

Talent Opportunities Program (TOP) Handbook & FAQs

About

The Talent Opportunities Program (TOP) is an initiative of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC) designed to help employers located anywhere in Canada hire college and university students on work placements. TOP brings together employers, students, post-secondary institutions and chambers of commerce from across Canada to create quality work-integrated learning (WIL) opportunities. WIL is a term given to activities that combine education and practical workplace experience. WIL encompasses a variety of terms, such as co-operative education and internships.

WIL opportunities help to bridge the gap between formal post-secondary learning and the skill requirements of Canadian employers. Benefits for students include the opportunity to:

- Develop and improve technical and employability skills (i.e. strategic thinking, problem solving, teamwork)
- Gain work experience and connections to employers in fields related to academic studies;
- Acquire clarity on career path decisions; and
- Access higher earnings and employment opportunities upon graduation.

TOP provides eligible employers with wage subsidies to hire eligible post-secondary students for paid work experiences. Students benefit from quality work experiences related to their fields of study.

TOP is funded by the Government of Canada's Student Work Placement Program (SWPP).

How the Program Works

TOP is administered by the OCC in partnership with the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, Alberta Chambers of Commerce, Fédération des chambres de commerce du Québec, along with other regional and local chambers of commerce.

In partnership with post-secondary institutions, TOP:

- Provides wage subsidies to employers that offer quality student work placements;
- Creates recruitment opportunities to match students to the right placements; and
- Convenes educators and employers to help align post-secondary education curricula to the skills needs of industry.

Wage Subsidy Overview

Eligible employers hiring eligible students may receive a wage subsidy for each placement. Any funds awarded must be used exclusively to support the wages of the student. The total value of the subsidy is calculated as follows:

- 50% of the wages (to a maximum of \$5,000) for each net new placement; or
- 70% of the wages (to a maximum of \$7,000) for each net new placement for the following under-represented groups:
 - Woman in STEM: Woman registered and studying in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields.
 - Indigenous people: People who reported identifying with at least one Aboriginal group, that is, First Nations, Métis or Inuit, and/or those who reported being a Treaty Indian or a Registered Indian as defined by the *Indian Act* of Canada, and/or those who reported they were members of an Indian band or First Nation.
 - Person with disabilities: An individual who has a difficulty or impairment due to a long-term condition or health problem and/or experiences a limitation in their daily activities.
 - Newcomer: Immigrants who immigrated within the last 5 years.
 - First-year student: Students registered in the first year of their program at a post-secondary institution.
 - Visible minority*:
 - Black;
 - South Asian (e.g., East Indian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan);
 - Filipino;
 - Arab;
 - Latin American;
 - Southeast Asian (e.g., Vietnamese, Cambodian, Laotian, Thai);
 - West Asian (e.g., Iranian, Afghan);
 - Korean; Japanese; and
 - Other group.

Please note: The Government of Canada announced in Budget 2021 an additional \$239.8 million for the Student Work Placement (SWP) Program to increase the number of SWP funded placements, from the planned 20,000 to 40,000, as well as extend the following temporary COVID-related flexibilities for another year in 2021-2022:

- **Increase the wage subsidy to up to 75% (from up to 50% for general placements and up to 70% for placements targeting under-represented students).**
- **Continue to apply the removal of net new placement criteria - waiving of the eligibility criteria requiring employers to exceed the number of placements offered in the past year under the program.**
- **Recognizing that the pandemic has changed the way businesses operate, and as a result, post-secondary institutions (universities, colleges and polytechnics) can continue to be the**

employer of record to offer meaningful placements to students. Please note this measure will be in place until July 31 2022.

The final subsidy amount will be calculated by the OCC and will be determined at the end of the placement term upon receipt of all supporting documents. This shall include a final accounting of each placement's actual length and total wages paid to the student (i.e. pay stubs). The OCC shall have the right to deny payment should the employer fail to provide all required information and documents to the satisfaction of the OCC. All payments provided by OCC shall be considered final.

Placements can be partially government-funded from non-federal sources, but only funds from non-governmental sources can be subsidized under this program (for example, a position paid with 60% provincial grant funding is only eligible for a subsidy on the 40% of the non-governmental funds). Employers must disclose if and by how much a placement is being partially funded by other government sources.

Employers may only benefit from a subsidy once per placement, may not receive funding for the same placement from more than one SWPP funding partners, and will not collect the subsidy in a way that results in a net financial benefit or profit.

Program Eligibility

Employers are:

- A registered Canadian business or not-for-profit organization located anywhere in Canada. Some exclusions apply. Please see below for a list of exclusions.
- Committed to paying the student in full for the duration of the placement (the wage subsidy will be administered after receiving all supporting information and documents, including pay stubs, at the end of the placement term).
- In compliance with all federal, provincial and territorial human rights and labour legislation, regulations, and any other relevant standards, such as the Occupational Health and Safety Act and the Employment Standards Act in Ontario, and any similar legislation in other jurisdictions.
- Covered by Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) or alternate workplace insurance.
- Only submitting applications for placements that are not subsidized by the federal government under another funding program.

Exclusions:

- Federal, provincial, territorial or municipal governments. Organizations which are extensions of a federal, provincial, territorial or municipal government, such as crown corporations, hospitals, and post-secondary institutions are generally not eligible.
- Major financial sector employers (see FAQs for more information).
- Please note that this list of exclusions may not be exhaustive. The OCC reserves the right to amend eligibility criteria at our discretion.

Students are:

- Registered as a domestic student in a recognized Canadian post-secondary institution.
- Canadian citizens, permanent residents, or persons to whom refugee protection has been conferred under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act.
- Legally entitled to work in Canada in accordance with relevant federal, provincial or territorial legislation and regulations.
- Registered in a program or course with a WIL component as part of their study plan.
- Registered in a full-time or part-time program in any field of study.

Placements

- Placements must be 'net new' to qualify for funding (i.e. incremental positions over and above what employers were able to hire in the prior federal fiscal year). Please refer to the question-and-answer section of the handbook for a detailed explanation. (*Note: this has been waived)
- Full-time or part-time positions.
- The student must be on the employer's payroll (contractors are not eligible).
- Work from home placements are eligible.
- Apprenticeships in a skilled trade are not eligible.
- Wages covered by a wage subsidy cannot be counted toward any tax credits. It is the employer's responsibility to follow their provincial tax credit guidelines and consult a tax professional.
- Placements can be partially government-funded from non-federal sources, but only funds from non-governmental sources can be subsidized under this program (for example, a position paid with 60% provincial grant funding is only eligible for a subsidy on the 40% of the non-governmental funds). Employers must disclose if and by how much a placement is being partially funded by other government sources.

How to Apply

Applications may be submitted through the online portal at <http://occ.magnet.today/>. Please create an account and login. If you already have a Magnet account, you may log in with your existing Magnet credentials.

Once logged in, you will find a link that mentions the Student Work Placement Program – SWPP. Please click the “Apply Now” box to be taken to the application portal.

While applications may be started before a student has been hired, applications will only receive conditional approval after an eligible student has been hired and all required information and documents are submitted. Employers must ensure they and the student meet the eligibility criteria.

When applying, please ensure you have the following information about the student:

- First and last name
- Email address
- Phone number
- Student number
- Enrollment status (full-time, part-time)
- Type of degree (bachelor's, master's, doctorate, university certificate/diploma, college/CEGEP certificate/diploma)
- Program of study
- Year of study
- Post-secondary institution
- Post-secondary institution contact information (if applicable)

The following documents will also need to be uploaded:

- Employment contract or letter
- Proof of Canadian citizen, permanent resident or refugee status (accepted documents include government issued ID, such as a passport, birth certificate, permanent resident card, etc.; SIN cards are not acceptable)
- Proof of enrollment (i.e. a document from the student's post-secondary institution indicating the student is registered in a program or course where a work-integrated learning component is part of their study plan, such as a co-op document, letter from school, etc. that clearly shows this information)

After an application is submitted, the student will be invited to complete the online student information form and sign the student agreement. Employers may collect the Student Agreement and upload the document when submitting their application, otherwise the student will be asked to submit the document when completing the student information form. Note: A signed Student Agreement is required for application approval.

When an application is granted conditional approval, the employer will be required to sign a recipient agreement and funds will be set aside for the wage subsidy. Employers are encouraged to review the Recipient Agreement and the terms of conditions contained therein prior to submitting an application.

Contact Us

For more information about TOP, please send an email to top@occ.ca.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

If you have a question not covered in the TOP Handbook, please send an email to top@occ.ca.

Employer Eligibility

Q: Can an employer be located anywhere in Canada?

A: Yes. Employers must be registered Canadian businesses or not-for-profit organizations and may be located anywhere in Canada.

Q: Are school boards eligible for TOP?

A: No. Organizations which are extensions of a federal, provincial, territorial or municipal government are generally not eligible for TOP.

Q: Are start-ups eligible for TOP?

A: Yes.

Q. Are financial sector employers eligible for TOP?

A: Major financial sector employers are generally not eligible for TOP. Employers that are not eligible, include, but are not limited to:

- Aequitas Innovations
- ALT5
- AON
- Aviva
- BMO Financial Group
- Canada Infrastructure Bank
- Capital One
- CIBC
- Desjardins
- HSBC Bank Canada
- Intact Financial Corporation
- NEO Exchange
- OMERS
- Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan
- PolicyMe
- Royal Bank of Canada
- Scotiabank
- Sun Life Financial
- Swiss Re
- Tangerine

- TD Bank Group (including TD Securities)
- TMX Group
- Travelers Canada State Street
- Westoba Credit Union

If your organization operates in the financial sector and is not listed above, please contact us for clarification.

Student Eligibility

Q: The student I want to hire is a family member. Is this acceptable?

A: Hiring a family member falls under our conflict of interest guidelines in our terms and conditions. Generally, hiring a family member will be ineligible for TOP funding. Employers must disclose a potential conflict of interest.

Q: Are graduate students eligible for TOP?

A: Yes. Students enrolled in master's or PhD programs are eligible for TOP.

Q: Can a student be in any year of study?

A: Yes. Post-secondary students may be at any stage of their program of study.

Q: What is meant by “registered in a program or course with a WIL component as part of their study plan”?

A: The student must be enrolled in a post-secondary program or course with a WIL component applicable to the semester of the work placement. For example, a student hired for a job would not be eligible for TOP if that job were not satisfying a WIL component of the student's program or course of study.

Q: If a student was hired in the Fall 2020 term with TOP support, can the same student be rehired in the Winter 2021 term and be eligible for TOP again?

A: If the student has another WIL component as part of their program or course of study in the Winter 2021 term, the student would be eligible for TOP again. A new application would need to be submitted.

Q: Are student's enrolled at private post-secondary institutions eligible for TOP?

A: Students must be enrolled at a recognized Canadian post-secondary institution. Please see Appendix A for a list of eligible post-secondary institutions. If your post-secondary institution is not listed, please contact us for clarification.

Work Placements

Q: Are apprenticeships eligible for TOP?

A: No. Apprenticeships in a skilled trade are not eligible for TOP.

Q: Can students be hired as a contractor or must they be on the company payroll?

A: Students must be on the employer's payroll. Contractors are not eligible for TOP.

Q: Is there a minimum or maximum length for the placement, in weeks or hours per week?

A: No. There is no minimum or maximum length so long as the WIL component of the student's program or course of study covers the duration of the placement. Placements may be part-time or full-time. The only maximum is the amount of funding that can be received per placement.

Q: Are summer jobs eligible for TOP?

A: Yes. Summer jobs are eligible for TOP so long as the student is satisfying a WIL component of the student's program or course of study.

Q: What is meant by 'net new' placements? (*Note: this has been waived)

A: Organizations who wish to participate must demonstrate a projected increase in the number of students hired in their "baseline year" to qualify. If your organization has previously accessed SWPP funding, the baseline year is calculated by how many SWPP eligible students you hired in the prior year between April 1, to March 31. If your organization has not previously accessed SWPP funding, the baseline year is calculated by how many students you hired between April 1, 2019 to March 31, 2020 and April 1, 2020 to March 31, 2021. Once the baseline year number has been calculated, the organization must express how many students they intend to hire within the current fiscal year of April 1, 2021 to March 31, 2022 (this includes students you have already hired). The answers to these questions determine if there was an increase in your hiring needs, which determines how many student placements you are eligible to receive SWPP funding for. The calculation is a total count of all post-secondary students hired regardless of any funding resources received (grants, tax credits, etc.)

Q: What if the student hired for a work placement doesn't work out?

A: Most post-secondary institutions with WIL programs have WIL and student advisors who can address employers' concerns and find a solution. Please contact the post-secondary institution. Placements that end early are still eligible for funding.

Funding

Q: Can an employer hire more than one student?

A: Yes. An employer may apply for TOP for more than one student/placement.

Q: Can other federal funding programs, such as the Canada Summer Jobs grant, be used in conjunction with TOP to fund placements?

A: No. Employers receiving any other federal funds to support the wages of the placement may not apply for TOP funding. This program does not allow federal funding to be 'stacked'.

Q: Can non-federal funding be 'stacked' with TOP?

A: Placements can be partially government-funded from non-federal sources, but only funds from non-governmental sources can be subsidized under the program. For example, a placement paid with 60% provincial grant funding is only eligible for a subsidy on the 40% of the non-governmental funds used to pay for the placement. If your placement is partially funded by provincial, territorial or municipal government funding, you must inform us when you apply.

Q: Can employers postpone placements after a contribution agreement end date?

A: No. Employers approved for funding must ensure placement(s) occur before the agreement end date or request an extension.

Q: What wages are eligible for the wage subsidy?

A: Gross wages paid to the student are eligible for the wage subsidy up to the maximum limits.

Q: How much funding is available through TOP? Will you run out of money?

A: Funding is available on a first-come first-serve basis. Funding will only be reserved after an application receives conditional approval and a Recipient Agreement is signed. Applicants will be informed should funding run out.

Q: Should I apply under multiple semesters if the student's placement takes place over more than one term? For example, if the placement takes place between September 2020 and March 2021, can I apply under the Fall 2020 and Winter 2021 terms and thus receive two subsidies for this student?

A: The term in which a placement is categorized is typically the term in which the placement started. Therefore, a placement that began in September 2020 would qualify for a Fall 2020 subsidy even if its end date is after December 31, 2020. A placement would be eligible to receive two subsidies only if there are two WIL components in the student's program or course of study. If this applies to your student, you will need to submit two applications for this student (one for each term) and they would count as two placements.

Application Process for Employers

Q: What information about my organization do I need when I apply?

A: The following information will be required about the employer:

- Organization name
- Website

- Number of employees (0-99, 100-499, 500+)
- Business registration number
- Number of students hired by your organization during the prior federal fiscal year (from April 1st of the prior year to March 31st of the current year)
- Address
- Contact information

Q: What information about the placement do I need when I apply?

A: The following information will be required about the placement:

- WIL type (please see the [CEWIL Canada](#) website for definitions)
- Job title
- Job description
- Placement duration (in weeks)
- Hours per week
- Hourly wage
- Address
- Start and end dates
- Supervisor name and contact information

Q: What information about the student do I need when I apply?

A: While applications may be started before a student has been hired, applications will only be approved after an eligible student has been hired and all required information and documents are submitted. The following information will be required about the student:

- First and last name
- Email address
- Phone number
- Student number
- Enrollment status (full-time, part-time)
- Type of degree (bachelor's, master's, doctorate, university certificate/diploma, college/CEGEP certificate/diploma)
- Program of study
- Year of study
- Post-secondary institution
- Post-secondary institution contact information (if applicable)

The following documents will also need to be uploaded:

- Employment contract or letter
- Proof of Canadian citizen, permanent resident or refugee status (accepted documents include government issued ID, such as a passport, permanent resident card, etc.; SIN cards are not acceptable)
- Proof of enrollment (i.e. a document from the student's post-secondary institution indicating

the student is registered in a program or course where a work-integrated learning component is part of their study plan, such as a co-op document, letter from school, etc. that clearly shows this information)

Q: What happens after I submit an application?

A. Your application will be reviewed and you will receive an email with further instructions.

Q: Can I apply for TOP before hiring a student?

A: Employers may apply for TOP before hiring a student. However, applications will only receive conditional approval after an eligible student has been hired and all required information and documents are submitted. Employers must ensure they and the student meet the eligibility criteria.

Q: Can I apply once for multiple placements or do I have to submit one application per placement?

A. You need to submit a new application for each placement. However, you can save your organization information the first time you complete an application, so only the placement and student information will need to be filled out every time.

Q: Are placements that have already started or already ended eligible for the program?

A: Employers may apply for a retroactive wage subsidy for a placement in progress or a placement which has already ended so long as the applicable term (e.g. Fall 2020) can still be selected in the online application. If the term is no longer available for selection, the application window has closed.

Application Process for Students

Q: As a student, what information and documents do I need to provide?

A: When your employer submits an application naming you as the student they have hired, you will receive an email asking you to fill out an online student information form. You will also be asked to download, complete, and email back a signed Student Agreement.

Your employer will also ask you to provide them with the following documents to submit as part of their application:

- Proof of Canadian citizen, permanent resident or refugee status (accepted documents include government issued ID, such as a passport, permanent resident card, etc.; SIN cards are not acceptable)
- Proof of enrollment (i.e. a document from the student's post-secondary institution indicating the student is registered in a program or course where a work-integrated learning component is part of their study plan, such as a co-op document, letter from school, etc. that clearly shows this information)

These documents are required to approve your employer's application for a wage subsidy for your work placement. Please help your employer with these documents.

Appendix A: List of Recognized Post-Secondary Institutions

Academy of Learning Career College
Acadia University
Alberta University of the Arts
Algoma University
Algonquin College
Assiniboine Community College
Athabasca University
Aurora College
Bishop's University
Boucher Institute of Naturopathic Medicine
Bow Valley College
Brandon University
British Columbia Institute of Technology
Brock University
Cambria College
Cambrian College
Camosun College
Canadian Institute of Planners
Canadian Mennonite University
Canadore College
Cape Breton University
Capilano University
Carleton University
Carlton Trail Regional College
Cégep André-Laurendeau
Cégep Beauce-Appalaches
Cégep de Baie-Comeau
Cégep de Chicoutimi
Cégep de Drummondville
Cégep de Granby
Cégep de Jonquière
Cégep de la Gaspésie et des Îles
Cégep de La Pocatière
Cégep de l'Abitibi-Temiscamingue
Cégep de Lévis-Lauzon
Cégep de l'Outaouais
Cégep de Matane
Cégep de Rimouski
Cégep de Rivière-du-Loup
Cégep de Sainte-Foy
Cégep de Saint-Félicien

Cégep de Saint-Hyacinthe
Cégep de Saint-Jérôme
Cégep de Saint-Laurent
Cégep de Sept-Îles
Cégep de Shawinigan
Cégep de Sherbrooke
Cégep de Sorel-Tracy
Cégep de Thetford
Cégep de Victoriaville
Cégep du Vieux Montréal
Cégep Édouard-Montpetit
Cégep Garneau
Cégep Gérald-Godin
Cégep Heritage College
Cégep Limoilou
Cégep Marie-Victorin
Cégep régional de Lanaudière
Cégep Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu
Cégep Trois-Rivières
Centennial College
Centre de formation professionnelle Chandler-Bonaventure
CFP Compétences Outaouais
Champlain Regional College
Coast Mountain College
Collège Ahuntsic
College Boreal
Collège Communautaire du Nouveau-Brunswick
Collège d'Alma
Collège de Bois-de-Boulogne
Collège de l'île
Collège de Maisonneuve
Collège de Rosement
Collège de Valleyfield
Collège Jean-de-Brébeuf
Collège LaSalle
Collège Lionel-Groulx
Collège Montmorency
Collège nordique francophone
College of New Caledonia
College of the North Atlantic
College of the Rockies
Collège Rosemont
Concordia University

Concordia University of Edmonton
Conestoga College of Applied Arts & Technology
Confederation College of Applied Arts & Technology
Conservatoire de Musique et D'Art Dramatique de Montreal
Cumberland Regional College
Dalhousie University
Dawson College
Douglas College
Durham College of Applied Arts And Technology
Eastern Shores School Board
École de Technologie Supérieure
École des Métiers de l'Aérospatiale de Montréal
École Nationale d'administration Publique
Emily Carr University of Art + Design
Fanshawe College of Applied Arts & Technology
First Nations University of Canada
Fleming College
Gabriel Dumont Institute
George Brown College
Georgian College
Grande Prairie Regional College
Great Plains College
HEC Montreal
Herzing College
Holland College
Humber College Institute of Technology & Advanced Learning
Huron University College
Institut de Technologie Agricole
John Abbott College (Cegep)
Justice Institute of British Columbia
Keyano College
Kwantlen Polytechnic University
La Cite Collegiale
Lakehead University
Lakeland College
Lambton College
Langara College
Laurentian University
Lethbridge College
Loyalist College
MacEwan University
Manitoba Institute of Trades and Technology
Maritime College of Forest Technology

McGill University
McMaster University
Medicine Hat College
Memorial University of Newfoundland
Metro College of Technology
Mohawk College
Montreal College of Information Technology
Mount Allison University
Mount Royal University
Mount Saint Vincent University
New Brunswick Community College
Niagara College
Nicola Valley Institute of Technology
Nipissing University
Norquest College
North Island College
North West College
Northern Alberta Institute of Technology
Northern College of Applied Arts
Northern Lakes College
Northern Lights College
Northern Ontario School of Medicine
Northlands College
Nova Scotia Community College
NSCAD University
Nunavut Arctic College
Okanagan College
Olds College
Ontario College of Art and Design University
Ontario Tech University
Parkland College
Polytechnique Montréal
Portage College
Queen's University
Red Deer College
Red River College
Redeemer University
Royal Military College
Royal Roads University
Ryerson University
Saint Mary's University
Saint Paul University
Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies

Saskatchewan Polytechnic
Sault College of Applied Arts
Selkirk College
Seneca College
Sheridan College
Simon Fraser University
Southeast College
Southern Alberta Institute of Technology
St Lawrence College
St. Clair College
St. Francis Xavier University
St. Mary's University
St. Stephen's University
St. Thomas University
The King's University
The Royal Conservatory of Music
Thompson Rivers University
Trent University
Trinity Western University
Université de Moncton
Universite de Montreal
Universite de Saint-Boniface
Université de Sherbrooke
Université du Québec
Université Laval
Universite Sainte-Anne
University College of the North
University of Alberta
University of British Columbia
University of Calgary
University of Guelph
University of Guelph-Humber
University of Lethbridge
University of Manitoba
University of New Brunswick
University of Northern British Columbia
University of Ottawa
University of Prince Edward Island
University of Regina
University of Saskatchewan
University of the Fraser Valley
University of Toronto
University of Victoria

University of Waterloo
University of Windsor
University of Winnipeg
Vancouver Community College
Vancouver Island University
Vanier College (Cegep)
Western University
Wilfrid Laurier University
Willis College
York University
Yukon College