

Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development

# Better Jobs Ontario (BJO) Training

## BJO Fundamentals

Program Coordination and Support Unit  
Employment and Training Division

July 2023

# Agenda

- Program Overview
- Program Background: *Second Career to Better Jobs Ontario*
- Roles and Responsibilities
- Key Considerations for BJO Approval
- Eligibility Requirements by Program Stream
- Suitability
- Eligible Skills Training
- Financial Supports, Needs Assessment and Feasibility
- Application Process
- Appendices

## Program Overview



### Skills Training for Unemployed Individuals

- Better Jobs Ontario (BJO) provides **unemployed individuals** with skills training to help find employment in in-demand occupations in Ontario.
- The BJO program targets individuals in need of skills training, such as those who have been laid off or are experiencing challenges attaching to the labour market, including social assistance recipients, newcomers, gig workers, and persons with disabilities.



### Financial Assistance

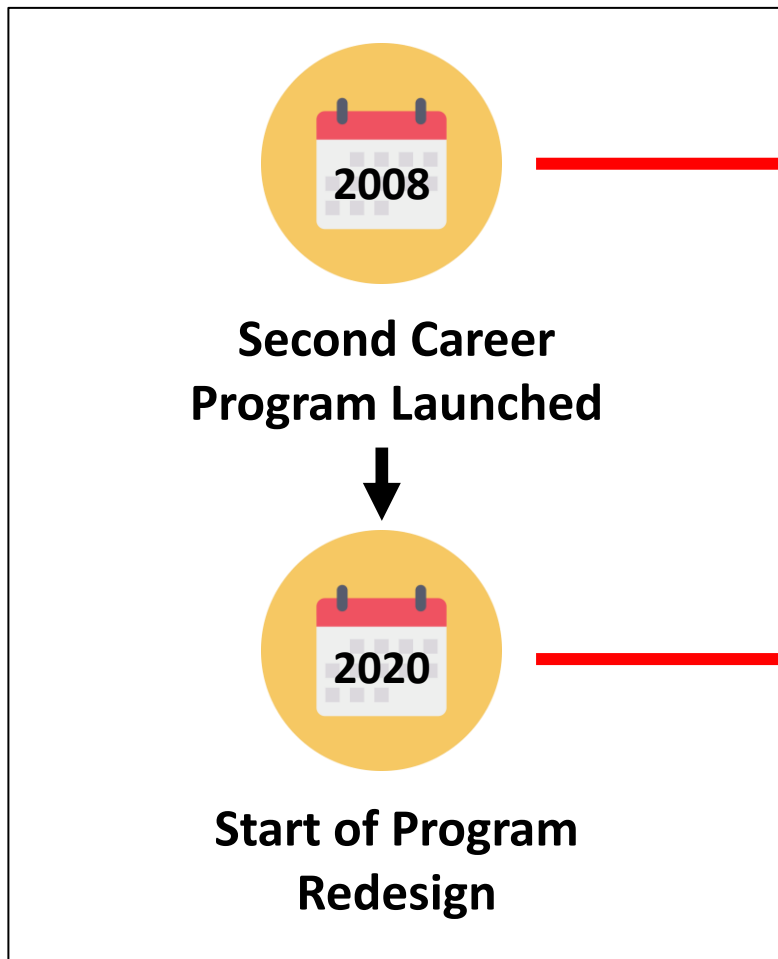
- Eligible individuals can receive **up to \$28,000** for training and living costs, with additional funding available for child care, disability-related supports, living away from home, and essential skills support.



### Labour Market Attachment

- The intention of the BJO program is to help eligible individuals rapidly attach to employment by the most cost-effective path.

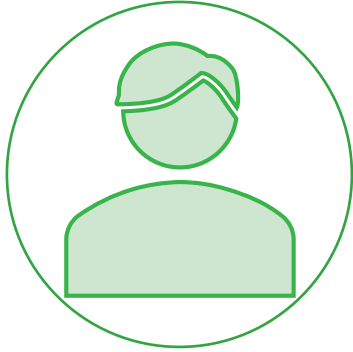
## Program Background: *Second Career to Better Jobs Ontario*



- Launched as a response to imminent **global recession** and high number of **lay-offs** occurring across the province, particularly in the manufacturing sector
- Targeted laid-off, Employment Insurance (EI) eligible, and unemployed individuals

- Redesign **simplified and strengthened** Second Career, while strategically re-focusing the program within the context of COVID-19 pandemic-related **labour market shifts** and economic recovery
- Renamed program to **Better Jobs Ontario**, expanding program eligibility and suitability and updating funding model

# Roles and Responsibilities



## **Applicant**

- Develops Employment Action Plan\*
- Researches appropriate training options\*
- Complete BJO application package\*
- Update ministry regarding program progress and changes



## **Service Provider**

- Provides resources and career counseling
- Assesses applicant against eligibility, suitability and financial feasibility
- Supports applicant and provides updates as needed throughout training
- Follows up to support client after training



## **MLITSD**

- Reviews applications against program guidelines
- Assesses financial need and specifies assistance amounts
- Administers agreement and issues payments

\*these actions are completed with the support of the Service Provider

# Key Considerations for BJO Approval



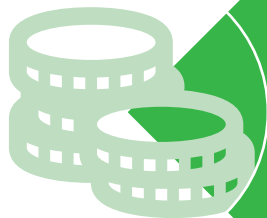
## Eligibility

- Determines whether individuals meet baseline requirements for BJO in advance of further assessment



## Suitability

- Determines whether individuals deemed eligible are also most appropriate for the program



## Financial Need

- Determines the amount of BJO financial assistance individuals deemed eligible and suitable will receive
- Considers the financial feasibility of the program for the applicant

<b>Stream:</b>	Regular	Fast Track	Manufacturing	Feepayer
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# Eligibility Streams

**Regular**

**Two pathways:**

1. Laid off and Unemployed
2. Low-income Household with Challenges Attaching to the Labour Market

**Fast Track**

**Manufacturing Sector Initiative**

**Feepayer**

## Program Eligibility – Regular Stream

To be eligible, individuals must:

- Have been **laid-off** and be **unemployed**,

**OR**

- Be from a **low-income household and experiencing challenges attaching to the labour market.**



## Program Eligibility – Regular Stream, Laid-Off Pathway

To be eligible, individuals must:

- Have been **laid-off** and be **unemployed**,

**OR**

- Be from a **low-income household and experiencing challenges attaching to the labour market.**

**The principal definition of “Laid-off” includes those:**

- whose **fixed-term** employment contract has expired;
- who have received EI Part I maternity or parental benefits and are seeking to re-enter the labour force;
- who have left work due to medical reasons; or
- who were laid-off and then became self-employed.

**Individuals who have been laid-off can be considered unemployed if they:**

- are working less than an average of 20 hours per week,
- have taken an **interim job** to provide for basic needs after their initial lay-off, or
- are continuing to receive salary via salary continuance or received severance pay.

**Interim job:**

- A job that an individual has taken while seeking better employment.
- Must be a low skill level job (i.e., National Occupational Classification (NOC) 2021 Training, Education, Experience and Responsibilities (TEER) category 5).
- May be full-time, part-time, seasonal, or temporary contract work.

## Program Eligibility – Regular Stream, Low-Income... Pathway (1/3)

Individuals must meet the following four criteria:

To be eligible, individuals must:

- Have been **laid-off** and be **unemployed**,
- OR**
- Be from a **low-income household and experiencing challenges attaching to the labour market.**

1. Do not have a lay-off event.

2. Have been unemployed for 6 months or longer, defined as meeting **one** of the criteria below:

- without work but actively seeking employment and currently available to start work, **OR**
- not working more than an average of 20 hours per week, **OR**
- engaging in unincorporated, self-employment without a business number (e.g., gig work) for an average of 20 hours per week or less.

## Program Eligibility – Regular Stream, Low-Income... Pathway (2/3)

To be eligible, individuals must:

- Have been **laid-off**; and be **unemployed**,

**OR**

- Be from a **low-income household and experiencing challenges attaching to the labour market.**

3. Are part of a household where the combined income of the client and their spouse is at or below the BJO Low-Income Threshold for their household size.

Household Size	BJO Low-Income Thresholds (6 months)
1 person	\$13,310
2 persons	\$16,571
3 persons	\$20,327
4 persons	\$24,734
5 persons	\$28,053
6 persons	\$31,638
7 persons or more	\$35,225

- Individuals in receipt of social assistance at the time of applying to BJO are considered below the BJO Low-Income Threshold

## Program Eligibility – Regular Stream, Low-Income... Pathway (3/3)

To be eligible, individuals must:

- Have been **laid-off**; and be **unemployed**,

OR

- Be from a **low-income household and experiencing challenges attaching to the labour market.**

4. Have had a **two-year period** where they did not attend high school (full-time, part-time or academic upgrading) with the following exceptions:

- have left **full-time** high school and participated in Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) programming within the last two years, **and/or**
- are currently in receipt of social assistance.

## Program Eligibility – Summary of Regular Stream / Implications

To be eligible, individuals must:

- Have been **laid-off** and be **unemployed**,

**OR**

- Be from a **low-income household and experiencing challenges attaching to the labour market.**

In BJO's Regular Stream, applicants can only be eligible for one pathway.

- If an applicant has ever been laid off, they are ineligible for the **low-income household with challenges attaching to the labour market** pathway.
  - However, they may be eligible for the **laid off and unemployed** pathway.
- If an applicant has no layoff event, they are ineligible for the **laid off and unemployed** pathway.
  - However, they may be eligible for the **low-income household with challenges attaching to the labour market** pathway.
- Individuals who quit or were terminated from their employment (excluding an interim job) are not eligible for the BJO program.
  - Note: some additional considerations are listed in BJO Guidelines Sections 2.3.5 and 2.3.6.

# Questions?

## Fast Track Stream

The Fast Track Stream is intended to support individuals most impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

To be eligible for the Fast Track Stream, individuals must:

- have been laid off on or after March 1, 2020, from a sector identified as highly impacted by COVID-19 in the [Addendum to the BJO guidelines](#),
- have no more than a high school education **and/or** have been laid off from an occupation that required no more than high school education,
- be seeking training for identified in-demand occupations in provincial priority areas, **AND**
- be unemployed.

There are no suitability requirements for this stream.

## Manufacturing Sector Initiative

This initiative is designed to be responsive to labour market fluctuations by supporting recently laid off individuals in the manufacturing sector.

To be eligible for the [Manufacturing Sector Initiative](#), individuals must:

- have been laid off on or after January 1, 2019,
- have been laid off from a job in the manufacturing sector, **AND**
- be unemployed.

Suitability: Service Providers automatically award maximum points in the Active Job Search, Duration of Unemployment, and Work History suitability criteria.



## Feepayer

The Feepayer pathway allows eligible applicants to collect Employment Insurance (EI) Part 1 benefits during skills training, with no additional financial support from the ministry.

- Feepayers are EI claimants who have requested and received section 25 approval from the ministry to continue to collect EI Part 1 benefits for the duration of their entitlement period while attending approved skills training.
- Feepayers pay their own tuition and training costs.
- Feepayers are subject to program and individual eligibility requirements.
- Feepayers are not required to complete a suitability assessment or financial needs assessment, are exempt from skills training requirements and are not required to demonstrate good employment prospects.

# Suitability

Individuals who score **16** or higher on the combined suitability criteria are considered the most suitable for the BJO program. **FeePAYERS and Fast Track Stream applicants are not assessed against the suitability criteria.**

Suitability Criteria	Description and Considerations
Active Job Search	Applicant's length of applicant's job search, awarding higher points for longer job search.
Duration of Unemployment	Applicant's length of unemployment, awarding higher points for longer unemployment.
Educational Attainment	Applicant's highest educational attainment, awarding higher points for lower educational attainment.
Work History	Applicant's length of time in the same occupation, or length of "poor employment" history, awarding higher points for longer work history.
In-Demand Occupational Requirements	Awards more points if occupational goal requires credential or license for employment.
Type of Training	Awards more points if training program leads to a certificate/diploma.
Occupational Experience	The skill level of the applicant's occupational experience, awarding higher points for experience in low-level skill jobs.

## Eligible Skills Training (1/2)

Applicants must demonstrate that their proposed training:



## Eligible Skills Training (2/2)

### Duration

- The skills training period cannot exceed 52 weeks between the program's start and end date.
  - This includes breaks, vacation and placement periods.
- Literacy and Basic Skills training or language training is not included in the 52-week duration maximum.

### Skill level

- Skills training is allowable for NOC TEER category 2, 3 or 4 occupations and equivalent with good employment prospects in Ontario.
- Some NOC TEER category 1 occupations are eligible, as listed in the [Fast Track Stream Addendum](#).
- This includes programs provided by universities.
- Feepayers are exempt from skill level requirements.

### Training Outcome

- Skills training must lead to a credential, such as a micro-credential, certificate, or diploma.
  - A certificate or diploma must signify that all of the skills required for employment in a specific training occupation have been attained.
  - A micro-credential must either provide an in-demand skill expected to lead to employment, or fill a skills gap for the applicant.

## Available Financial Supports

- Most financial supports for BJO training must fit within a \$28,000 funding maximum. Cost categories which are subject to this maximum include:
  - **Basic Living Allowance (BLA)** – Up to \$500 per week
  - **Transportation (for in-person training)** – Flat-rate of \$45 per week
  - **Training Access Payment** – One-time \$350 payment
  - **Tuition, Books and Other Instructional Costs** – No maximum
  - **Electronic Devices** – Up to \$500
- Other financial support categories may exceed the \$28,000 funding maximum. Cost categories which are not subject to this funding maximum include:
  - **Dependent Care** – Based on actual expenses to a maximum per week based on care type
  - **Disability-Related Needs** – Based on actual expenses with no maximum
  - **Living Away from Home** – Up to \$240 per week
  - **Literacy and Basic Skills and/or language upgrade training** – No maximum

# Financial Needs Assessment

An applicant's household income is considered to determine the financial need for basic living allowance, transportation allowance and the training access payment.

## Included in Household Income

- Household income includes any monies that are or will be received by the applicant or their spouse/common law partner during the training period. For example:
  - Employment Income
  - Bursaries/scholarships
  - Inheritances
- Any other sources not mentioned in the exclusion list (e.g., Canada Pension Plan-Disability benefits)

## Excluded from Household Income

- The following sources of income are not included in household income calculations for BJO:
  - Ontario Works (OW),
  - Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP),
  - Tax benefits (e.g., Child Benefits),
  - Ontario Child Benefit Equivalent savings program
  - Child support payments
  - Disability supports for children (e.g., Assistance for Children with Severe Disabilities)

## Implications

- Social Assistance clients must inform their OW/ODSP caseworker of potential BJO income.
- BJO income may impact Social Assistance income supports, but clients can still qualify for Extended Health Benefits through ODSP or OW (see appendix B).
- Participants intending to apply to both BJO and OSAP must be assessed for financial need first by BJO.

## Financial Feasibility

Financial feasibility in context of Better Jobs Ontario refers to the ability of an individual to financially sustain themselves (and their family) while participating in Better Jobs Ontario skills training.

### Adjusting for the \$28,000 funding maximum

- If eligible training costs exceed the \$28,000 funding maximum, the ministry will reduce funding amounts (for applicable cost categories) to \$28,000.
- This means that applicants may receive less funding than they are eligible for.
- The Financial Assistance portion of the BJO Application for Financial Assistance may show reduced amounts for Basic Living Allowance (BLA).

### Service Provider / applicant considerations

- During the Service Provider's Financial Needs Assessment discussion, consider whether:
- the BJO applicant will be able to sustain their basic needs if approved for the skills training program,
  - the total training cost exceeds \$28,000, and
  - the applicant will incur dependent care costs above BJO dependent care maximums.

# Questions?



# Application Process



## Needs Assessment

Service Provider (SP) works with individual to assess skills, goals and training needs.

SP and applicant develop an Employment Action Plan.



## Application Completion and Submission

SP and applicant research training options.

SP assesses applicant's eligibility, suitability and financial need.

SP and applicant gather required documents and submit full BJO application package.



## Application Review

The ministry reviews the application against program guidelines.

Assesses financial need and specifies assistance amounts.

Approves or denies BJO application.

## Key Application Considerations

### Completeness

- When submitting BJO applications, ensure all required components are included.
- Use the [BJO Application Checklist](#) on the Employment Ontario Partner's Gateway as a guide to ensure completeness.
- Some documentation should not be included in a BJO application, but may be reviewed by the SP, including:
  - medical notes,
  - Records of Employment, and
  - the applicant's resume.

### Submission Process

- Applications must be submitted at least 15 business days prior to the applicant's proposed start date.
- Applications may be submitted via either:
  - the Better Jobs Ontario Portal, or
  - the Enterprise Attachment Transfer Service (EATS).
- Applications may not be submitted via regular email.

## Employment Action Plan (EAP)

The EAP is a mandatory document that supplements the details and information inputted in the BJO Financial Assistance Application Form.

In the EAP, Service Providers should note any exceptional aspects of the BJO application and include a detailed rationale for supporting or not supporting the application. This includes:

- The applicant's **eligibility** stream.
- Notes supporting **suitability** scoring (including if there is an exception).
- Considerations that have been made (e.g., financial, medical, travel, dependent care).
- Confirmation of applicant's understanding of **financial feasibility**, and how the applicant plans to manage any financial deficits.
- If the application is not being supported, rationale for this recommendation.
- Additional supports or considerations (e.g., disability-related needs).

A full list of EAP requirements are noted on the [BJO Application Checklist](#).

## Letter of Acceptance

An applicant's letter of acceptance from their training institution must include:

- The program name
- Start and end dates of skills training
- Dates of scheduled training breaks
- All training costs and payment schedule
- Full-time or part-time designation
- Method of training delivery (e.g., online, in-person, hybrid)
- Any other considerations (e.g., previously completed course components, disability-related support requirements, etc.)

If any required components are missing from the Letter of Acceptance, the BJO application is incomplete and may be returned to the Service Provider.

### Amendments

If there are changes to a BJO client's training program (e.g., training dates), they may require an amended agreement. Service Providers work with ministry staff and the client to amend the BJO agreement during the client's training period.

# Private Career College (PCC) Applications

All PCC programs must be registered on the Ontario.ca Private Career Colleges [website](#).

- For BJO applications for training at a PCC, Service Providers must verify that the training details (length, costs, etc.) on the letter of acceptance match the details captured on the PCC website.
- The ministry can only approve funding and training length up to the maximums outlined on the PCC website.
- Applications for PCC training must include a screenshot from the PCC website that displays the training details.  
For example:

[Hi-Mark Occupational Skills Training Centre Ltd.](#)  
Unit 3, 427 Dundas Street North, Cambridge, ON, N1R5R5  
**Phone** : 416-781-8000

Hide Details

Program ↓↑	Hours ↓↑	Delivery Format(s) ↓↑	Instruction Weeks (Minimum) ↓↑	Instruction Weeks (Maximum) ↓↑	Tuition ↓↑	Books (estimated) ↓↑	Other Fees ↓↑	International Student Fees ↓↑	*Effective Date ↓↑
HVAC Co-op	776	In-person	19	19	\$8,662.50	\$429.45	\$3,654.20	\$0.00	N/A

# Questions?

If you have questions after the training session, please contact your ministry representative by email:

Hamilton, Brantford, Niagara: [hnb.bjo@ontario.ca](mailto:hnb.bjo@ontario.ca)

London, Owen Sound: [london.bjo@ontario.ca](mailto:london.bjo@ontario.ca)

Sarnia: [sarnia.bjo@ontario.ca](mailto:sarnia.bjo@ontario.ca)

Chatham: [chatham.bjo@ontario.ca](mailto:chatham.bjo@ontario.ca)

Windsor: [windsor.bjo@ontario.ca](mailto:windsor.bjo@ontario.ca)

# Appendices

# Appendix A: Resources

[Home](#) > [Jobs and employment](#)

## Better Jobs Ontario

Get skills training and financial support when you qualify for Better Jobs Ontario (formerly Second Career).

### On this page

1. [People facing challenges finding a stable job](#)
2. [Overview](#)
3. [Eligibility](#)
4. [Apply to Better Jobs Ontario](#)

### People facing challenges finding a stable job

Effective April 29, 2022, we expanded the program to better help people who may face challenges finding stable jobs such as gig workers, youth and people on social

#### Related

[Adult learning](#)

[Adjusting after job loss](#)

#### Chat with us live

Weekdays  
8:30am - 5pm ET

[Chat live now](#)



- [Better Jobs Ontario | Ontario.ca](#)
- [Better Jobs Ontario | EOPG](#) – includes:
  - Better Jobs Ontario Program Guidelines
  - Addendum to Better Jobs Ontario Guidelines
- [Better Jobs Ontario \(BJO\) Forms](#) – includes:
  - Application for Financial Assistance
  - Application Guide
- [Private Career Collage Search Service](#)
- [myEOIS \(gov.on.ca\)](#) – training and Q&A's regarding the BJO Portal and the Case Management System (CaMS)
- [Government of Canada National Occupation Classification \(NOC\) website](#)
- [NOC 2021 Concordance tables](#)



## Appendix B: *Extended Health Benefits*



- ODSP and Ontario Works recipients can qualify for Extended Health Benefits (EHB) while in receipt of social assistance.
- Benefits, such as prescription drug coverage, diabetic supplies and coverage of medical transportation expenses, are available through EHB.
- In April 2022, EHB eligibility was expanded to people who leave social assistance to enrol in Better Jobs Ontario. This means that recipients of ODSP or Ontario Works can continue to receive health benefits if they exit their respective programs due to income from Better Jobs Ontario.
- EHB eligibility is extended to individuals in Better Jobs Ontario until the completion of skills training, at which point they can:
  - transition into the workforce;
  - apply for rapid reinstatement for ODSP; or
  - reapply for Ontario Works.

## Appendix C: Suitability Criteria (1/2)

- Individuals who score 16 points or higher on the suitability criteria are considered most suitable for the BJO program.
- Suitability information can be found in section 2.5.2 of the BJO Guidelines.
- For additional scoring information, refer to the BJO Eligibility and Suitability Assessment Tool in EOIS-CaMS.

Criteria	Program Suitability High: 3 points	Program Suitability Medium: 2 points	Program Suitability Low: 1 point
<b>Active Job Search</b>	More than 26 weeks	13 to 26 weeks	Less than 13 weeks
<b>Duration of Unemployment</b>	More than 26 weeks unemployed	13 to 26 weeks unemployed	Less than 13 weeks unemployed
<b>Educational Attainment</b>  The highest education level an individual has completed	High school completion or less (this includes those with an Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD) or equivalent, (e.g., the General Educational Development (GED)), the equivalent in other jurisdictions, or any amount of secondary schooling up to the point of BJO application);  Postsecondary completion that is not recognized in Ontario.	High school completion with some postsecondary education or some apprenticeship training;	Postsecondary completion or apprenticeship completion (Certificate of Apprenticeship or Certificate of Qualification)

## Appendix C: Suitability Criteria (2/2)

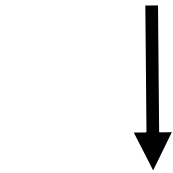
Criteria	Program Suitability High: 3 points	Program Suitability Medium: 2 points	Program Suitability Low: 1 point
<b>Work History</b> This is defined as the extent to which an individual’s work history (in Canada or abroad) impacts their ability to attach to the labour market	More than 5 years in the same occupation previous to lay-off  OR  More than 3 years of “poor employment history”	3 to 5 years in the same occupation previous to lay-off  OR  2 to 3 years of “poor employment history”	Less than 3 years in the same occupation previous to lay-off OR Less than 2 years of “poor employment history” OR No previous work history
<b>In-Demand Occupational Requirements</b>	Credential/license needed for chosen occupation.	No Credential/license needed for chosen occupation.	--
<b>Type of Skills Training</b>	Occupation specific skills training in NOC TEER category 2, 3 or 4, or NOC TEER category 1 if it is for an in-scope occupation listed in the <a href="#">Addendum to the Better Jobs Ontario Guidelines</a> .	Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) training or language training that is needed in advance of occupation-specific skills training.	No previous work experience.
<b>Occupational Experience</b>	Work experience in NOC TEER category 5 occupations and few opportunities for sustainable, long-term employment; and/or a disability prevents an individual from using existing occupational skills.	Work experience is in NOC TEER category 2, 3, or 4 occupations and few opportunities for long-term employment; and/or a disability prevents an individual from using existing skills.	No previous work history

## Appendix D: Program Redesign, Phases 1 and 2

1



- **Fast-tracked lower-skilled individuals** laid-off from sectors most impacted by the pandemic and seeking training in an in-demand provincial priority area, to help them get back to work faster and support economic recovery
- Focused on **short-duration training** (52 weeks or less) to get people in jobs faster
- Removed Private Career College (PCC) **tuition caps** to expand training options



2



- Simplified the **financial assessment** by using flat rates, where possible
- Increased **basic living allowance, transportation and childcare** supports to better reflect increased costs of living
- Improved the client experience by **streamlining the application process** and forms
- Explored opportunities to **digitize** the application
- 



## Appendix D: *Program Redesign, Phase 3*

3



- **Expanded program eligibility and suitability** to individuals from a low-income household who have had challenges transitioning into sustainable employment:
  - **Improved access** for client groups with known barriers to labour market attachment, which may have been exacerbated by COVID-19, such as newcomers, people with disabilities, youth with employment barriers, and social assistance recipients.
- **Re-named program *Better Jobs Ontario*** to better reflect the expanded scope of the program
- Launched **digital application** province-wide to digitize and simplify the application process
- Expanded eligibility of the **Extended Health Benefit (EHB)** during training to support Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) and Ontario Works clients who exit social assistance due to income from Better Jobs Ontario.

