Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development

Skills Catalyst Fund

Call for Proposals
Guidelines & Requirements

December 2019
Table of Contents

CONTEXT ........................................................................................................................................3
  CHALLENGES ..........................................................................................................................3
  OPPORTUNITIES ......................................................................................................................3
WHAT IS SKILLS CATALYST FUND? .........................................................................................3
  OBJECTIVES OF THE PROGRAM ..........................................................................................4
KEY TERMS ..................................................................................................................................4
PROJECT REQUIREMENTS .......................................................................................................6
  FOCUS AREAS ..........................................................................................................................7
  WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT THEMES ...............................................................................8
  OPEN LICENSE ........................................................................................................................11
FUNDING ALLOCATION AND DISTRIBUTION .......................................................................11
CONDITIONS OF FUNDING & ACCOUNTABILITY ..................................................................12
EXPENDITURES ..........................................................................................................................13
  ELIGIBLE EXPENDITURES .......................................................................................................14
  INELIGIBLE EXPENDITURES ...................................................................................................15
  ELIGIBLE IN-KIND CONTRIBUTIONS ......................................................................................15
  INELIGIBLE IN-KIND CONTRIBUTIONS ..................................................................................16
  PROCUREMENT, TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY REQUIREMENTS .........................................16
PROPOSAL REVIEW AND EVALUATION CRITERIA ..............................................................16
MONITORING AND REPORTING ..............................................................................................18
SUBMISSION PROCESS ............................................................................................................19
  NOTIFICATION .......................................................................................................................20
  CONFIDENTIALITY ..................................................................................................................20
CONTEXT

The Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development (ministry) is launching an open call for proposals to test a wide range of innovative workforce development interventions responding to specific labour market needs of the economy, employers and workers. These efforts will ensure Ontario’s workforce is better equipped with the skills and training needed for the jobs of today and tomorrow. The ministry is allocating $20 million to support successful project proposals through this competitive process.

Challenges
Ontario’s economy continues to face challenges stemming from technology, changing demographics and globalization that are altering the types of jobs available and the skills required for them.

- Jobs are increasingly more technology-driven.
- An increasingly large number of workers are preparing to exit the labour force over the next few years.
- Global competitiveness increasingly influences regional and local economies and their labour market.
- Workers, job seekers and employers are seeking opportunities for upskilling in a variety of areas to support the changes in their own fields and workplaces.

Opportunities
Ontario’s greatest strength is its people and investing in their resiliency and adaptability to the changes happening in the labour market and economy is a strong focus for the government. Ensuring Ontario’s economic competitiveness requires a forward-looking and responsive workforce development system that:

- Supports learners in acquiring the right skills and knowledge that prepares them for the world of work.
- Provides jobseekers and workers with opportunities to find and keep good jobs.
- Enables employers to hire the right talent that meets their business needs and supports their ability to upskill and reskill these workers as needs change.

WHAT IS SKILLS CATALYST FUND?

The Skills Catalyst Fund supports the development and implementation of projects that test new and emerging ideas and approaches to labour market challenges. The ministry seeks projects that bring together workforce development partners to jointly develop and deliver solutions to these challenges in their sectors.
The program provides one-time project-based funding for workforce development projects that propose new and emerging approaches to labour market problems and may focus on:

- Increasing the in-demand skills and competencies of people that lead to better employment or employability outcomes;
- Eliminating the barriers to the full participation of underrepresented groups in Ontario’s labour market; and
- Developing locally-driven solutions to labour market needs stemming from the unique economic needs of communities.

**Objectives of the Program**

The objectives of the Skills Catalyst Fund are to:

- **Build meaningful partnerships** that better align education, training, and employment service systems with the needs of employers, and prepares learners, jobseekers and incumbent workers for in-demand jobs;
- **Encourage innovative ideas and solutions** that strengthens education and training systems to better plan for and respond to the needs of employers and the broader economy;
- **Help all People** – especially those facing barriers to fully participating in the labour market (i.e. women, youth, Indigenous people, persons with disabilities, newcomers and veterans) – enter, adapt and remain in a changing workforce; and
- **Provide the skills, tools, opportunities, and experiences** learners, jobseekers, workers and employers need to thrive in the current and future workforce.

**KEY TERMS**

**Applicant**: the lead organization from a Consortium that is applying for funding to implement a project proposal. The following organizations may apply to this Fund:

- Employers with a presence and licensed to operate in Ontario
- Professional/Industry/Sector Associations
- Local/regional Chambers of Commerce and Boards of Trade
- Not-For-Profit Organizations with a presence in Ontario
- Publicly-assisted postsecondary institutions
- Private Career Colleges who are in compliance with the *Private Career Colleges Act, 2005*
• School Boards
• Other levels of government (e.g. First Nations, municipalities)
• Indigenous Organizations
• Unions

**Consortium:** Applicants to the Skills Catalyst Fund are required to be part of a consortium in order to be eligible to apply. A consortium is a group of two or more partner organizations who support the project by having a specific role in its development or implementation. Each partner organization’s agreement to participate in the project and their specific role must be articulated in a letter of support or memorandum of understanding that accompanies the project application.

The consortium must include a minimum of two partners, with representatives from two of the following three organization types:

• Employers licensed to operate in Ontario;
• Education or training providers (e.g. school boards, publicly-assisted postsecondary institutions, private trainers operating in compliance with the Private Career Colleges Act, 2005, Indigenous Institutes, professional accreditation bodies, union-based training centres, employment and training organizations); and
• Business support or development organizations (e.g. industry/professional/sector associations, chambers of commerce, labour and economic development organizations).

**Participants:** The Skills Catalyst Fund supports a wide range of participants, which may vary for each Project. Projects may support client types such as learners, jobseekers, workers and employers. In addition to supporting a wide range of participants, the ministry has a particular interest in traditionally underrepresented groups such as women, youth, Indigenous people, persons with disabilities, newcomers and veterans.

• **Indigenous Peoples:** individuals who self-identify as belonging to one of three distinct groups in Canada: First Nations, Inuit or Métis.
• **Newcomers:** individuals who are naturalized Canadian citizens, permanent residents and temporary residents (including temporary workers, international students and refugee claimants), who arrived in Canada after 2010.
• **Persons with Disabilities:** individuals who self-identify as a person with a disability as defined in Section 10 (1) of the Ontario Human Rights Code\(^1\)

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\(^1\) Section 10 (1) of the [Ontario Human Rights Code](https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/2001c10) 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 coordination, 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;
• **Veterans**: individuals who are former members of the Canadian Armed Forces (including those who served in the Reserve Force, special duty areas and on domestic duty), who have been, or are about to be, honourably released from military service.

• **Youth**: individuals who are between the ages of 15 and 29 at the start of a Project.

**Project**: All activities undertaken over a period of 12 months from the project start date to achieve the objectives of the Skills Catalyst Fund.

**Project Partners**: Organizations collaborating with the Applicant on project activities. They may be organizations who are part of a consortium with the Applicant, or they may be playing other supporting roles such as providing research, training, work placement, or other services to support the goals and objectives of the Project.

**Project Plan**: A detailed breakdown of all key project activities, timelines and outcomes expected as a result of the Project.

**Successful Applicant**: An entity that has been awarded funding through the Skills Catalyst Fund and is responsible for delivering a Project. The Successful Applicant is responsible for signing and fulfilling all requirements of the transfer payment agreement, including but not limited to: receiving and managing the funds, ensuring coordination of Project activities and its Project Partners, and communicating with the ministry regarding the status of the Project on behalf of all partners. The Successful Applicant must:

• Be licensed to operate in Ontario;

• Be in full compliance with all applicable laws;

• Be registered on [Transfer Payment Ontario](#);

• Be registered to receive payment from the Government of Ontario as a supplier;

• Maintain appropriate Workplace Safety & Insurance Board (WSIB) coverage; and

• Have adequate third-party general liability insurance.

**PROJECT REQUIREMENTS**

- 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*. 
Projects submitted for funding consideration must:

- Address a clearly identified labour market issue supported with evidence;
- Be designed to reflect the unique talent and skills challenges facing Ontario employers at the provincial, regional or local level;
- Support or consider how proposed interventions can support the participation of individuals from underrepresented group in the workforce;
- Involve employers, industry and education and training experts in the development and / or delivery of proposed intervention(s) and include proof of the partnership through partner support letters or a memorandum of understanding;
- Identify how the proposed intervention is emerging, new and / or different from existing workforce development programs;
- Identify potential employment opportunities for participants upon the completion of the proposed intervention(s) and provide supports to help them find employment, where feasible given local labour market conditions;
- Ensure training and work placements (if applicable to the Project) are accessible to as many participants who qualify, including participants facing multiple barriers to employment;
- Not displace or replace existing or laid-off employees with work placements, support or job opportunities for project participants;
- Specify a sustainability plan for the proposed intervention after funding from the ministry ends; and
- Implement an evaluation plan that identifies and tracks key performance metrics of the project to measure its success (see Evaluation Framework Metrics on Page 17).

Focus Areas
Although the Skills Catalyst Fund will support a broad range of projects, Applicants who address one or more of the three focus areas below will benefit from additional points in their evaluation. However, having a focus area is not a requirement for a proposal.

The focus areas include the following:

1. Demographic shifts, technological advancements and changes in the economy (e.g. shift from a goods to services economy) present significant challenges to Ontario’s workforce and businesses. They alter the nature of work, the type of jobs available and the skills required for them. This can create imbalances between the skills that employers are seeking and those that workers possess, especially if these changes are rapid. Therefore, Ontario’s workforce development system needs to be responsive to these challenges and together with industry, find new ways to address them to ensure that people can connect with opportunities to find and keep good jobs and employers can hire the skilled workers they need to thrive. **The Skills Catalyst Fund is seeking to support projects that promote strong employment and employability outcomes for individuals and businesses by helping connect more people into jobs and helping businesses find the talent they need.**
2. Ontario’s workforce has become more diverse in recent decades as a result of an aging population, increased participation of women, high numbers of immigrants and temporary residents, and increased employment opportunities for people with disabilities. However, despite recent low unemployment rates, some people remain underrepresented in the labour market or face barriers to their full participation.

Some of these individuals include:

- Recent immigrants who despite their qualification and experience, have trouble integrating into the local labour market and tend to have higher low-income rates.
- An increasing number of youths who are not in employment, education or training (NEET).
- People with disabilities who may require additional supports to help them address a myriad of challenges finding and maintaining employment.
- Veterans of the Canadian military who are released into the general economy and may face challenges transitioning to rewarding career opportunities.

Supporting the labour market participation of these individuals is crucial to ensuring that businesses have access to the skilled talent they need to support their workforce needs. It also ensures that Ontario is investing in its greatest asset – its people, to enable them to be productive members of society.

Therefore, the **Skills Catalyst Fund is seeking to support project proposals that support positive employment outcomes of all individuals, with a particular interest in Projects that directly target and address the needs and support positive employment outcomes of traditionally underrepresented groups such as women, youth, persons with disabilities, Indigenous peoples, newcomers and veterans.**

3. There is no one-size-fits-all approach to effective workforce development. Communities (e.g. rural and remote communities) have unique skills and talent development needs that are shaped by local market conditions. These needs may not be adequately addressed by existing programs or services and may require a locally based intervention. **The Skills Catalyst Fund is seeking to incent targeted, place-based proposals that address the unique labour market needs of a community or region and support increased employment outcomes for residents and secures a talent pipeline for businesses to foster their economic growth.**

**Workforce Development Themes**

Projects must respond to at least one of the following four workforce development themes:
- Partnership Development
- Developing Skills and Competencies
- Supporting Job Pathways
- Investing in Employer-Led Training

**Partnership Development**
This theme recognizes that a shared sense of responsibility is needed to develop Ontario’s greatest asset – its people – in alignment with the needs of the economy. As such, Applicants responding to this theme must propose, over the course of their Project, the development of new and unique partnerships that support human capital development initiatives that are dictated by the job market needs of businesses and employers. Partnerships can be regional or sectoral. The goal of the partnership development, including the labour market issue that it will be addressing, must be clearly articulated.

All applications require a consortium of partners. However, projects focusing on this theme will seek to build upon this consortium to develop deeper sectoral or regional partnerships that will be called upon to address a labour market issue.

The Skills Catalyst Fund seeks to support initiatives that may:

- Develop local industry consortia to support long-term employer-led skills training networks.
- Pool together community resources to address gaps in local labour market information to help employers and jobseekers better plan for current and future job market needs.

**Developing Skills and Competencies**
Education and skills training are important to building a resilient workforce and addressing the gaps between the skills and competencies employers need and learners and jobseekers possess. Moreover, there is a growing need to identify cost-effective and innovative approaches to support more opportunities for learners, jobseekers and workers to develop the skills required for jobs in high demand.

The Skills Catalyst Fund seeks to support initiatives that may:

- Support employers in identifying skill requirements they need in a changing workforce and provide them with cost-effective options to provide suitable candidates with job-ready skills training.
- Support the development of industry-recognized skills and competency framework across a set of occupations.
- Address skills shortage and skills mismatch challenges identified by employers in their workforce.
- Support the job readiness of learners and jobseekers entering the workforce by reducing the gap between their existing skills and those that businesses are looking for.
Increase in-demand skills and competencies for all people especially those in underrepresented groups (i.e. women, youth, Indigenous people, persons with disabilities, and newcomers) that enables employers and businesses to build a pipeline of talent to meet their needs.

Provide targeted supports to veterans that complement and build upon their existing skillset and experience and help them transition to appropriate civilian employment.

Support skills training closely linked to experiential learning or work placement opportunities that enables the job readiness of participants and builds a pool of job-ready talent to meet the needs of businesses.

**Supporting Job Pathways**

A rapidly changing economy is evolving the demand for jobs and the skills required for them. This also impacts the pathways into these jobs. Individuals and businesses need access to timely, reliable and actionable labour market information to understand the job and career options available to them. They also need opportunities that helps them map out the skills and competencies required for their desired occupation. Furthermore, these pathways need to be attuned to the labour demands of the economy.

Students and parents require information about potential job pathways to support them in making informed education and career choices. Moreover, learners require better exposure to good paying and high demand jobs in high growth sectors that may not require a postsecondary education credential.

Jobseekers and incumbent workers also need flexible pathways that recognizes their skills and experience and allows for non-linear career development that supports rapid skills upgrade for higher skilled positions or jobs in high-growth sectors.

The Skills Catalyst Fund seeks to support initiatives that may:

- Promote earlier and better exposure to non-traditional pathways for learners and jobseekers in line with the needs of the labour market.
- Support flexible career pathways that allow for laddering and rapid industry-recognized up-skilling or re-skilling programs for workers and jobseekers.
- Develop localized labour market information on career prospects and trends, skills in demand, education and employment requirements.

**Employer-Led Investments in Training**

Investing in human capital is important for both business productivity as well as addressing the skills and competencies gap for employers and jobseekers. Employers play a large role in fostering and enabling conditions for skills training and are key partners in supporting innovative approaches to skills development for the re-skilling and up-skilling of employed individuals. There is an opportunity to incentivize and support greater collaboration between employers and education and training organizations.
The Skills Catalyst Fund seeks to increase employer-led / backed training in various areas such as:

- Employee training
- Mentorship and experiential learning
- Workforce planning for future skills and labour needs
- Programs addressing skills gaps in a region or sector
- Addressing barriers to employment for underrepresented groups.

Open License

All materials created using funding from the Skills Catalyst Fund must abide by Creative Common’s Attribution 4.0 International License/ (CC BY 4.0) https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/. Under this 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. However, the ministry will consider projects that should be exempt from this requirement if applicants can provide a clear and compelling rationale.

FUNDING ALLOCATION AND DISTRIBUTION

Total available funding for this program is $20 million. The funding will be allocated through a competitive process based on the evaluation of all eligible applications received.

Interested parties can apply for up to 12 months of funding from the start date of the Project.

The grant available for any one Project is 80% of eligible project costs, up to a maximum of $500,000. Applicants and their Project Partners must contribute a minimum of 10% of the total project cost in cash, while the remaining balance of the project cost (i.e., 10%) can be made up of cash and/or in-kind contributions from other funding sources. The minimum grant amount that an Applicant may request from the ministry is $50,000.

The ministry reserves sole discretion to provide additional funding above the maximum amount, based on the review of an application. The ministry also reserves the right to adjust the amount of funding an Applicant will receive, which may differ from the budget submitted.

The ministry is not bound to enter into an agreement with any Applicant. Applications will be assessed considering the evaluation criteria.

Funding will be distributed through transfer payment agreements signed between the ministry and Successful Applicants.
Notice in writing to an Applicant that it has been identified as a Successful Applicant and the subsequent negotiation and execution of a written transfer payment agreement will constitute an agreement for any eligible expenditures.

**CONDITIONS OF FUNDING & ACCOUNTABILITY**

Funding is discretionary and will not be provided on an ongoing basis.

Employers, industry / sector associations, education and training institutions, intermediaries, and other Partners will be expected to contribute any funding needed beyond approved funding for eligible project activities during the funding period.

In applications where there is a shortfall between budgeted expenses and expected approved funding, applicants must be able to demonstrate that they are contributing to the project through other resources.

A Successful Applicant will receive funding pursuant to signing a transfer payment agreement with the ministry. By entering into this agreement, a Successful Applicant will be required to meet certain legal responsibilities, including maintaining all necessary insurance, in order to receive any funding.

A Successful Applicant will be responsible for managing and executing the development and delivery of their Project, including resource management and satisfaction of performance and financial obligations established by the ministry.

The transfer payment agreement with the ministry will set out the terms and conditions governing the payment of the grant, and will include, but not be limited to:

- A Project budget;
- Project management requirements, including a complete project description, plan and outcomes;
- Reporting obligations;
- Method and schedule of payment;
- Contract termination and corrective action in the event of default; and
- Other performance and accountability provisions identified by the ministry and agreed upon with a Successful Applicant.

Successful Applicants will be expected to:

- Be accountable to the ministry for all funds and Project components under the transfer payment agreement;
• Manage their Project plan to meet financial and accountability reporting requirements and deliverables, as identified in the transfer payment agreement;

• Engage and manage relationships with any third-party service providers (if applicable);

• Ensure coordination of Project Partners and all activities;

• Be responsible for performance measurement of the project, including ensuring data quality, establishing targets and aggregating information collected from funding 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 program, 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. If the proposed project is approved for funding, Applicants must provide the ministry with a copy of their Certificate of Insurance as a condition of funding. Coverage under two million dollars ($2,000,000) may be considered based on prior approval by Ontario;

• Agree to an independent audit of the project if required, including program revenues and expenditures;

• If requested, provide a copy of their 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 before the legal agreement is finalized;

• Undergo a due diligence review at the ministry’s expense if required, before the legal agreement is finalized.

**EXPENDITURES**

Applicants are required to submit a budget for their Project with their application. The budget must include all costs directly related to delivering the Project including all other proposed cash and in-kind contributions being contributed to the Project by the Applicant and/or its Project Partners. Costs must be clearly linked to the activities identified for the Project.

The Project budget must clearly identify:

• All costs directly related to delivering the Project, within market value;
• All Project costs including in-kind contributions (e.g. donated space, time donated by instructors, etc.);
• Funding received from partnerships and/or collaborations; and
• Other government funding (if applicable).

The costs for any materials, tools, techniques, approaches, developments or salaries used in research, training, work placements or other project components that have already been reimbursed by government funding to the applicant under any other funding agreement will not be eligible expenses under any new agreement entered into by an Applicant and the ministry.

Applicants should not take any action, or incur any costs related to their Project that is predicated on receiving funding from the ministry until an application is approved and all parties have entered into a transfer payment agreement acceptable to the ministry. The Government of Ontario is not responsible for paying any cost incurred by an Applicant should the application not be approved or if an Applicant fails to enter into a funding agreement acceptable to the ministry.

It is anticipated that funding will be allocated in installments according to a negotiated payment schedule with the Successful Applicant. Disbursement of funds will be dependent on the Successful Applicant meeting all program and reporting requirements under the transfer payment agreement. The ministry may withhold up to 20 percent of the grant amount until Project completion.

**Eligible Expenditures**

Expenditures, which are incurred within 12 months of the start date as specified in the transfer payment agreement, are eligible. Expenditures must be directly related to Project activities including:

• Partnership development costs that relates to ensuring that there are appropriate relationships and collaboration in place between organizations to deliver the Project
• The costs for any materials, tools, techniques, approaches, developments and salaries used in administering project components
• Marketing and promotion of programs and opportunities
• Wages and employment related costs for staff administering the project
• Supports for clients to participate in the program, where applicable and reasonable e.g. wage subsidies (up to 30% of wages paid up to a maximum of $3,000 per client), supplies, transportation, etc.
• Administrative costs related to project delivery. These must be a reasonable percentage of total project costs, which must not exceed 15%.
Ineligible Expenditures
Expenditures that are not related to delivering the Project are considered ineligible. These include but are not limited to the following:

- Capital expenses such as renovations
- Overhead
- Insurance
- Costs related to the development of the proposal or program application
- Executive or senior management salaries who do not directly contribute to project delivery
- Out-of-province travel costs for project staff or participants
- 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 funding agreement
- Reimbursement for airfare purchased with personal frequent flyer points programs
- Fines and penalties
- Interest charges
- Losses on other projects or contracts
- Any project activity related to the previous contract under Skills Catalyst Fund
- Any costs, including taxes, 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, committee and political meetings, or religious activities
- Costs already covered by other funding sources
- Contingency or unexplained miscellaneous costs
- Harmonized Sales Tax (HST) for tax exempted organizations.

Applicants should contact skillscatalystfund@ontario.ca if they are unsure if a planned expenditure is eligible or ineligible.

Eligible In-Kind Contributions
If requested by the ministry, Successful Applicants must be able to verify the value of donated goods and services. In-kind contributions must be valued at the lesser of demonstrated fair market value or actual cost to the donor. In the event of a
disagreement between an Applicant and the ministry regarding the value of an in-kind contribution, the decision of the ministry will be final.

The following are examples of eligible in-kind contributions:

- Time donated by various relevant partners in the development and/or delivery of the Project or for consulting and professional services required for the Project. This must be valued at the individual's actual salary pro-rated based on the time spent on the Project, and not any other value
- Donation of premises to deliver the project, on a pro-rated basis;
- Donation of space at a location other than the Applicant’s premises necessary for the Applicant or a Project Partner to deliver the Project
- Discounts greater than or above regularly discounted prices
- Project administration and delivery salaries, pro-rated to the time spent on the project.

**Ineligible In-Kind Contributions**
The following are examples of ineligible in-kind contributions:

- Donations in the form of knowledge, goodwill, or other intangibles
- All remunerations and fees paid to the Board of Directors
- Opportunity costs
- Standard discounts
- Interest charges
- Any items or services not directly related to the Project.

The ministry will have the final word in determining expenditure eligibility and valuation of expenditures and in-kind contributions.

**Procurement, Travel and Hospitality Requirements**
Under the *Broader Public Sector Accountability Act, 2010*, two directives regarding procurement practices and expenses are in effect namely: the *Broader Public Sector Procurement Directive* and the *Broader Public Sector Expenses Directive*. The onus is on each Applicant to comply with these directives.

**PROPOSAL REVIEW AND EVALUATION CRITERIA**

An inter-ministerial committee will review the proposals and make recommendations to the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development. The committee will fairly
evaluate eligible applications against the program criteria and the ministry reserves the right to make final decisions about funding.

Proposals will be evaluated against the following criteria:

1. **Labour Market Issue(s), Rationale and Supporting Evidence (25%)**
   Applicants should provide a clear description of the labour market issue(s) their Project is addressing, including the sector, region and/or client group impacted by the issue. Applicants should also include a compelling rationale with adequate evidence to support the need for intervention.

   Although not a requirement for submission, Projects with a focus on one or more of the following focus areas will be awarded additional points:
   - Leads to better employment and employability outcomes for all Participants
   - Targets the labour market needs of one or more of the following traditionally underrepresented groups in the workforce: women, youth, Indigenous people, persons with disabilities, newcomers and veterans.
   - Addresses local or regional labour market issues for which existing services or programs have been demonstrably shown to offer limited or insufficient intervention.

2. **Project Overview & Delivery (25%)**
   Applicants should explain how their Project proposals respond to the objectives of the Skills Catalyst Fund. The proposals should demonstrate how its intervention is innovative or applies a new model or approach that is different from existing offerings. Proposals should show how the Project will help people enter, adapt and remain in a changing workforce, and provide them with skills, tools or opportunities they need to thrive in the workforce.

   Proposals should also clearly define the scope and purpose of the project and provide a clear understanding of the steps for implementation. A work plan that sets out expected timelines for key activities is recommended. Proposals should demonstrate effective use of resources to achieve objectives within the established timeframe for funded activities. Anticipated risks and mitigation strategies should be clearly articulated, and Applicants should have a plan for the Project after the funding period ends.

3. **Partnerships and Stakeholder Support (20%)**
   Applicants should indicate the number and type of partners involved in the Project and their specific roles and responsibilities in the implementation of the project. Applicants should also describe how the partnership will align business needs with education and training programs to address the labour market issue(s) that will be the focus of the Project. Proof of partnership through signed partner support letter(s) or signed memorandum(s) of understanding, will be required for Project Partners – particularly Consortium members. Where applicable, additional support from other stakeholders for the proposed intervention should be included.
4. Organizational Capacity and Experience (10%)
Applicants should demonstrate how well their organization’s strengths, including the combined strength of their Project Partners, is suited to implement the proposed intervention that addresses the specified labour market issue. Any previous experience delivering a similar initiative should be highlighted with supporting evidence of outcomes.

5. Evaluation Framework (15%)
The ministry is interested in high quality evidence of “what works”. For this reason, proposals should have a solid evaluation framework that is focussed on outcomes by describing the theory of change and identifying an evaluation plan, including appropriate performance metrics, data collection methods and frequency of data collections.

While the ministry expects that evaluation plans may be different for each Project, Applicants are expected to set performance targets for the following ministry-specified metrics, where applicable:

- Number and type of partners actively engaged in the Project
- Size of business partners involved in the Project
- Investments (in-kind and cash) from Project Partners
- Number of Participants actively engaged in the Project
- Number of active Participants from the following groups: women, youth, Indigenous people, persons with disabilities, newcomers and veterans
- Number of Participants enrolled in training and completing training
- Number of work placement or other experiential learning opportunities provided
- Number of jobs filled in industry upon training completion
- Project Partner and client satisfaction with Project activities
- Number and type of innovative tools and processes developed

Additional performance indicators may be developed by the ministry in collaboration with the Successful Applicant and tracked on a project-by-project basis.

6. Budget (5%)
Projects will also be assessed on their ability to provide good value for money to support learners, jobseekers, workers and businesses in Ontario.

MONITORING AND REPORTING

Reporting requirements for approved projects includes:

1. Interim Report
Successful Applicants must provide an interim report to the ministry on the progress achieved and expenditures incurred in comparison to the objectives, Project timelines
and budget in the transfer payment agreement. It is expected that Applicants, where feasible, will provide status updates on project-specified and ministry-specified metrics.

The interim report should also identify any challenges or anticipated delays in fulfilling or achieving the milestones outlined in the Project plan and any related mitigation strategies.

2. Final Report

Successful Applicants must submit a final report outlining the achievement or progress towards fulfilling the objectives as articulated in the transfer payment agreement.

The final report must report on actual incurred expenses against budgeted amounts in the transfer payment agreement. Unspent funding must be explained. The ministry may request the return of funding.

3. Third-Party Evaluation

The ministry may engage a third party to research and evaluate approved Projects during and after their implementation. Successful Applicants and partner organizations shall agree to full co-operation with the third party at the time of signing a transfer payment agreement with the ministry.

4. Audited Financial Statements

To ensure that funding awarded is used judiciously, Successful Applicants who receive funding of $150,000 or more from the ministry may 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 between one to two months after the completion of Project activities.

SUBMISSION PROCESS

The deadline for the ministry to receive applications is 11:59 am on January 27, 2020.

Applicants will need to register online as a Transfer Payment Ontario user to apply. The registration process can be found on the Transfer Payment Ontario webpage. Once registered, Applicants can download the application form on the Transfer Payment Ontario website.

Any additional relevant information may be attached as appendices to the completed application, if required.

For questions regarding the submission process, please contact skillscatalystfund@ontario.ca.
Notification

A decision regarding funding will be communicated to all Applicants by email.

Confidentiality

Please note the ministry is subject to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (the “Act”). The Act provides every person with a right of access to information in the custody or under the control of the ministry, subject to a limited set of exemptions. 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. 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 ultimately decide on the disclosure of the record.

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

December 2019