

**Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training, and Skills  
Development**

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# **Skills Development Fund**

## **Round 3 Application Guide**

**September 2022**

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**The Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development (ministry) is allocating funding in 2022-23 through the Skills Development Fund (SDF) to support projects that will support Ontario's economic recovery.**

## **1. Context**

The SDF is an Employment Ontario program that initially launched as a COVID-19 pandemic response initiative in February 2021 and has since moved to focus on post-pandemic economic recovery. As the government continues to manage outbreaks and return to normalcy, economic recovery is central to the government's agenda, including addressing skills and workforce development challenges in the labour market.

### **1.1 Workforce Development Challenges**

Prior to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, Ontario was facing tight labour market conditions, with the unemployment rate at multi-year lows and employers reporting recruitment challenges, particularly related to finding workers with specific desired skills and experiences.

More people now than ever will require employment and training services because of the scale of the pandemic's disruption across several industries and the disproportionate impact for some key sectors. For instance, workers in the hospitality industry (e.g., accommodation and food services) have experienced major job losses while employers in other sectors have reported difficulty in securing the skilled talent to fill job vacancies in areas of technology, manufacturing, and the skilled trades.

There are structural inequalities and economic barriers that prevent people from having the opportunity to participate fully in the labour market. For example, the data shows that youth, women, Indigenous people, racialized individuals, people with disabilities, and lower wage earners are among the groups disproportionately impacted by job losses during the lockdown period.<sup>1</sup> There are disproportionate labour market impacts on local and regional economies that are driven by unique local conditions.

The growing digital knowledge and skills gap also jeopardizes the continuity of supply chains and operations.

The need to innovate has become more apparent as apprenticeship training delivery agents (TDAs) and workforce development training providers cope with the implications

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<sup>1</sup> Wholesale and retail and accommodation and food services sectors have a higher concentration of workers that have not completed postsecondary education, a larger proportion of female workers (54.4% and 47.4% respectively) and lower median hourly wages (\$17.00 and \$15.00) compared to other sectors. These sectors also typically employ youth and visible minorities. Young workers and women are more likely to have been laid off permanently.

of providing in-class training, while adhering to health and safety measures. Online and/or virtual training is a relatively new concept for many trades and providers could benefit from an investment in innovative approaches to in-class delivery.

## **1.2 Opportunities to Address Challenges through the SDF**

The way people work, learn and train has been changing, and the pandemic has accelerated those changes. Where work is done, how it is conducted, and the need to adapt to changes in society and technology. Work is a foundational value of society and must be protected and rewarded to build better communities. Therefore, the government remains committed to enabling forward-looking, collaborative, and responsive solutions to bridge the gap between the knowledge that people have and the skills that employers need to build a talented, resilient, and vibrant workforce.

## **2. What Is the Skills Development Fund?**

The SDF will support project-based solutions that offer partnership-driven approaches to stimulate economic growth in emerging and key growth sectors of Ontario's economy and to increase long-term economic competitive advantage through workforce development strategies that can support workforce sustainability and resilience

### **2.1 Objectives of the Program**

The main objectives of the SDF are to:

- **Support and help develop a resilient workforce by supporting access into the labour market, and/or retention and capacity-building for employers.** This includes attracting investment and job creation through the development and maintenance of a stable labour force, particularly one that keeps pace with changes in technology and the way that work is done. Solutions can also redress pandemic-induced labour and financial impacts on businesses, reduce the administrative burden of human resourcing and worker retention.
- **Empower workers and job seekers who face higher barriers of entry, and enhance pathways into meaningful and gainful employment,** including youth (high school and early postsecondary graduates), women, Indigenous peoples, racialized individuals, people with disabilities or mental health challenges, and members of at-risk communities. Tailored supports, workplace accommodations, or specialized training are fundamental components of protecting workers' social and physical wellbeing. This includes specialized training for people with learning disabilities, mental health challenges and other disorders.

- **Encourage partnerships across the economy and support innovative ideas and training solutions** to improve the capacity of communities to respond to shocks to labour market conditions in in-demand, emerging and essential sectors. Partnerships quicken market-led recovery, growth, and prosperity to enhance the talent development pipeline.

### 3. Program Parameters

To qualify for the SDF, projects must support market-driven solutions that meet each of the following requirements:

1. One or more main objectives (see section 2.1).
2. One or more target sectors or occupations (see section 3.2).
3. One or more participant groups (see section 3.3).
4. One or more focus areas (see section 3.4).

The primary applicant must also meet the eligibility criteria described below in section 3.1.

#### 3.1 Eligible Applicants

- a. The following entities are eligible to apply to the SDF as **primary applicants**:
  - Employers in Ontario other than those listed in section 3.1 (b).
  - Apprenticeship training delivery agents (TDAs) other than those listed in section 3.1 (b).
  - Non-profit organizations in Ontario, including Indigenous band offices and Indigenous Skills and Employment Training (ISETs) agreement holders.
  - Professional / industry / employer associations.
  - Trade unions / union-affiliated organizations.
  - Municipalities, District Social Services Administration Boards (DSSABs), Consolidated Municipal Service Managers (CMSMs), Hospitals.

In cases where an application is submitted by a consortium of partners (collectively, applicants), the lead organization for the consortium is the **primary applicant** and the primary contact for the ministry on all matters related to the submitted application, including being the responsible party under a Transfer Payment Agreement (the **Recipient**).

If the application is selected for funding and a Transfer Payment Agreement entered into between the parties, the primary applicant as Recipient will be accountable to the

ministry for managing and executing the development and delivery of the project, including resource management and satisfaction of performance and financial obligations established by the ministry in the Transfer Payment Agreement.

Each primary applicant must also meet all of the conditions set forth in section 3.1 (c) as a condition of eligibility.

- b. The following entities are only eligible to apply to the SDF either as a co-applicant with one of the organizations above or as a non-primary applicant in a consortium of partners:
- Publicly assisted colleges, universities, or Indigenous Institutes in Ontario; and
  - Private career colleges registered under the *Private Career Colleges Act, 2005*.
- c. In addition to the requirements set out in sections 3.1(a) and (b) above, as a condition of eligibility primary applicants must:
- Be a legal entity.
  - Be authorized to operate or carry-on business in the province of Ontario.
  - Have a physical presence and are actively operating or carrying on business in the province of Ontario.
  - Comply with all applicable legislation, including the Human Rights Code, the *Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA)*, the *Employment Standards Act, 2000 (ESA)*, the *Building Opportunities in the Skilled Trades Act, 2021 (BOSTA)*, and other legislation that may be applicable to the primary applicant and its operations or business.
  - Maintain and declare appropriate Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) or private disability insurance coverage as applicable to cover the cost of work-related injuries/occupational diseases, as well as adequate third-party general liability insurance as advised by its insurance broker.
  - Be, or must partner with, a ministry-approved Training Delivery Agent (TDA), where the applicant intends to deliver apprenticeship in-class training.

Entities that are not eligible to be the primary applicant through the SDF program may be eligible to participate in an application or project as a participating and/or contributing partner(s).

Entities can submit more than one application; however, each project and the project activities must be substantively different. Entities may partner together on multiple projects.

### 3.2 Target Sectors or Occupations

As a criteria of eligibility, submitted projects must focus on in-demand and key growth **target sectors and occupations** linked to future oriented economic recovery, to address regionally focused occupational and regional demands that are responsive to employers’ needs.

The Ontario [Labour Market Information website](#) has a relevant tool to validate in-demand and growth occupations and sectors. It uses regionally focused content for indicators of future demand – 5-year regional occupational outlook.

Target sectors and occupations include, but are not limited to the following:

- Skilled trades, other high-skilled, technical occupations, and other occupations in high demand (e.g., heavy-duty equipment technician, technology-related jobs, etc.).
- Sectors experiencing labour market challenges, including those impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic (e.g., those experiencing high layoffs), sectors with unmet demand and talent gaps, as well as other priority sectors such as:
  - Manufacturing and advanced manufacturing.
  - In-demand health care occupations.

### 3.3 Participant Groups and Their Eligibility

All project proposals must support one or more groups within the parameters outlined below as a criteria of eligibility.

Participant Groups	Interpretation
<p>Projects may support client types such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employers, sponsors of apprentices. (See below for additional requirements).</li> <li>• Registered apprentices <a href="#">in skilled trades prescribed in Ontario under the BOSTA.</a></li> <li>• Job seekers, workers at risk of job displacement, including certain individuals with a 900 series SIN</li> </ul>	<p>For the purpose of the SDF, those that are “disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic” are defined as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Women:</b> individuals who self-identify with the female gender. This includes women in skilled trades where they are traditionally underrepresented.</li> <li>• <b>Youth:</b> individuals who are between the ages of 15 and 29 at the start of a Project.</li> </ul>

<p>(denotes temporary authority to work in Canada) and an open work permit awaiting their official documents for permanent residency.*</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Those that are <b>disproportionately impacted by COVID-19</b>, including women, youth**, people with disabilities (PwD)***, Indigenous peoples, racialized groups, immigrants.</li> </ul> <p>* Includes protected persons, persons who graduated as an international student from a designated learning institution and have been granted a work permit under the Post-Graduation Work Permit Program, and those in Canada on a temporary work permit who have been granted Permanent Resident status.</p> <p>** Youth, excluding full-time students and summer student programs.</p> <p>*** Projects that identify as primarily supporting people with disabilities are</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Justice System Involved:</b> individuals involved with the criminal justice system (i.e., have a criminal background).</li> <li>• <b>People with Disabilities:</b> individuals who self-identify as a person with a disability, including those requiring specialized mental health support, or with a disability as defined in Section 10 (1) of the Ontario Human Rights Code.<sup>3</sup></li> <li>• <b>Indigenous Peoples:</b> individuals who self-identify as belonging to one of three distinct groups in Canada: First Nations, Inuit or Métis.</li> <li>• <b>Racialized Groups:</b> often used to stand in for “visible minorities,” this more fluid term acknowledges that race is a social construction that can change over time and place. It can be applied to people who have racial meanings attributed to them as a group in ways that negatively</li> </ul>
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<sup>3</sup> Section 10 (1) of the **Ontario Human Rights Code** defines “disability” as follows:

- any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, includes diabetes mellitus, epilepsy, a brain injury, any degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical co-ordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device;
- a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability;
- a learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language;
- a mental disorder; or,
- an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the **Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997**.

<p>required to have a minimum of 65% participation of people with disabilities.</p> <p>Participants must reside in Ontario<sup>2</sup>.</p>	<p>impact their social, political, and economic life.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Immigrants:</b> refers to individuals who are, or who have ever been, a landed immigrant or permanent resident. Such individuals have been granted the right to live in Canada permanently by immigration authorities. Immigrants who have obtained Canadian citizenship by naturalization are included in this group.</li> </ul>
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### 3.3.1 Other Eligibility Criteria for Participants

#### a. Employers and Sponsors of Apprentices

In respect of SDF-funded projects that will provide support to employers and/or sponsors of apprentices (as participants), each of those employers and sponsors must:

- Be a legal entity
- Be authorized to operate or carry-on business in the province of Ontario
- Have a physical presence and are actively operating or carrying on business in the province of Ontario
- Comply with all applicable legislation, including the Human Rights Code, the OHSA, the ESA, the BOSTA, and other legislation that may be applicable to the primary applicant and its operations or business.
- Maintain and declare appropriate WSIB or private disability insurance coverage as applicable to cover the cost of work-related injuries/occupational diseases, as well as adequate third-party general liability insurance as advised by its insurance broker.
- TDAs must be approved by the Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development to deliver apprenticeship in-class training in the trade(s) associated with the project.

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<sup>2</sup> Apprentices who reside outside of Ontario but who work and are registered as an apprentice in Ontario may be supported.

- Apprenticeship sponsors must, where applicable, meet the requirements under BOSTA to: (1) employ or engage an individual to practice in a compulsory trade; and (2) meet trade ratio requirements.

#### **b. Individuals Awaiting Permanent Residence Status**

Individuals with a 900-series Social Insurance Numbers (SINs)<sup>4</sup> and an open work permit who have received preliminary approval from the federal government and are waiting for their permanent residence status to be finalized are eligible for participation in SDF-funded projects, depending on the primary applicant and project's other eligibility and suitability requirements.

These individuals include:

- "Protected persons" as defined by the Immigration and *Refugee Protection Act*, and
- Those in Canada on an open work permit who have received a letter or document from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada confirming that they meet the eligibility requirements for permanent residence (i.e., approval in principle).

Proof of status is required. Individuals with a 900-series SIN and a work permit awaiting their official documents for permanent residency will usually have a letter to this effect and must present that documentation to support their change in status. Individuals must present their new SIN (replacing the 900-series SIN) once they receive it.

#### **c. Refugee Claimants**

Refugee claimants with a 900-series SIN and an open work permit are also eligible to participate in an SDF-funded project, depending on the primary applicant and project's other eligibility and suitability requirements.

Refugee claimants with an open work permit must present their work permit as well as any updates to the status of their work permit.

#### **d. Visitors under Emergency Travel measures**

Visitors under Emergency Travel measures enacted by the federal government, including the Canada-Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel (CUAET)

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<sup>4</sup> Social Insurance Numbers (SINs) are issued by the federal government. The following guidance is based on the federal government's current practice of issuing SINs. SINs that begin with a "9" are issued to individuals who are not Canadian citizens or permanent residents but require a SIN for employment purposes. If the federal government changes its practices, the following guidance may need to be revised.

measure with a 900-series SIN and an open work permit are eligible for participation in an SDF-funded project, depending on the primary applicant and project's other eligibility and suitability requirements.

Visitors under Emergency Travel measures, such as CUAET, who do not have a 900-series SIN and an open work permit are **not** eligible for SDF.

**e. Temporary Foreign Workers with an employer-specific work permit**

Temporary foreign workers with a 900-series SIN are **not** eligible for participation in SDF-funded projects.

**f. International Students**

International students with a 900-series SIN are **not** eligible for participation in SDF-funded projects.

### **3.4 SDF Focus Areas**

Although the SDF will support a broad range of projects, submitted applications will be required to demonstrate how funding will support one or more of the following focus areas as a criteria of eligibility:

- Engage in **research and development** for innovative approaches and solutions to modernize skills development that meets local employer and labour market needs (i.e., information, tools, equipment, resources, service delivery models), and
  - to offer business models/solutions to support current and future labour market/workforce challenges and needs.
- Ensure a sustainable and resilient workforce by **enhancing employers' capacity** to:
  - provide employers with supports and tools to adapt their businesses to changing labour market, including digitally driven economy,
  - develop partnership-driven approaches to their workforce development needs,
  - deliver employer-led training to recruit, train and retrain workers that are targeted to be laid-off - enhance future focused skills development through experiential learning, workplace (on-the-job) training, , and job placements

to improve workers' employment outcomes and meet workforce needs now and in future, and

- increase employer capacity to attract, develop and retain underrepresented groups in their workforce, including:
  - providing employers with supports and tools to enhance accessibility and accommodation,
  - providing specialised employment services and supports related to mental health, and
  - supporting employers' training needs and reduce administrative burden of training and/or recruitment.
- Stimulate economic growth by unlocking the full economic potential of **skilled trades and apprenticeship** to:
  - increase access to Ontario's apprenticeship system by encouraging greater employer participation and improving supports for apprentices on-the-job, and in-class through the provision of wraparound supports, up-to-date training equipment and increased capacity,
  - enhance the apprentice experience either on-the-job or in-class to increase apprentice registrations, progression, completions, and the obtaining of the highest level of certification available in a particular trade, and
  - increase capacity of apprentice sponsors to attract, develop and retain underrepresented groups in their workforce.
- Build and sustain partnerships that identify and address shared sectorial workforce development needs and labour market needs in emerging and growth sectors in Ontario.

### **3.5 Eligible Activities**

Funding provided under the SDF is intended to support the activities outlined in this section. Other activities that may not strictly fall under the activities listed below, but that are designed to serve the focus areas outlined in this document, may be considered by the ministry.

#### **Skilled Trades and Apprenticeship**

- In-class training support for apprentices, including accessibility accommodations, tutoring, exam preparation supports, mentorship programs, mental health support, and wraparound supports that promote apprentice progression completion, and the obtaining of the highest level of certification available in a particular trade.<sup>5</sup>
- On-the-job supports to help trainers (e.g., journeypersons) provide the training apprentices need to successfully progress through their training and work towards the highest certification available in the relevant trade (e.g., train-the-trainer, career development initiatives, mental health support, mentorship programs).
- Wrap-around support for apprentices while training on-the-job (e.g., inclusive hiring and respectful workplace practices for hiring from traditionally under-represented groups, including applicant screening, recruitment and retention strategies; mentorship; end-of-training supports).
- Research, development and piloting of new and innovative approaches to delivering classes that are on the 2023-24 apprenticeship in-class training seat plan (e.g., e-learning delivery<sup>6</sup>, online assessment, virtual simulation, or other alternative methods to block release etc.).
- Purchase of equipment or supplies that support resilient skills building or enhance in-class training.
  - Approved TDAs must deliver apprenticeship in-class training in the trade(s) associated with the project in 2023-24.

### **Employer/Organization Focused**

- Recruitment, training and retention of workers and employers.
- Employer-led skills development (employability, essential and technical skills) through experiential learning, work-integrated learning, job trials, job placements, and mentorship.
- Projects that serve underrepresented groups (e.g., PwD, racialized groups, immigrants, etc.).

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<sup>5</sup> Funding may not be used to enhance in-class per diem rates or be used to fund additional classes not approved under the TDA's In-Class Enhancement Fund transfer payment agreement.

<sup>6</sup> Ministry approval is needed to deliver apprenticeship in-class training 100% online after March 31, 2022. For information about how to obtain ministry approval please see the [TDA Approval Guideline](#) and [Application Form](#) on the ministry's [Employment Ontario Partners' Gateway](#) website.

- Increased wraparound, accessibility and accommodation supports and tools, including projects that address mental health.
- Partnership building and management.

### **Research and Development**

- Reports that identify innovative approaches and solutions to modernize skills development and build a resilient workforce.
- Innovative business models and workforce development solutions to support labour market challenges.
- Production of new or improved tools, models, software, e-learning modules, online assessment, virtual simulation, curriculum and/or resources.
- Partnership building and management.

### **Workforce Development (Full-Service/Light Touch)<sup>7</sup>.**

- Removing barriers in education and skills training opportunities, improving employer access and leadership in recruiting, and developing talent, or retaining and retraining the existing workforce.
- Researching, developing, and delivering new and innovative approaches to skills training (occupational, short-term, essential, literacy and soft skills, etc.).

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**<sup>7</sup>Full-Service Projects:** Training/re-skilling/ upskilling provided to job seekers; comprehensive level of assistance required. Participants obtain skills in one or multiple key domains, and placements could be available as part of their training. Activities could include experiential learning and job placements. Could include projects that provide direct financial assistance to individuals to select, arrange and pay for training.

**Light Touch Projects:** Short duration of training (i.e., 2 days) - minimal level of service or assistance required by participants. Provides structured and individualized supports to assist individuals based on their existing level of skills and qualifications, in conducting informed job search activities. Activities include individual or group assistance with information on local labour market, career planning, education and training programs, resume writing; interview and job preparation, occupational requirements, job finding clubs, job placements, etc. Activities focus on finding work. Individualized case management services and counselling supports that monitor individuals' progression in implementing their action plan and/or provide specialized assessments and professional diagnostic services related to physical, social, intellectual, and/or psychological traits that may have an impact on their ability to participate in training or to occupy specific jobs. This can also include job retention activities and job placement assistance.

- Providing tools, equipment and wrap-around support to job seekers, learners and workers (e.g., employability services, job placement, on-the-job mentorship, mental health supports and delivery, etc.).
- Developing virtual employment and training services.
- Building capacity of training providers and supporting organizations.
- Engaging and developing collaborations with employers and other key workforce development partners.

**The SDF is not intended to duplicate funding for expenses or activities funded by other sources. This includes provincial or federal funds and/or charging project participants fees to participate in, or benefit from project activities approved and funded by the SDF.** However, SDF can be used to supplement funding for additional costs of the project not covered by other public sources, and the primary applicant would need to clearly indicate which costs would be covered, including the proposed innovative incremental/enhanced activities.

The SDF is intended to be responsive and nimble with a focus on quickly identifying and processing innovative market-driven projects that will address the identified focus areas and deliver outcomes within the project timeframes.

Before applying, applicants are encouraged to consider whether their projects are better suited to existing Employment Ontario programs or if they could be funded by other provincial or federal programs.

All project activities may be considered for funding for 12 months (please see Appendix A for information on projects eligible for multiyear funding). The ministry may request financial and audit reports to be submitted before and after the time noted above.

Projects that have been funded in Round 1 and Round 2 of SDF may apply for Round 3 SDF funding but must demonstrate how their project meets the focus area and objectives in Round 3, and will be required to demonstrate that it meets all of the eligibility requirements described in these guidelines. No eligibility requirements are deemed to be waived by the ministry by virtue of a primary applicant's (or project's) participation in prior rounds of SDF funding.

### **3.6 Eligible Expenses**

Applications must include a budget which clearly itemizes expenses planned for the aforementioned activities (see section 3.5). A list of possible eligible expenses, subject to the ministry's review and approval, is included below.

All goods and services must be acquired through a fair and transparent process that promotes best value for money.

SDF funds cannot be used for expenses or activities already being funded by other sources, including the provincial or federal government or fees charged to participants.

In addition to funding research and projects, SDF funding can be used under the following categories, **without duplication**, as approved in the Transfer Payment Agreement:

3.6.1 Operating Costs

3.6.2 Administrative Costs

3.6.3 Capital Costs (i.e., Equipment and Vehicle)

3.6.4 Financial Support to Employers and Participants

3.6.5 Travel Costs

### **3.6.1 Operating Costs:**

- Staffing: Salary of staff members who conduct training, planned consulting or sub-contracting services used to directly deliver the project.
- Professional development for management and administrative staff involved in the project - amount to cover basic training needs as per organization's existing policies and employment related requirements.
- Marketing: marketing and promotion of program or distribution.
- Direct materials and consumables used in the delivery of project by participants (supplies and equipment, parts, safety equipment for participants, cleaning supplies, etc.). These are generally physical items which have a useful expected life of less than one year, or do not meet a materiality threshold for individual tracking.
- Maintenance and support of equipment directly used to deliver the project.
- Materials and office supplies (e.g., pens, pencils, paper, envelopes, cleaning supplies, subscriptions).
- Mentorship and Mental Health: mentorship and mental health services to support clients with on-the-job training, employment, or apprenticeship training.
- Operational printing contracted externally (business cards, letterhead, ad hoc unanticipated print jobs, minor updates and/or printing of organizational or program brochures, etc.).
- Other non-participant-based costs (e.g., water where public water is not safe for drinking, staff and volunteer recognition).

- A pro-rated portion of lease of real estate or the appropriate percentage of utilities associated with the direct delivery of training. If the property is financed, a pro-rated portion of financing/interest costs only may be considered as operating costs and not capital repayment.
- Audits: Projects over a threshold (see section 4.4) will require an audit by an external auditor. Audit reports are required as part of the final report submission. A maximum of \$5,000 may be received for a third-party to conduct an audit of the project.
- Employability services and supports:
  - Overall skills upgrading, which promotes a resilient worker, such as leadership, teamwork, communication, community engagement.
- Job search, matching, placement, etc. services and support, including job retention and career advancement.

### **3.6.2 Administrative costs:**

Administrative costs are limited to a maximum of 15% of the operating costs of the SDF project. Administrative costs are indirect expenditures necessary for operating an organization but not directly associated with the delivery of the Project.

Administrative costs should be attributed to the project on a basis that is proportional with the respective size of the organization and the size and/or effort of the project:

- For example, pro-rated portions of:
  - Salaries/benefits of the Executive Director, IT, and/or financial staff that work for the entire organization but may spend a portion of their time dedicated to administrative functions that support the project.
  - Legal/accounting fees:
    - Legal and accounting fees.
    - Bank fees, postage and courier fees; basic telephone fees and monthly internet fees.
    - Contracting (if not contracted specifically to support the project), bookkeeping, janitorial services, Information Technology (IT) used indirectly in project delivery, equipment maintenance services, security, translator, training fees, consultant fees, printing contracts fees.
    - Indirect/support equipment repair and maintenance (includes photocopy meter charges).
    - IT maintenance.
    - Lease or finance/interest costs attributed to administrative functions.

### **3.6.3 Capital Costs (i.e., Equipment and Vehicle):**

- New training equipment to reflect latest industry standards, including digital platforms.
- Equipment required to facilitate training for participants, students and apprentices with disabilities, where the equipment has an expected useful life of more than one year.
- Vehicle and Mobile Unit purchases and/or modifications are allowed when it meets the following requirements:
  - o Vehicle or mobile unit is directly related to delivery of services to project participants (e.g., mobile apprenticeship training units that are used for hands-on apprenticeship training and will improve the efficiency of apprenticeship training overall).
  - o The recipient would need to provide to the ministry at least three quotes for procurement of the vehicle or mobile unit, or three quotes for modification where the service is purchased. Purchase or modification can only occur upon review of the quotes and subsequent authorization from the ministry. Evidence of quotations and the expected purchase cost must be provided with the application.
  - o Mobile unit owners must purchase relevant vehicle insurance that includes coverage of the modifications. Documentation must be provided to confirm this coverage.
  - o Relevant vehicle insurance should include all perils coverage as per statutory requirements in Ontario, including Ontario Automobile Policy (OAP1) Owner's Policy Sections 3 and 4, auto liability for a limit not less than \$2,000,000 (two million) per occurrence including Accident Benefits and where applicable Section 7, Loss or Damage Coverage.
  - o The ministry will not fund modification of existing mobile units within 5 years of a government (federal or provincial) funded modification, unless the need is verified and rationale provided, with proper documentation e.g., installation of new equipment that has only come out in the last few years. Details and rationale must be provided as part of the application.
  - o New vehicle or mobile unit purchase may not be eligible if project is not sustainable beyond the project period.
  - o Plan for disposition of the asset.

### **3.6.4 Financial Support to Employers and Participants:**

- Pre-screening candidates (i.e., readiness and/or employability assessment).

- Health and safety-related equipment and other trade-specific Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).
- Apprentice in-class wrap-around supports.<sup>8</sup>
- Apprentice on-the-job training expenses (i.e., career development initiatives, mental health support, mentorship programs).
- Train-the-trainer resources to support journeypersons who train or wish to train apprentices.
- Development of training materials/resources.
- Disability-related services and accommodation supports.
- Training tuition fees and expenses, including licensing fees for participant access to pre-existing online training websites.
- Other wrap-around supports for training or job placement participants, e.g., tuition or other training provider fees, and other materials required to complete skills training (e.g., training clothing, tools, equipment, disability supports), temporary relocation and/or temporary housing expenses of the worker or job seeker to access the learning centre/training facility.
- Training or job placement wage subsidies: costs of up to 50% of wages paid, up to a maximum of \$5,000 per training participant or job placement. Wage subsidies may not be used as replacement for, or to supplement tuition fees.

### **3.6.5 Travel costs:**

- Travel or commuting expenses of the worker or job seeker to access the learning center or place of employment.<sup>9</sup>
- Staff and volunteer transportation (bus fare, taxi and parking required for delivery of project activities but not part of travel claims; does NOT include monthly parking fees or bus pass). For people with disabilities who require mobility support, this can also include coverage of site-to-site job travel, for both participants and staff support persons.

## **3.7 Ineligible Expenses**

- TDAs may not request funds for expenses that are already covered in their Apprenticeship In-Class Enhancement Fund Transfer Payment Agreement.
- Activities that are already funded through other sources of funding such as Federal or other Provincial funds.

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<sup>8</sup> May not be used as an in-class training per-diem enhancement.

<sup>9</sup> Apprentices attending in-class training can apply to the Apprentice Development Benefit for support with travel expenses. Therefore, travel expenses to the training center is ineligible under SDF. See section 5.3 for additional travel directives.

- Regular or ordinary costs related to other activities carried out by the organization.
- Insurance.
- Costs related to the development of the SDF application or the Transfer Payment Agreement, including negotiations, as well as any associated documents.
- Executive or senior management salaries who do not directly contribute to project delivery.
- Out-of-province travel costs for project staff or participants or expenditures associated with activities or operations performed outside of Ontario.
- Annual membership fees to associations.
- Costs for any materials, tools, techniques, approaches, developments or salaries used in training, work placements or other project components that have already been reimbursed by government funding to the applicant under any other Transfer Payment Agreement.
- Reimbursement for airfare purchased with personal frequent flyer points programs.
- Reimbursement of any airfare above the lowest fare available when purchasing a ticket unless otherwise approved by the ministry.
- Fines and penalties.
- Interest charges on debts related to financing the Project.
- Losses on other projects or contracts.
- Any costs, including taxes and input tax credits, for which the Recipient has received, will receive or is eligible to receive a rebate, credit, or refund.
- Annual general meetings, budget deficits, membership fees, fundraising activities, tournaments, conferences, committee and political meetings, receptions, parties, festivals or religious activities.
- Fees to attend or organize conferences, trade shows and summits.
- Contingency or unexplained miscellaneous costs.
- Harmonized Sales Tax (HST) for tax exempted organizations.
- Any expenses that are not permitted and/or are inconsistent with the terms and conditions of the Transfer Payment Agreement and any other applicable directive, policies or guidelines of the Province of Ontario.

## **4. Application and Selection Processes**

### **4.1 Application Process**

Beginning September 29, 2022, organizations can begin to apply for funding through Transfer Payment Ontario (TPON). Applications will be accepted for ministry review on a continuous basis until January 31, 2023, or until the funding has been fully committed. Projects will be prioritized based on the strength of their application. Please be aware that funds are limited and therefore applicants are encouraged to apply and submit their completed applications early.

Primary applicants must register with TPON to access the SDF Round 3 application form. TPON is the Province of Ontario's online application system for grant funding. It is important for applicants to understand the steps for registering with TPON prior to application submission.

- Information on registering and accessing TPON is available at: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/get-funding-ontario-government>
- TPON website: <https://www.app.grants.gov.on.ca/tpon>
- Applicants with technical questions about TPON can contact the TPON Customer Service Line at (416) 325-6691 or 1-855-216-3090, Monday to Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time, or by email at [TPONCC@ontario.ca](mailto:TPONCC@ontario.ca).

The ministry, at its sole discretion, will conduct ongoing assessments of applications as they are received.

The ministry is not bound to enter into a Transfer Payment Agreement with any applicant (even eligible applicants). Applications will be assessed using the evaluation criteria set out in section 4.2. The ministry reserves the right to recommend any, all or no applications for selection, whether the application(s) meets or scores highly on the evaluation criteria or not, and retains full and absolute discretion to select any eligible application for funding. If an eligible application is selected for funding, the funds will be distributed through Transfer Payment Agreements signed between the province and the selected applicants.

The ministry, at its discretion, may host virtual information sessions with interested applicants during the application period to address questions or provide clarification/updates.

For questions regarding the SDF program, submission process, or any other inquiries please contact [SkillsDevelopmentFund@ontario.ca](mailto:SkillsDevelopmentFund@ontario.ca)

## 4.2 Selection Criteria

Ministry staff will review submitted applications and assess eligible applications against the program criteria outlined below. The ministry will have sole authority to decide which eligible projects are funded.

Eligible applications will be evaluated against the following criteria:

Criteria	Weighting	Interpretation
Demonstrated Innovation	12%	The application clearly indicates how the project is innovative. If applying for a project that primarily supports PwD, the application clearly indicates how the project will support PwD in an innovative way that does not duplicate programs funded by other sources.
SDF Objective(s) and Focus Area(s)	20%	The application clearly indicates how it is aligned with at least one of the objectives <u>and</u> focus areas of the SDF.  The application clearly defines outcomes of the project, including how it meets Key Performance Indicators (KPI) (see section 4.3: Performance Management, below), value for money and impacts, including benefits to the project target group.
Project Need	25%	The application clearly defines the issue that it is seeking to address through the project (e.g., sector, region and/or participant group impacted by the issue are identified); and includes compelling rationale with adequate labour market evidence to support the need for the intervention being proposed.

Criteria	Weighting	Interpretation
		<p>The application clearly describes how the activities of the project will lead to the intended changes and desired outcomes.</p> <p>The application includes a commitment to reporting on the required KPIs (see section 4.3) and clearly identifies additional KPIs that will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the project (see section 4.4). The application includes the proponent’s plan for the collection, analysis and reporting of the data, and projections.</p>
Organizational Capacity	13%	<p>The application demonstrates how well the primary applicant’s strengths and experience (as well as any partners, if partnered with an applicant), are suited to design, implement, deliver, and monitor the proposed project and expenditures, while meeting SDF program integrity and accountability requirements.</p> <p>Applications that include a sustainability plan to phase out or secure alternative sources of funding for the project after the SDF funding period ends will be prioritized.</p>
Project Delivery Plan	20%	The application provides a detailed delivery plan that includes a feasible timeline for all key activities, identifies who is responsible for tasks, and clearly articulates risks and reasonable mitigation strategies.
Budget	10%	The application includes reasonable costs and provides a clear and detailed

Criteria	Weighting	Interpretation
		<p>breakdown of all expenditures, including funding from other sources, if applicable.</p> <p>The application demonstrates effective use of resources to achieve project objectives within the established timeframe.</p> <p>The application demonstrates the attribution methodology of administrative costs. Administrative costs do not exceed 15% of operating costs for the proposed project, not including amounts that are funded by other sources.</p>

**Notification of Successful Applicants:**

Applicants deemed eligible for SDF funding and selected by the ministry will be notified by the ministry to further finalize project activities and budget to be set forth in a Transfer Payment Agreement (and will be known as a **selected applicant**). The ministry retains the absolute right to not enter into a Transfer Payment Agreement with any selected applicant, notwithstanding any negotiations.

### 4.3 Performance Measurement

Selected applicants will be required, as Recipient under the Transfer Payment Agreement, to report on and set targets for ministry KPIs as a condition of funding under a Transfer Payment Agreement.

As applicable to the project, Recipients must report on:

- Participant demographics (i.e., age, education, etc.).
- Total number (#) of participants who took part in the funded project.
- Number (#) of participants in research and innovation projects.
- Number (#) of participants in employer focused projects.
- Number (#) of participants in workforce development skilled trades and apprenticeship projects.
- Number (#) of participants in workforce development full-service projects.
- Number (#) of participants in workforce development light touch projects.
- Percentage (%) of participants who self-identified as belonging to an underrepresented group (i.e., women, youth, people with disabilities, racialized groups, Indigenous peoples, etc.).
- Percentage (%) of participants who self-identified as people with disabilities.
  - For applications submitted for projects that primarily serve people with disabilities, **at least 65% or more of project participants** are required to be people with disabilities.
- Percentage (%) of registered apprentices that participated in SDF projects.
- Number (#) of projected organizational partners actively engaged in the project (if applicable).
- Number (#) of projected employers/industry associations involved in project (if applicable).
- Number (#) of projected education and training providers involved in the project (if applicable).
- Number (#) participants engaged or interviewed.
- Percentage (%) of participants that completed experiential learning opportunities.
- Percentage (%) of participants that completed skills training.

- Percentage (%) of participants who indicated improved industry and local labour market employability skills as a result of training.
- Percentage (%) of incumbent workers who completed upskilling or reskilling.
- Number (#) trainers (e.g., journeypersons, etc.) trained to support apprentices as a result of SDF.
- Number (#) of draft reports or findings from a research project.
- Percentage (%) of participants that complete the project.
- Percentage (%) jobseekers who achieved employment.
- Percentage (%) incumbent workers who attained a promotion or advancement.
- Number (#) of new apprenticeship registrations.
- Number (#) of apprentices who progressed to the next in-class training level of their apprenticeship program.
- Number (#) of apprentices who completed and obtained a Certificate of Qualification or Certificate of Apprenticeship.
- Number (#) of research projects contributing to peer reviewed academic journals.

Applicants must identify KPIs they will report on to evaluate the effectiveness of their project as part of the application process. The application must clearly identify the applicant's performance targets, plan for the collection, analysis and reporting of the data. A minimum participant program completion target of 80% is required for workforce development projects and of the participants who completed the program/services, 80% of those participants must achieve employment. Projects primarily supporting people with disabilities may negotiate different program completion and employment targets. The applicant may add project-specific indicators and targets, in addition to the above-required ministry-provided metrics. The ministry may outline additional indicators and targets in a Transfer Payment Agreement at its discretion.

Recipients will be provided with reporting templates. The timeline for reporting will be detailed in the Transfer Payment Agreement.

#### **4.3.1 Third-Party Evaluation**

The ministry may hire a third-party consultant to evaluate funded projects during or after their implementation. The Transfer Payment Agreement entered into between the primary applicant/Recipient and ministry will include this as a condition of receipt of funds.

## **4.4 Performance Management**

Selected applicants will enter into a Transfer Payment Agreement with the Province and will be expected to meet the following reporting requirements<sup>10</sup> and adhere to the terms of the Agreement, in their role as Recipient.

### **1. Activity Reports**

Recipients must provide activity reports to the ministry on the progress achieved and expenditures incurred in comparison to the objectives, project timeline and budget indicated in the Transfer Payment Agreement. It is expected that Recipients, where feasible, will provide status updates on project-specified and ministry-specified program evaluation metrics. Recipients will be provided templates for these reports and instructions on the frequency in which they are to be completed and returned to their local ministry office.

### **2. Final Report**

Recipients must submit a final report outlining the achievement or progress towards fulfilling the objectives as articulated in the Transfer Payment Agreement.

### **3. Financial Reports**

Financial monitoring verifies that funds are spent as intended in the Transfer Payment Agreement, and that bookkeeping systems and accounting practices are in place to manage and control ministry funds. Project expenditures will be monitored throughout the duration of the Transfer Payment Agreement via ministry Estimate of Expenditure Reports (EERs) and Statement of Revenue and Expenditure Reports (SRERs).

Recipients will be provided templates for these reports and instructions on the frequency they are to be completed and returned to their local ministry office. Unspent funding must be explained and upon demand, must be returned to the ministry. Funds that remain unspent or unaccounted for will be pursued by the ministry for collection.

### **4. Auditor's Report**

To ensure that funding awarded is used judiciously, Recipients who receive funding of \$150,000 or more from the ministry will be required to engage the services of a third-party auditor to assess the financial statements of the project and submit a report to the ministry. The report is typically due to the ministry sixty (60) calendar days after the completion of project activities, as outlined in the Transfer Payment Agreement. Applicants will include the cost of this audit in their budget application.

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<sup>10</sup> The Province may change reporting requirements at its discretion.

Recipients are contractually obligated to communicate their progress through the reports noted above. Failure to do so may result in funds being held-back or recovered.

The service activity and financial data requirements support the ministry in monitoring progress on key activities. The ministry will maintain open dialogue with Recipients throughout the funding period to provide ongoing feedback in order to support continuous improvement and a flexible design plan.

Project monitoring, depending on the degree of associated risk, may include:

- Verification of documents and other forms prior to processing.
- Direct contact with the selected applicant and/or participants/beneficiaries, other stakeholders, and partners.
- On-site/virtual visits to assess progress and achievement of activity milestones.
- On-site/virtual visits to verify expenditures and compliance to Transfer Payment Agreement terms.
- Utilizing program/project data for informed decision-making.
- Additional reports as specified from time to time.

## **4.5 Intellectual Property**

All materials created using funding from the SDF must abide by Creative Commons's [Attribution 4.0 International License/ \(CC BY 4.0\)](#). Under the Transfer Payment Agreement, intellectual property remains with its creator, but others are free to copy, redistribute, transform, and/or build upon the material for any purpose, even commercially.

The ministry will consider other Creative Commons licences if the selected applicants can provide a clear and compelling rationale.

## **4.6 Confidentiality**

Please note the ministry is subject to the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (the "Act"). The Act is a provincial statute which regulates the collection, use and disclosure of personal information and access to information in the custody and/or control of governmental institutions.

Section 17 of the Act provides a limited exemption for third party information that reveals a trade secret or scientific, commercial, technical, financial or labour relations

information supplied in confidence where disclosure of the information could reasonably be expected to result in certain harms. Any trade secret or any scientific, technical, commercial, financial, or labour relations information submitted to the ministry in confidence should be clearly marked by the primary applicant/recipient.

The ministry will provide notice before granting access to a record that might contain information referred to in Section 17 of the Act so that the affected party may make representations to the ministry concerning disclosure. Should the ministry decide not to disclose certain records, the requester has the right to appeal that decision to the office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner, who will make a decision on the disclosure of the record.

Applicants are advised that the names and addresses of transfer payment recipients, the amount awarded, and the purpose for which the transfer payment is awarded is information the ministry makes available to the public.

## **5. Funding Allocation**

Funding is discretionary and is intended to be provided for the duration of the Transfer Payment Agreement term, subject to the terms and conditions of the Transfer Payment Agreement (including compliance with same by the Recipient).

**There are no maximum or minimum funding amounts. However, the fund is intended to have a significant impact, so the ministry intends to first consider applications with a project budget greater than \$150,000 and may choose to fund all or a portion of the primary applicant's proposed project.**

Although not required, primary applicants are strongly encouraged to seek additional funding sources to support their application and their proposed project for the duration of their Transfer Payment Agreement term and beyond, should one be entered into with the primary applicant.

The ministry reserves the right to adjust the amount of funding the selected applicant will receive if a Transfer Payment Agreement is entered into, which may differ from the budget submitted.

A multi-year funding option may be available for select applications, please refer to Appendix A for details.

### **5.1 Funding Allocation, Distribution & Conditions**

Selected applicants who enter into a Transfer Payment Agreement with the Province will receive funding upon satisfaction of any conditions for funding contained in the Transfer Payment Agreement.

The Transfer Payment Agreement outlines the understanding between the Province of Ontario and the Recipient regarding the SDF project and ensures accountability for the use of public funds. Recipients are responsible for managing and executing their projects in accordance with their Transfer Payment Agreement with the Province. By entering into the Transfer Payment Agreement, Recipients will be required to meet all legal responsibilities contained in the Transfer Payment Agreement, including maintaining all necessary insurance, in order to receive any funding.

The Transfer Payment Agreement will set out the terms and conditions governing the payment of the fund, and will include the following:

- Recipient responsibilities.
- Project budget.
- Project management requirements.
- Monitoring and reporting requirements.
- Accountability requirements, audits and financial reporting obligations.
- Milestones and performance measures.
- Mode and schedule of payments.
- Process for contract termination; and
- Other performance and accountability provisions identified by the province and agreed upon with the Recipient.

Recipients will be expected to:

- Be accountable to the province for all funds and performance of project components under the Transfer Payment Agreement.
- Manage their project plan to meet financial and accountability reporting requirements and deliverables, in accordance with the Transfer Payment Agreement.
- Engage and manage relationships with any third-party service providers (if applicable).

- Coordinate project partners and all activities.
- Be responsible for performance measurement of the project, including ensuring data quality, establishing targets and aggregating information collected from recipients.
- Maintain records pertaining to the project to support ministry-funded evaluation of the program.
- Submit regular reporting that will be used by the ministry to assess the progress of implementation, as well as compliance with relevant directives and requirements under the Transfer Payment Agreement.
- Put in effect and maintain for the duration of their funded project, all necessary insurance for the initiative, including Commercial General Liability Insurance to an inclusive limit of not less than two million dollars (\$2,000,000) per occurrence, and provide the ministry with a copy of their Certificate of Insurance. Coverage under two million dollars (\$2,000,000) may be considered based on prior approval by Ontario.
- Coordinate and provide to the ministry an independent audit of the project if required by the ministry, including program revenues and expenditures.

If requested before the Transfer Payment Agreement is finalized, a selected applicant must provide a copy of its latest financial statements (including audited financial statements if available) and those of significant partners who contribute at least 50% of the proportion of the project cost that is not covered by the ministry's grant.

Prior to signing a Transfer Payment Agreement, the ministry, in its sole and absolute discretion, may undertake additional due diligence review of the selected applicant, including by requesting that the selected applicant submit any additional information, related to their application, that the ministry requests.

## **5.2 Proposed Project Budget**

Primary applicants are required to submit a detailed budget with their application. The budget must include all costs directly related to delivering the project, including any proposed cash and in-kind contributions being contributed to the project by the primary applicant and/or their partners, where applicable.

The project budget must clearly identify where applicable:

- All costs directly related to delivering the project, within market value.
  - Any supplies delivered by non-arm's length parties must be valued at their established arm's length equivalent market value.
- All costs including in-kind contributions (e.g., donated space, time donated by instructors, etc.).
- Funding received from partnerships and/or collaborations; and
- Other funding sources, including federal and provincial government funding.

**Applicants should not take any action, or incur any costs related to their project prior to entering into a Transfer Payment Agreement with the ministry and the project commencement date.** The Government of Ontario is not responsible for paying any cost incurred by any applicant should the application not be approved, or if the selected applicant fails to enter into a Transfer Payment Agreement satisfactory to the ministry, in its sole and absolute discretion.

Funding will be allocated in installments according to a negotiated payment schedule. Disbursement of funds will be dependent on the Recipient meeting all program and reporting requirements under the Transfer Payment Agreement. The ministry may withhold up to 15% of the funding amount until project completion.

### **5.3 Procurement, Travel & Hospitality Requirements**

For Recipients that are considered Broader Public Sector organizations as designated under the *Broader Public Sector Accountability Act, 2010*, two directives regarding procurement practices and expenses are in effect: the Broader Public Sector Procurement Directive and the Broader Public Sector Expenses Directive.

All Recipients are also required to comply with the terms and conditions of the Transfer Payment Agreement with respect to procurement, travel and hospitality.

Some Recipients may be subjected to the **Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act, 1996** which will require the disclosure of names, positions, salaries and taxable benefits of employees who were paid a salary of \$100,000 or more.

- Recipients receiving \$1 million in funding, or more are subject to this legislation.
- Recipients receiving between \$120,000 and \$1 million are subject to this legislation if the funding they receive is 10 per cent or more of their gross revenues.

- Recipients receiving less than \$120,000 are not required to disclose, unless they are one of the entities explicitly covered by the Act.

Please review [the background and frequently asked questions on public sector salary disclosure](#) for more information.

## **Appendix A: Skills Development Fund (SDF) Multi Year (MY) Projects**

Multi-year funding (2 or 3 years) may be available to applicants with previous experience delivering employment and/or training program(s) and is intended for projects with longer-term outcomes.

Applicants will indicate interest in MY through the application process, and decisions around multi-year funding will be based on the selection criteria outlined in section 4.2 and the applicant's past experience in other employment and/ or training programs.