Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services

Office of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity

Women's Economic Security Program (WESP) | Call for Applications

Questions and Answers

January 2024

Contents

Application Requirements

1. How do I apply to the WESP?

All applications **must be submitted online** through the Transfer Payment Ontario (TPON) portal (https://www.app.grants.gov.on.ca/tpon/psLogin). The online application may be saved at any point and edited at any point before January 26, 2024, 5:00 PM EST. Please refer to the Transfer Payment Ontario Reference Guide, found here for additional information.

If you have technical questions about using TPON or accessing the online application form on the TPON site, please contact TPON Client Care, available Monday to Friday, from 8:30 am to 5:00 pm by:

- Telephone: 416-325-6691 or 1-855-216-3090
- TTY: 416-325-3408 or 1-800-268-7095
- Email: TPONCC@ontario.ca

Note: The province reserves the right to not accept late or incomplete applications; it is recommended that applications be submitted in advance of the program submission deadline (January 26, 2024, 5:00 PM EST) to ensure deadline is met.

2. What are the eligibility criteria for an applicant?

Applicants eligible to apply to the WESP include broader public sector organizations, publicly funded post-secondary institutions, not-for-profit organizations and Indigenous organizations based in Ontario. Applicants must be legal entities and meet the following criteria:

- Ontario-based entities on or before January 1, 2020, including those that are established by or under legislation; are federally or provincially incorporated; or are band councils as defined under the Indian Act, Canada;
- Have an elected governing Board of Directors or equivalent;
- Demonstrate financial stability for the duration of the funding period as shown through externally audited financial statements, established financial policies and procedures;
- Have bylaws that outline procedures for reporting and accounting to their membership or the public for the organization's operations and performance:
- Satisfy the Ministry that it has adequate governance structures and accountability processes to properly administer and manage public funds and to carry out the project consistent with the terms of the Transfer Payment Agreement (TPA);

- Satisfy the Ministry that it has relevant, accurate, and timely financial reporting and audited financial statements;
- Be able to provide a valid Commercial General Liability Insurance; and
- Operate in compliance with the Ontario Human Rights Code.

For additional information refer to the WESP Application Guidelines, Section 3.1 Eligible Applicants.

3. **Would an organization that has been incorporated prior to 2020, but began operating in Ontario after 2020 be eligible to apply as a lead applicant? Expand on the definition of "Ontario Based"?**

Applicants are required to provide proof of provincial or Federal incorporation certification (i.e. Certificate of Status) or establishment under the *Indian Act, 1985*, on or before January 1, 2020.

For the purpose of delivering WESP training programs, organizations are required to have operations based in Ontario.

4. **Are municipalities eligible to submit an application?**

Applicants eligible to apply to the Women's Economic Security Program include broader public sector organizations, publicly funded post-secondary institutions, not-for-profit organizations, and Indigenous organizations. Municipalities fall under the broader public sector category and are therefore eligible to submit applications as the lead applicant. We encourage partnerships between women-centred community-based organizations, educational institutions, and businesses.

5. **Can an applicant / organization submit multiple applications?**

Yes, an applicant can submit multiple applications, however, if an applicant is applying to more than one funding stream, **one application is required for each funding stream**. If an applicant wants to provide training in more than one sector under the same stream (i.e., General Employment), you must submit one application per proposed project.

6. **If a training project is being delivered with more than one organization, is the application considered a consortium?**

The WESP Application Guidelines, Section 3.2 Consortium Proposals, defines a consortium as "partner applicants or private sector partners offering relevant and complimentary skills or job experience".

A consortium is required to submit one application and identify a project lead. The Project lead must meet the application eligibility criteria, for additional information, as per WESP Application Guidelines, Section 3.1 - Eligible Applicants.

7. **What if an applicant's 2022 Audited Financial Statements is not available before January 26, 2024?**

The applicant is required to submit **the most recent** Audited Financial Statements. For example, the 2021 Audited Financial Statements if the 2022 statements are not completed.

8. **When will successful applicants be notified?**

The Ministry will select successful applicants to deliver WESP using a fair, transparent, and rigorous evaluation process. Timing of notification of successful applicants will be dependent upon the number of applications received.

Funding

9. **Is the WESP multi-year funding? If so, what is the maximum number of years an applicant can apply for?**

WESP budgets are approved annually. Contracts will be multi-year. It is expected that successful applicants will begin project delivery in the 2024-25 fiscal year (post April 1, 2024). Please submit your budget based on project delivery for one fiscal year.

10. **Is WESP funding available to new applicants?**

The WESP Call for Applications is open to new and current applicants.

11. Is there a minimum number of trainees required to be considered for funding?

Please note that there is not a minimum or maximum number of program participants required. Applicants are required to submit service data targets based on project delivery for one fiscal year. Note: applicants must complete the following sections in the WESP Application Form:

- Section F – Budget; and
- Section G – Service Data.

12. Are applicants required to contribute financially to the program, in addition to the funds requested from WESP? Is there required or recommended cost sharing, either in-kind or cash contributions from applicants? Are applicants required to demonstrate their cash or in-kind contributions to the project?

Successful applicants are required to meet the financial eligibility criteria as outlined in WESP Application Guidelines – Section 3.1 Eligible Applicants, such as demonstrating financial stability for the duration of the funding period as shown through externally Audited Financial Statements, established financial policies and procedures. For additional information regarding the budget, please refer to WESP Application Form, Section F – Budget. Applicants are not required to provide in-kind or cash contributions.

Funding Streams

Women in Skilled Trades & Women in Information Technology

13. Please explain this statement: Training Delivery Agent must be registered with the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development, AND hold a Registered Training Agreement with the same Ministry for the training they are providing.

The Training Delivery Agent must be registered with the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development (MLITSD) AND hold a Registered Training Agreement in the pre-apprenticeship or apprenticeship training they are providing. This is a requirement for both the Skilled Trades and Information Technology Streams.

For additional information regarding skilled trades program participants registration, please contact MLITSD by email: contactEO@ontario.ca; phone: 416-326-5656 / 1-800-387-5656; or live chat https://www.ontario.ca/page/employment-ontario-live-chat.

General Employment Training

14. What are the micro-credentials eligibility criteria?

As per the WESP Application Guidelines, Section 4.7 - Micro- Credentials, micro-credentials should be stacked or bundled in such a way that when combined will provide well rounded training to enable participants to gain employment.

Note: Stacked or bundled micro-credentials must focus on the development of a skill or set of skills that are in demand or fill a knowledge or labor gap, that will allow the participant to gain the vital skills relevant to the target occupation.

Please Note: Micro-Credentials are only ONE of the eligible training activities under the General Employment Training stream. Applicants under this stream are not required to provide only micro-credentials.

Entrepreneurship for Women's Self-Employment

15. Elaborate on the mentorship component of the entrepreneurship stream. How should mentors be selected? Can organization staff act as mentors, or should corporate mentors be arranged?

Applicants are best equipped to determine how they intend to execute the required mentorship component of the Entrepreneurship stream. As per the WESP Application Guidelines - Section 4.5 – Mandatory Partnership / Mentorships, applicants are encouraged to develop partnerships that enhance program delivery and outcomes. Mentors should have relevant sector-based expertise and experience. Staff who have the relevant experience may act as mentors.

16. For the entrepreneurship stream: can the mentors be paid or receive an honorarium?

The WESP Guidelines - Section 9.1.1 Eligible and Ineligible Costs, mentors may receive an honorarium for services provided related to program activities.

17. For the entrepreneurship stream what is the expectation for reporting data post 6 months, given that it typically takes longer than 6 months for individuals to start up a business? How do we report on this in the interim?

Successful applicants are required to report on the data that is available to them at the required reporting time. More information on reporting timelines will be provided in the Transfer Payment Agreement.

18. **For the Entrepreneurship stream, can weekly stipends or 'completion bonuses' be paid to participants during training? Since wage subsidies can be paid to the other 3 streams, is this allowed under Entrepreneurship as long as it doesn't exceed $3,000.00/participant?**

As per the WESP Application Guidelines, Section 4.4. Work Placements, C - Wage Subsidies, wage subsidies are not an eligible expense and do not qualify for the Entrepreneurship training stream's budget.

Please note that Section 9.1.1 Eligible and Ineligible Costs, "weekly stipends" or "completion bonuses" are not listed as eligible costs and do not qualify as budget items for the Entrepreneurship training stream.

Training Program Requirements

19. **What is the expected and/or maximum duration of the project? Are projects expected to have a 52-week duration, or are applicants expected to propose a project that will be delivered and complete within the 2024-25 fiscal year?**

The WESP Application Guidelines -Section 4.3 Program Streams outlines the expected duration of each program stream. All training programs are a maximum of 52 weeks. Training programs are required to be implemented for a duration that would lead to a participant's ability to secure employment in the target sector/occupation.

   o   In addition, the Women in Skilled Trades, Women in Information Technology and General Employment streams are required to provide an internship or work placement of 8-12 weeks.

20. **Can you please clarify what is required as part of the work placements?**

Work placements are a mandatory component for the three employment training streams: Skilled Trades, Information Technology, General Employment Training. The WESP Application Guidelines - Section 4.4 Work Placements, outlines, work placements requirements. Key requirements include:

- 8-12 weeks duration, based on employer needs and local market conditions;
- Comply with the appropriate legislation and/or regulations; and
- Include participant evaluations of the work placements.

21. Are program participants required to make payments for entry to the program?

Participants are not required to contribute financially to gain entry into the program. Training programs are free for participants as long as they meet the participant eligibility requirements. For additional information, see WESP Application Guidelines – Section 4.1 Eligible Program Participants.

22. Is the low-income threshold determined by household income or individual income?

The low-income threshold is determined by family or household income. The Low-Income Measure for 2022 can be found in the WESP Application Guidelines - Section 4.1 Eligible Program Participants.

23. What is the verification requirements to determine if participants fall under the low-income threshold? Is this attestation based or documentation based?

Program participant's Low-Income Measure is determined through a review of the previous year's income tax Notice of Assessment.

24. Elaborate on the requirement that program participants who do not secure employment through the organization's training must be supported/directed to receive more training and support to secure employment or self-employment.

Successful applicants are required to provide employability and workplace preparation training to program participants. Please see WESP Application Guidelines - Section 4.6 Employability Training for additional information. The goal of the program is to help women get suitable employment or self-employment post-training. If a graduate cannot secure a job or become self-employed, the funded applicant may provide assistance to identify and pursue further education and training. For additional information, refer to WESP Application Guidelines - Section 4.8 Further Education and Training for the types of training that would qualify under this category.

In addition, successful applicants must develop and implement a referral protocol with the local Employment Ontario service providers to ensure continued job search and work placement support post-program and provide assistance for continued education and training. For additional information, refer to WESP Application Guidelines – Section 4.6 Employability Training.

25. Is there capital funding included in the budget?

Capital funding is an ineligible cost and is not included in the budget. For additional information refer to the WESP Application Guidelines – Section 9.1.1 Eligible and Ineligible Costs.

26. Can programs be 100% remote?

Applicants are required to specify in their application how the training will be delivered.

27. If an organization applies as a Francophone agency, will they be penalized if they, in fact, provide services in both English and French?

Organizations can provide training in more than one language. Applicants are expected to abide by the French Language Services Act (FLSA) requirements as outlined in WESP Application Guidelines – Section 8.4 French Language Services. Applicants are responsible for clarifying the specific population the project aims to serve in the WESP Application Form and will be assessed based on the Application Assessment Criteria outlined in Section 6.2.

28. Are organizations required to work with another body to complete a third-party evaluation? At what point is the third-party evaluation expected to be completed?

Evaluations are expected to be completed by an independent (third party) evaluator unrelated to the project at the end of the Transfer Payment Agreement. Successful applicants will be required to include an overview of an evaluation plan for their proposed projects. More information will be provided by the ministry to successful applicants.

Please refer to the WESP Application Guidelines – Section 4.9 Third Party Project Evaluation for additional information.

29. Are there any guidelines for goal setting/ target measures?

Applicants must complete the WESP Application Form, Section F- Budget and Section G – Service Data. Service Data targets should be based on the total number of participants the organization estimates the project will serve in one fiscal year.

Factors that can be considered when setting target measures can include the organizations size, location, target population and project complexity.

For additional information, please refer to the WESP Application Guidelines – Section 7 Completing the WESP Application Form.

Program Supports and Services

Wraparound supports

30. Are organizations eligible to receive funding for wraparound supports they are already providing?

Successful applicants are required to allocate up to 5% of their budget to wraparound supports. Note, this funding can be used to strengthen existing supports or deliver additional support.

31. What are the types of wraparound supports organizations are expected to provide?

Wraparound supports are those that reduce barriers that low-income women may face in order to participate and be successful in the training program. The WESP Application Guidelines, Section 5.1 Wraparound Supports (Mandatory), outlines the types of wraparound supports an applicant can deliver.

Wraparound supports are based on participant need and can include supports such as, transportation, food on-site, assistance with childcare and caregiving responsibilities, training, education, tutoring, upskilling or workshops focused on helping participants become more knowledgeable and develop core competencies that are essential to their entry and retention in the program such as reading, writing, math and IT literacy.

32. Are partnerships required for each training stream?

Partnerships and mentorships are a mandatory component of all program streams, as per WESP Application Guidelines, Section 4.5 Mandatory Partnership / Mentorship.

Note: the Women in Skilled Trades, Women in Information Technology and General Employment streams require partnership with a minimum of two employers to maximize employment opportunities. The Entrepreneurship for Women's Self-

Employment stream requires partnerships to provide mentorship opportunities, as well as partnerships that enable access to grants and loans for participants.

33. **For organizations that are not training organization but social service support organizations, how does that match to the WESP streams?**

Social service organizations may be best suited to apply to the General Employment Stream. Funded projects in this stream will provide employment training that are up to a maximum of 12 months in length and must include a work placement of 8-12 weeks. Refer to the WESP Guidelines, Section 4.3 Program Streams for additional information.

Please Note: Micro-Credentials are only ONE of the eligible training activities under the General Employment Training stream. Applicants under this stream are not required to provide only micro-credentials.

Women's Economic Security Program
Questions & Answers

1. **What is the Women's Economic Security Program (WESP)?**
   - Organizations funded under WESP deliver employment, pre-employment, pre-apprenticeship, and entrepreneurship training to low-income women. The objectives of the program are to:
     - Increase incomes and labour force attachment of low-income women; and
     - Address labour market gaps in high demand sectors, including those where women are underrepresented.

2. **What are the WESP training streams?**
   - WESP has four streams under which organizations may apply.
   - WESP's four streams are:
     - Women in Skilled Trades
     - Women in Information Technology
     - Women's General Employment Training
     - Entrepreneurship for Women's Self-Employment

3. **As an organization that is currently funded under WESP, do I need to reapply?**
   - Yes, all organizations currently funded under WESP must reapply for funding if they wish to continue to deliver WESP beyond this fiscal year (2022-23).
   - OWSEO invites returning applicants to review the Application Guidelines to ensure their application satisfies all necessary criteria and updated program requirements.

4. **Am I eligible to apply in partnership with another entity?**
   - OWSEO welcomes consortium proposals that include partner organizations. One organization in each consortium will apply for funding as the project lead. The project lead must meet the applicant eligibility criteria above.

5. **As an organization that serves Indigenous women, am I eligible to apply?**
   - Applications are welcome from organizations that serve the Indigenous community. To be eligible, please refer to the application guidelines, which include but are not limited to the following criteria:
     - Be Ontario-based entities in existence since January 1, 2020, or before, including those that are established by or under legislation; are federally or provincially incorporated; or are band councils as defined under the Indian Act, Canada.

6. **As an organization that serves Francophone women, am I eligible to apply?**

- Applications are welcome from organizations that serve the Francophone community. Under the *French Language Services Act (FLSA)*, organizations are required to take appropriate measures to ensure Active Offer of French Language Services (FLS) in <u>designated areas in Ontario</u>.

7. How much funding can our organization apply for?
- Organizations may apply for funding amounts between $100,000 and $450,000 per fiscal year (April to March).
- In the application, organizations are asked to include a budget for one fiscal year only.
- Recipients will be required to provide budgets on a yearly basis that reflect anticipated spending over that fiscal year only.
- Please see section 6.1 of the WESP Application Guidelines for more details.

8. How many organizations will be funded?
- Organizations are eligible to apply for $100,000 - $450,000 per year (April to March).
- The number of organizations funded will be determined by the amount of funding each eligible organization applies and is approved for.

9. How long is the application period open?
- Applications opens on December 4, 2023 and remain open for 8 weeks, closing at 5:00 PM on January 26, 2024. Following the application closing, the Ministry will require time to assess the applications.

10. How will successful organizations be selected?
- The Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS) will select successful applicants to deliver WESP using a fair, transparent, and rigorous process.
- Successful organizations will be selected based on a variety of evaluation criteria, such as organizational capacity, alignment with program objectives, demonstrated need, and financial stability.
- More information can be found in the WESP Application Guidelines.

11. What is the deadline to apply to this Call for Applications?
- The new program locations will be selected through a call for applications, which is open to eligible organizations starting December 4, 2023 and closing on January 26, 2024. In order to be considered, proposals must be submitted by 5:00 PM on January 26, 2024, in TPON.

12. What if I have questions about the application?
- Information sessions will be available to applicants on the following dates:
  - Information Session 1 (EN): December 12, 2023, at 11AM

- o Information Session 2 (EN): January 9, 2024, at 1PM
- o Information Session 3 (FR): December 13, 2023, at 11AM

- Technical questions about the application form on the TPON site may be directed to:
  - o Toll-free: 1-855-216-3090
  - o TTY: 416-325-3408
  - o Email: TPONCC@ontario.ca

- WESP Call for Applications specific questions may be sent to OWSEOgeneralinquiry@ontario.ca