consideration the needs and realities of LBS learners, different communities, organizational sectors (i.e., colleges, school boards, and community-based agencies), organizations delivering different linguistic and cultural programming streams (i.e. Anglophone, Deaf, Francophone, Indigenous) and other factors such as the diversity of needs of learners served (e.g., skill level).
- Develop a framework/strategy for:
 - Strengthening service provider capacity to better serve existing learners.
 - Building service provider and the LBS network's capacity to reach more Ontarians who need literacy and essential skills training.
 - Strengthening the network's capacity to disseminate leading practices and respond to the changing needs of learners, employers, educational/training institutions and other parties as appropriate.

B) Practitioner Qualifications and Competencies:

- Establish a framework for practitioner competencies.
- Recommend core competencies, skills and knowledge for practitioners delivering adult literacy and essential skills programming that would be common throughout the province.
- Ensure the core are reflective of or recommend additional competencies, skills and knowledge that are reflective of:
 - Cultural and linguistic diversity of learners.
 - Mode of delivery (for example on-line vs. in-person).
 - Type of programming being provided (for example workplace literacy).

- Develop a framework/strategy for ongoing professional development for practitioners.

3. Working Table 3: Modes of Delivery and “Footprint” of Services

Objectives

Building on the recommendations made in the Cathexis LBS evaluation report and at the LBS symposium, identify recommendations regarding modes of delivery and footprint of services in order to improve and expand literacy and essential skills services to better serve current learners and reach more Ontarians.

Seeking Participants

Up to eight representatives of regional networks and of service delivery and support organizations

Timeframe

April 2018 to December 2018. It is anticipated that the table will meet monthly via teleconference (half-day) and quarterly for in-person meetings (full-day).

Deliverables

Building on the recommendations made in the Cathexis LBS evaluation report and at the LBS symposium:

- Identify the characteristics of best practice models for program delivery and their effectiveness in meeting the needs of learners.
- Recommend how to improve current delivery modes and explore and expand reach through additional program delivery modes such as contextualized essential skills and workplace essential skills.
- Consider options and strategies for incorporating essential skills training into other training programs.
- Develop a strategy for ensuring that the geographic location of services meets the needs in the province.
- Recommend options for leveraging partnerships with industry, labour and other essential skills training providers.
- Recommend whether the ministry should consider supporting:
 - Differentiated programming service provision based on sector, stream, goal path, region and/or other factors.
 - “Full suite” service provision so that all learners can be well served at each delivery site (e.g. based on cultural and linguistic needs and streams, accessibility, literacy and essential skills levels and goal paths).
 - Other models of place-based delivery.

Reference Groups

Reference groups will include a diversity of representatives from service delivery organizations, support organizations and regional networks, as well as ministry representatives. Building on the recommendations made in the Cathexis LBS evaluation report and at the LBS symposium, these bodies will work collaboratively to offer recommendations to the Steering Committee, as needed, but primarily, to provide advice to the ministry and consultants on key priorities. The ministry will make final decisions regarding program changes. The objectives, approximate timelines and anticipated deliverables are set out below for each of the reference groups.

1. Reference Group 1: Rebranding, Marketing, Awareness and Communications

Objective

Building on the recommendations made in the Cathexis LBS evaluation report and at the LBS symposium, advise on strategies to reach more Ontarians through network-driven outreach, on rebranding and marketing of the program, and on communications strategies and opportunities for continuous improvement.

Seeking Participants

Up to eight representatives of services delivery organizations, support organizations and regional networks

Timeframe

April 2018 to December 2018. It is anticipated that the group will meet monthly via teleconference (half-day) and quarterly for in-person meetings (full-day).

Deliverables

Building on the recommendations made in the Cathexis LBS evaluation report and at the LBS symposium:

- Develop a strategy to reach additional learners through network-driven outreach to improve awareness of available programs and services in 2018-19.
- Work with the ministry to rebrand adult literacy and essential skills program services to mitigate the stigma often associated with the terms “literacy” and “basic skills”; and expand understanding that skills maintenance is increasingly a lifelong undertaking for all adults.
- Advise on a potential marketing campaign that will provide information about the issue of literacy and essential skills and the programs and services provided by the Ontario government.

- Convey the message that adult literacy and essential skills program services ensures a workforce that is resilient and adaptable to changing workplace demands and proficiency is fundamental importance to the social and economic health of Ontarians.

2. Reference Group 2: Funding and Performance Management

Objective

Building on the recommendations made in the Cathexis LBS evaluation report and at the LBS symposium, advise on the development of an LBS program funding model and changes to performance management.

Seeking Participants

Up to eight representatives of services delivery organizations, support organizations and regional networks

Timeframe

July 2018 to December 2018. It is anticipated that the group will meet monthly via teleconference (half-day) and quarterly for in-person meetings (full-day).

Anticipated Deliverables

Building on the recommendations made in the Cathexis LBS evaluation report and at the LBS symposium and working with the ministry and consultants, provide advice on supporting high quality and expanded service delivery through a funding model and performance management framework.

- Establish principles and a framework for a funding model/formula for LBS.
- Establish/revise principles and framework for program accountability, performance management and continuous improvement.

What You Bring

MAESD is seeking a diversity of insights, skills and expertise related to each of the working tables and reference groups. There will be up to eight LBS network representatives joining ministry representatives on each working tables and reference group. It is important that participants represent the linguistic, cultural, geographic and sectoral diversity of the Literacy and Basic Skills program.

In your participation application, we ask that you describe the relevant knowledge and experience you would bring to the specific working tables or reference groups you are applying to. Each applicant should also describe your current role in advancing literacy

and other essential skills in your community. Please confirm you will be available to participate in the in-person and teleconference meetings.

Please also confirm in your participation application that you have the endorsement of your organization to participate on the working tables or reference groups you are applying to.

Each organization is welcome to apply for more than one working table and/or reference group. In particular, those you feel you would bring the greatest value to.

Ministry representatives will review all the participation applications and make recommendations to the Steering Committee. The committee will make the final decisions regarding working table and reference group membership.

MAESD invites you to apply online to participate:

Click [here](#) to apply.

If you have any questions, please email us at LifelongLearning@Ontario.ca.

Additional information

Once the Steering Committee, working tables and reference groups are established, each will develop its own Terms of Reference (TOR) and agree to a meeting schedule. The TOR will be established in line with its objectives and deliverables. External consultants, including a professional facilitator, will be dedicated to this process to support facilitation, project management and administration of the meetings (whether in-person or via teleconference/webinar).

Frequency

With the support of the ministry and consultants, the Steering Committee, working tables and reference groups will establish a meeting and teleconference schedule in order to meet the anticipated deliverables and timelines set out in this document.

It is anticipated that each working table and reference group will meet via teleconference approximately once monthly and in-person quarterly.

Communications/Sharing of Information

The ministry will work with consultants to share the meeting schedule and relevant documents, including research and reports, and meeting minutes among the Steering Committee, working tables and reference groups.

Administrative Support

The ministry and consultants will provide administrative and research support, as needed, for the Steering Committee, working tables and reference groups.

Expenses

The ministry has set aside funds to support the expenses directly associated with participation in quarterly in-person Steering Committee, working table and reference group meetings. These funds are intended to offset some of the expenses organizations would otherwise incur by participating in these meetings. Travel, meals and accommodation expenses will be supported according to the rates set out in the Travel, Meal and Hospitality Expenses Directive² and the Public Sector Expenses Review Act.

Pre-approval of travel, meal and accommodation expenses will be required by the ministry prior to the in-person Steering Committee, Working Table and Reference Group meetings.

What Impact Your Participation Will Have

Partnership is key to the success of building essential skills in the province. Program change and implementation recommendations from each working table and reference group will inform the Steering Committee's recommendations to the ministry. These recommendations will improve and expand programming to better serve learners and reach more Ontarians. The ministry is responsible for the final decisions regarding program changes. We look forward to continuing to collaborate with the LBS network to advance skills and support more Ontarians, to unlock their potential.

² Note: Travel does not refer to a person's regular commute to work. For example, if you regularly commute to Toronto, expenses will not be supported for meetings held in Toronto. If you are traveling from within the GTA, limited accommodation expenses will be supported.