

CURRICULUM RESOURCE

Applying for Ontario Works

OALCF ALIGNMENT

Competency	Task Group	Level
Competency A - Find and Use Information	A1. Read continuous text	2
Competency A - Find and Use Information	A2. Interpret documents	2
Competency B - Communicate Ideas and Information	B1. Interact with others	2
Competency B - Communicate Ideas and Information	B3. Complete and create documents	2
Competency D - Use Digital Technology	N/A	N/A

Goal Paths (check all that apply)

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Employment | <input type="checkbox"/> Postsecondary |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Apprenticeship | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Independence |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Secondary School Credit | |

Embedded Skills for Success (check all that apply)

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Adaptability | <input type="checkbox"/> Numeracy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Collaboration | <input type="checkbox"/> Problem Solving |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Communication | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reading |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Creativity and innovation | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Writing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Digital | |

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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This Employment Ontario service is funded in part by the Government of Canada and the Government of Ontario through the Canada-Ontario Job Fund Agreement.



The opinions expressed in this report are the opinions of Community Literacy of Ontario and do not necessarily reflect those of our funders.

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Introduction – For Practitioners

This curriculum resource was researched and written by Doug Noyes and Joyce Bigelow for Community Literacy of Ontario in the winter of 2024.

Applying for Ontario Works has been created to share information and resources around the process of applying for Ontario Works.

Applying for Ontario Works is intended for Ontario LBS learners. It is a beginner's guide to Ontario Works and how to apply for benefits. Tasks and activities align with the Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework.

This resource has been designed for learners with Level 2 skills.

While this curriculum resource was specifically written for under-represented groups, the content may have broader application to other adult learners who are interested in this topic.

Applying for Ontario Works can be used by learners in various settings, including 1-to-1 tutoring, small groups, and classroom learning.

Practitioners are encouraged to supplement this resource with:

- discussions about learner experiences related to the subject matter
- examples that are culturally relevant to the learner
- additional activities as desired

This resource requires the use of a computer connected to the internet.

This resource may benefit from being led by an OW caseworker to answer the complex questions that could come up for participants.

Applying for Ontario Works embeds the Government of Canada's Skills for Success model. Tasks and activities are included that align with the Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework.

Skills for Success

In May 2021, the Government of Canada introduced an update to its Essential Skills model. The updated model has been renamed Skills for Success.

There are nine Skills for Success:

- Adaptability
- Collaboration
- Communication
- Creativity and Innovation
- Digital
- Numeracy
- Problem Solving
- Reading
- Writing



To find out more about the Skills for Success, visit

<https://www.canada.ca/en/services/jobs/training/initiatives/skills-success.html>

This resource highlights adaptability, communication, problem solving, and reading.

Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework (OALCF)

The OALCF is a competency-based framework that Ontario's Literacy and Basic Skills programs use to develop programs for each person receiving literacy support. For more information, visit the Ontario Government's website at

https://www.tcu.gov.on.ca/eng/eopg/programs/lbs_oalcf_overview.html

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Introduction

People often refer to Ontario Works as just “OW”. Throughout this resource, we will use this OW short form often.

This resource will help you:

- understand what Ontario Works is
- consider if it is a possible solution for you
- prepare to apply for Ontario Works
- learn about the application process
- know about your rights when applying for Ontario Works

The resource has referred to two main information sources:

- The Government of Ontario has a Social Assistance website <https://www.ontario.ca/page/social-assistance> full of helpful information.
- We also direct you to the Ontario Works application home page Apply for Ontario Works at www.sada.mcass.gov.on.ca/intake/OW/home-page

Changes may occur in the Ontario Works (OW) application process. The above resources and your local OW office will be the best source for up-to-date information.

Perhaps the best place for OW information is your local OW office.

You can find out where your local office is by asking **211 Ontario**.

211 is a free and confidential service. It can easily connect you to social and community supports you may need. You can access 211 by:

- dialing 211 on your phone or cell
- texting 211
- searching the internet for 211 Ontario or going directly to <https://211ontario.ca/search>

Tell 211 your location and what you want to search for. For example, you can ask for or type in: Ontario Works or Social Assistance.

Learning Activity #1

1. Using the internet, search for 211 Ontario.
2. Locate the listing for 211Ontario.ca.
3. Navigate to 211Ontario.ca.
4. Select the Search option from the top menu.
5. Enter your location and your search keywords “Ontario Works”. Then click the search box.

6. Locate your local Ontario Works office.

Note: The listing may be a city or county name, but Ontario Works should be right below it.

7. Record the information about your local Ontario Works office below.

Name of agency _____

Address _____

Phone number _____

What is Ontario Works

Ontario Works (OW) is one type of social assistance provided by the Province of Ontario. Welfare may be another name some people use for OW.

OW is a program for people who are in financial need. Those in need can apply for financial and employment assistance through OW.

The Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) is another type of social assistance offered by the Government of Ontario. It is for people with disabilities who have no or limited income. This resource does not include information about ODSP.

OW may provide benefits for you and the people in your “benefit unit”. Your benefit unit may include dependents, such as a spouse or children.

As an individual, you could receive up to \$733 a month for basic needs. This amount may change over time. This was the monthly basic needs amount in November 2023. If you have a spouse or children, you may receive a larger amount. The basic needs amount is to help you and your eligible family members with living expenses, including food and rent. You or your dependents may also be eligible for health benefits.

In most cases, you must participate in employment-related activities to receive financial help. Some examples of employment-related activities are:

- workshops for resume writing
- job counselling
- job-specific training

Why Would You Want to Apply For Ontario Works?

Do any of these apply to you?

- You are out of work
- You can't get a job with the education and skills you now have
- You can't support yourself or your family
- Your job pays less than the minimum Ontario Works cut-off amount. (Note: this amount changes from time-to-time)
- You temporarily can't work
- You can't collect Employment Insurance (EI)
- You are trying to get on a disability program like ODSP or CPP
- You are under 18 and not living with your parents

What Ontario Works Can Do for You

It can be extremely upsetting to be in any of these situations. It is stressful to be constantly worrying about money. Stress can:

- cause many health issues, emotional and physical
- effect your relationships with family and friends
- make it difficult to move ahead with your life

OW can help you deal with some of the causes of your stress.

- It can provide financial support to meet your critical expenses.
- The staff may be able to help you budget.
- They can refer you to resources like housing, food banks, and childcare. Their employment supports can help you prepare for and find a job
- They can work with you to develop a plan. This would be based on *your* skills, experience, and circumstances.

Examples

Here are some examples of services OW offices may provide to help you find a job:

Note: Many of the examples below are not provided directly by your OW office. Instead they are made to other agencies by referral. However, they may be included in your OW plan.

- access to employment-related activities, such as:
 - workshops for resume writing
 - job counselling
 - job-specific training
 - information on who's hiring
 - preparation for job interviews

- access to basic education to
 - finish high school
 - improve your language skills
 - upgrade your reading, writing, or math skills
- job-specific training to acquire micro-credentials through short courses offered by postsecondary education institutions in as little as 12 weeks:
www.ontario.ca/page/micro-credentials-ontarios-postsecondary-schools
- connection to Better Jobs Ontario (BJO). BJO helps people rejoin the workforce quickly by providing in-demand skills. Training programs take 52 weeks or less to complete. Learn more about Better Jobs Ontario
www.ontario.ca/page/better-jobs-ontario
- employment and community placements
- possible money and other supports to help with expenses when participating in employment- and training-related activities. Examples include:
 - childcare
 - travel

Learning Activity #2

1. Look at each of the examples above in the section “Things Ontario Works Can Do for You”.
 - a. For each example, consider if it interests you as a pathway to employment. Put a check in the box next to any that do interest you.
 - b. Discuss at least three examples with a partner, in a group, or with your instructor.

Adaptability

When you are on OW, you will need to work with your caseworker to make a plan. You may need to be adaptable. You may need to learn new things or try new routes to employment. This can lead to a sustainable job that will last and provide enough money for you to manage. And that can relieve your stress.

Going on OW, if you need to, can be a good step ahead.

Applying for Ontario Works

Qualifications



as-set

Assets are things you own that are of financial value. For example, cash or things that you can sell for money.

To qualify for OW financial assistance, you must meet several requirements.

1. You must be at least 16 years of age
2. You must be an Ontario resident
 - a. You may be eligible, if you are verified as a:
 - Landed immigrant
 - Refugee claimants
 - Convention refugee
 - Applicant for permanent residence in Canada
 - b. Visitors are not eligible for Ontario Works. Visitors are people who are in Canada for a temporary purpose. A visitor may:
 - Have a tourist visa, student visa or work permit/authorization

- Be temporarily re-located from another country (e.g., a natural disaster has forced a community evacuation).

3. Your assets, that are not exempt from OW asset calculations, must be less than:

- \$10,000 for a single person
- \$15,000 for a couple
- an additional \$500 for each dependant

Some assets are exempt or not included in the calculation of your assets. This means that they do not affect your eligibility for financial assistance. Here are some examples of exempt assets:

- the home you own and live in
- your primary vehicle (the one you use the most, if you have more than one)
- pre-paid funerals
- Registered Education Savings Plans (RESP)
- Registered Disability Savings Plans (RDSP)
- necessary household and personal items, such as furniture and clothing

4. You must be in financial need. For financial eligibility, OW will look at your

- income
- living expenses
- shelter costs
- family size and make-up

You may still receive Ontario Works assistance if you are working. You may work part-time and need assistance from Ontario Works for your living costs.

For more details on qualifying for OW see Eligibility for Ontario Works financial assistance at www.ontario.ca/page/eligibility-ontario-works-financial-assistance

Learning Activity #3

Look at #3 in the Qualifications section above. It says that OW will look at your income when determining eligibility.

1. Below is a **list of income and other sources of funds**. Choose three sources and discuss them with a group or your instructor.

List of income and other sources of funds

Income and other sources of funds you need to report include:

- a job
 - tax benefits
 - Canada Pension Plan (CPP) or Québec Pension Plan (QPP) benefits
 - Employment Insurance (EI)
 - Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) benefits
 - earnings from a job or a training program
 - profit from a farm or business, including self-employment
 - spousal support
 - sponsorship support
 - Guaranteed Annual Income Supplement (GAINS)
 - Old Age Security (OAS) and Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS)
2. Put a check in the box beside each of the sources of income you currently have.
Note: you do not need to show this to anyone at your learning centre.

Note: If you apply for OW, consider these check marks. You will need to have documents for each item you checked.

Applying

You can do the OW application in only two ways,

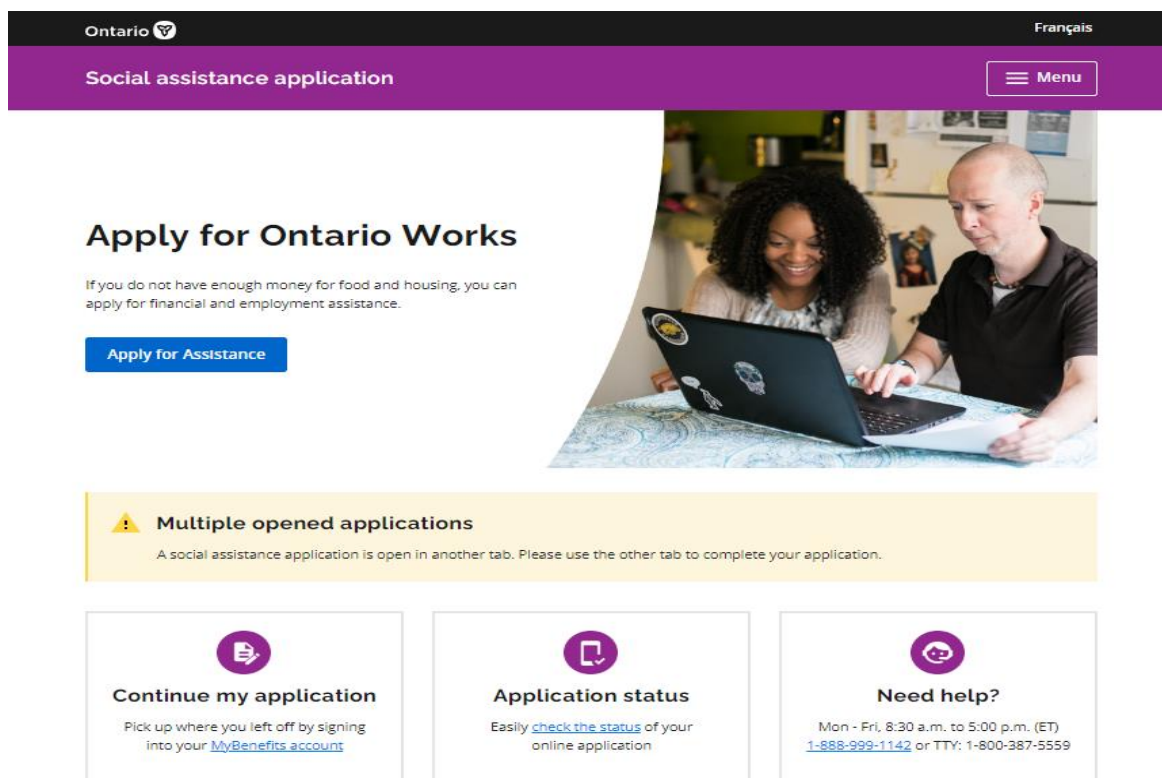
- online
- by telephone

However, some local OW offices may offer other options in exceptional circumstances.

The online application is available at

<https://www.sada.mcass.gov.on.ca/intake/OW/home-page> From this page you may

- apply for assistance
- continue an application
- check on your application’s status
- get help with your application



The screenshot shows the Ontario Social Assistance Application website. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the Ontario logo, the text "Social assistance application", and a "Français" link. A "Menu" button is also visible. The main heading is "Apply for Ontario Works". Below this, a sub-heading reads: "If you do not have enough money for food and housing, you can apply for financial and employment assistance." A prominent blue button labeled "Apply for Assistance" is displayed. A yellow warning box contains a triangle icon and the text: "Multiple opened applications. A social assistance application is open in another tab. Please use the other tab to complete your application." Below the warning box are three white boxes with purple icons and text: "Continue my application" (with a document icon), "Application status" (with a status icon), and "Need help?" (with a help icon). The "Need help?" box includes contact information: "Mon - Fri, 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. (ET) 1-888-999-1142 or TTY: 1-800-387-5559".

The application is many pages long. The website says that it should take 20 to 30 minutes to complete it. However, it may take much longer. For example, all the required information may not be handy.

If you leave the application inactive for 1.5 hours it will shut down. If you have not used the MyBenefits account (more on MyBenefits later), you will lose all your work. You will have to start over. Therefore, you should do two important things:

- create and use a MyBenefits account
- locate and organize your information before starting the application

MyBenefits Account

MyBenefits is an online service for Ontario social service recipients. With MyBenefits, you can quickly and conveniently access your information. This service is available 24/7 for OW and Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) recipients. You can do this securely on any of your online devices.

With MyBenefits you can:

- check the status and breakdown of each payment
- view letters
- view your profile information
- report address and phone number changes
- report earned income
- show proof of assistance to third party providers



And, as we said earlier, you can save the progress of your OW application.

To get started, visit Ontario.ca/MyBenefits (English) at <https://mybenefits.mcscs.gov.on.ca/auth/login?lang=en-CA>.

Learning Activity #4

Note: You may need assistance from your instructor for parts of this activity, such as with printing the instructions.

In this activity, you will find out more about MyBenefits. You will also find and print instructions on how to complete a MyBenefits application.

1. Do a web search using the keyword “MyBenefits”.
2. Visit one or more sites from various cities, such as Toronto, Windsor, Peel Region, Region of Durham, etc. You do not need to live in that city or municipality. See the example screen shot on the next page.
3. Read more about MyBenefits features on the websites.
4. Scan the sites’ webpages to see if there are step-by-step instructions on how to open a MyBenefits account.
5. Locate instructions on how to complete the online application for MyBenefits.
6. Print out the instructions that you prefer.

Google MyBenefits

Keyword

About 25,700,000 results (0.26 seconds)

MyBenefits
https://mybenefits.mcas.gov.on.ca

MyBenefits | MyBenefits
MyBenefits: sign-in or create an account to access your Ontario Works or Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) case.

Contact us
MyBenefits - contact us for help with this online service or to ...

Terms of use
General terms. Learn what you are agreeing to when you use the ...

More results from gov.on.ca »

Toronto
https://www.toronto.ca/employment-social-support

MyBenefits
MyBenefits is an online service available 24/7 to Ontario residents who receive Ontario Works (OW) or Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP).

City Of Windsor
https://www.citywindsor.ca/ways-to-contact/pages

MyBenefits
MyBenefits is an online service for social service recipients from the Government of Ontario. MyBenefits makes it faster, easier and more convenient to access ...

Peel Region
https://www.peelregion.ca/help/mybenefits-signup

Sign up for MyBenefits - Region of Peel
Sign up for MyBenefits. Easily access your Ontario Works or Ontario Disability Support Program information. MyBenefits is an online service available 24/7 ...

Region of Durham
https://www.durham.ca/living-here/mybenefits

MyBenefits
MyBenefits - Message their caseworker and view message history. - View payment status, history and information. - View and print Proof of Assistance. - Report ...

Lanark County
https://www.lanarkcounty.ca/my-benefits

MyBenefits
MyBenefits is an online service which allows you to access your current case related information on any device. Sign up Now! A photo of MyBenefits ...

City Site Examples

Optional Activity

Complete a MyBenefits account application by following the steps printed out in Activity 2 above.

Your Application

You can apply for OW in one of these two ways:

- Apply online through the Ministry of Community and Social Services website.
- Call 1-888-999-1142 to make an application over the phone.

There are many questions that you will need to answer. Some are:

- Simple, like your name and address
- just for statistical purposes
- confidential, such as financial information

You must complete certain questions. These will have “required” after the question. You may be able to skip others until your interview.

If applying by phone, you may not have to finish the whole application. They may refer you to a local OW worker to help you. You should apply by phone if you feel you will have difficulty.

It's a good idea to collect information and documents ahead of time. Then you will have everything ready when you apply. Here is a list of seven items you will need for your online or telephone application:

1. Social Insurance Number
2. health card
3. proof of identity and date of birth
4. employment history/information
5. income and asset statements
6. shelter costs
7. status in Canada

Learning Activity #5

Discuss the following in a group or with your instructor

1. What documents could show proof of your identity and date of birth?
2. What are some statements you could use to show your income and assets?
3. What might you include in your shelter costs?
4. Why would it be helpful to gather all your information and documents ahead of time?
5. What does "status in Canada" mean?

Further Preparation for Online Application

Gathering your information isn't the only thing you need to do before you start. You also need to prepare your internet browser. You need to do this for two reasons:

- to protect your privacy and your confidential information from hackers
- to provide enough room in your browser's memory. Your browser needs to remember where it is in the application process.

A web browser is an application for accessing websites and the Internet. Some example browsers are:

- Chrome
- Safari
- Edge
- Firefox

Go Incognito!

Incognito means to go disguised or in secret. Incognito mode on the internet is a more private way to surf the web. It does this by not keeping a record of your history, cookies, or other temporary data. This makes your session invisible to other device users.

Different browsers use different names to describe the incognito window. Other names are Private or InPrivate window.

Different browsers have different ways to change to an incognito window. Generally, click on the three dots or lines in the top right corner for a menu. Then, choose Incognito, Private, or InPrivate window. Safari is an exception. For Safari, first choose the four squares to show all of your windows. Then, use the drop-down arrow to select a private window.

Important Note:


Always use an incognito window when doing anything confidential on public computers. That includes those at your learning centre or in an OW office.

Learning Activity #6

1. What browser are you using on your device (computer, tablet/iPad, or cellphone)? _____
2. Open an Incognito, Private or InPrivate window on your device. You may want to practise this several times before showing your instructor how.

Clear your Cache and Cookies


Before applying for OW Social Assistance online, you must clear your browser's memory. This means that you will clear out the cache and cookies. Doing this leaves room to complete your application. It also allows you to leave it and come back if you are using MyBenefits. At the beginning of the online application, you will see the following on your screen.

Ontario  Frat

Social assistance application

[< Back](#)

Before you apply

 **Security and privacy**

Your privacy and security is important to us. To keep your application secure:

- Your information will be lost if you refresh the page at any time. You will need to start over.
- If you are inactive for more than 1.5 hours, your application will close, your information will be lost, and you will need to start over.
- Please clear your cache and cookies in your browser history. Clearing them fixes certain problems, like loading or formatting issues.

[How do I clear my cache and cookies?](#)

Click on the hypertext at the bottom that says, “How do I clear my cache and cookies?” You will get options to follow for your browser.

^ How do I clear my cache and cookies?

- How to clear your cache and cookies in [Chrome](#)
- How to clear your cache and cookies in [Safari](#)
- How to clear your cache and cookies in [Microsoft Edge](#)
- How to clear your cache and cookies in [Firefox](#)

Learning Activity #7

1. Refer to the instructions and screenshots above.
2. Clear the cache and cookies on your computer or other device.

Verification Appointment

What happens once you have submitted your OW Social Assistance application? It will go to a caseworker at your local OW office. The caseworker will review your application. They will call you to schedule an appointment. The call should happen within four business days once you submit your application. This appointment is a verification appointment.

At your appointment, the caseworker might ask you to provide more information. These questions could be about bills or other documents. They may be necessary to verify that the information on your application is true.

They will ask you to sign your application package. This will include a consent allowing OW to contact other agencies. These contacts will help determine if you qualify for assistance. Contacts may include:

- Ministry of Transportation
- Employment Insurance
- Equifax Canada

OW Approval

The caseworker will make a decision once they have all the information they need. They must tell you within four business days of your appointment. They will then tell you if they are approving or denying your application. If they approve it, they will also tell you how much you may receive and when.

You may receive a monthly allowance for your basic needs and shelter costs. You may get some assistance for health benefits and employment related expenses, etc.

Usually, you will receive payments directly into your bank account. You may also have payments put on your Reloadable Payment Card (RPC).

Through your MyBenefits account or by mail, you will get:

- a drug card
- an explanation of the cheque (like a cheque stub)
- an income-reporting statement (IRS)

What if OW determines that you are not eligible? You will have 30 days to request that OW reviews your information. This allows you to present new information, if applicable.

Learning Activity #8

1. Do you feel that you can make an application for OW Social Assistance now?
 - a. If yes, why? _____
 - b. If no, why not? _____
 - c. Discuss the above with a group or your instructor.

2. If approved for OW, you will have to do employment preparation activities. What type of activities might you want to take part in and why? Here are some examples:
 - job search training and assistance
 - career exploration
 - job skills training
 - specific career training
 - volunteering
 - goal setting
 - problem solving
 - other
 - none of the above

3. What barriers might you face to doing any of the above?
 - a. Discuss these barriers with a group or your instructor.

Other resources

- Community Legal Education Ontario (CLEO). This website has great tips about applying for OW, free resources, and legal advice. www.cleo.on.ca/en

CLEO's pages more specific to OW can be found in their Steps to Justice partnership <https://stepstojustice.ca/legal-topic/income-assistance/ontario-works/>

