

# Transitioning Funding Support for Occupational Training, 12 weeks or longer, from Human Services to Enterprise and Advanced Education

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*Please use the answers in this Q&A to address similar questions learners, service providers and staff may pose.*

## **LEARNERS Q&A**

### **L1. What do I need to do to get Alberta Works funding for training?**

If you are considering an occupational training program such as pharmacy technician, office assistant, or esthetician, among others, you can apply for assistance through the Government of Alberta. If the occupational training program you are considering is less than 12 weeks, you may be eligible for Alberta Works funding. You will need to discuss your eligibility for Alberta Works funding with an Authorized Official of Human Services and be recommended for training before you can submit an application for financial assistance.

If you are considering an approved occupational training program that is 12 weeks or longer and that begins before April 1, 2014, you may also be eligible for Alberta Works funding. For approved occupational training program that are 12 weeks or longer and begin on or after April 1, 2014, you'll apply for funding through Student Aid Alberta. Student Aid Alberta offers a combination of Alberta and Canada grants and loans. For more information or help applying, you are encouraged to visit [studentaid.alberta.ca](http://studentaid.alberta.ca) or contact the Student Aid Alberta Service Centre at 1-855-606-2096.

To determine who is an Authorized Official in your area, you can ask a career counselor at an Alberta Works office, your training provider or you can call our Career Information Hotline at 1-800-661-3753. Your Authorized Official will work with you to develop a Service Plan which outlines the training you need to achieve your career goal. The Service Plan does not assign or guarantee funding for any or all of the programs that are recommended. You will need to apply separately for financial assistance for each program in the plan.

### **L2. Why do I have to apply for funding through Student Aid Alberta to take occupational training programs that are 12 weeks or longer and start on or after April 1, 2014?**

We want to ensure Albertans have access to consistent, equitable funding supports for education and training so they can reach their full employment potential. Starting April 1, 2014, we are aligning our student funding programs to reduce duplication and streamline funding processes for learners. Albertans who are pursuing approved occupational training programs that are 12 weeks or longer, and start on or after April 1, 2014, will apply for funding through Student Aid Alberta.

### **L3. I thought I could get 30 months of Alberta Works funding for training. For the past two years, I have received Alberta Works funding to take courses I need to get into an occupational training program that's always**

**been part of my Service Plan. Will I still be able to get Alberta Works funding for the occupational training I want to take after April 1, 2014?**

Your Service Plan was developed to guide you in selecting programs to meet your career goals. It does not assign or guarantee funding for any or all of the programs that are recommended. You need to apply separately for financial assistance for each program.

If the occupational training program you plan to take begins on or after April 1, 2014, and is less than 12 weeks long, you will still apply for Alberta Works funding. After you have discussed your training plan with your Service Manager, you can complete an electronic fillable funding application online. After it has been verified, print it off, sign it and submit it to the Learner Income Support Office for processing.

However, if the program is 12 weeks or longer you will apply for funding through Student Aid Alberta. Student Aid Alberta offers a combination of Alberta and Canada grants and loans. For more information or help applying, you are encouraged to visit [studentaid.alberta.ca](http://studentaid.alberta.ca) or contact the Student Aid Alberta Service Centre at 1-855-606-2096. Student Aid Alberta has an effective online application that lets you know almost immediately if you are eligible and how much funding you will receive.

**L4. I have registered to attend my second year of an approved apprenticeship program starting on April 1, 2014. Do I need to change my apprenticeship training dates to before April 1, 2014 so I can get Alberta Works funding?**

There is no need to change your training plans. As a registered apprentice, you will continue to be eligible to apply for Alberta Works funding for the technical training portion of your apprenticeship after April 1, 2014.

**L5. Will I still be able to get a Skills Investment Bursary to finish my occupational training program on a part-time basis?**

For programs starting on or after April 1, 2014, the Alberta Works Skills Investment Bursary will only be available for part-time occupational training that would be less than 12 weeks long when offered full-time. If your part-time course would be 12 weeks or longer when offered full-time, you need to apply for funding through Student Aid Alberta.

Student Aid Alberta also has funding available for part-time students. For more information or help applying, you are encouraged to visit [studentaid.alberta.ca](http://studentaid.alberta.ca) or contact the Student Aid Alberta Service Centre at 1-855-606-2096.

**L6. How will I know if I am eligible for Alberta Works funding for occupational training programs?**

You will need to discuss the occupational training program you'd like to take with an authorized official. They'll discuss your circumstances with you and decide if you are eligible to be recommended for training. Once you have developed your Service Plan and submitted an application form for processing, the processing time usually runs between four and six weeks. You will receive a letter, at the address you provide, detailing the amount of funding you qualify to receive.

**L7. How will I know if I am eligible for funding through Student Aid Alberta?**

Student Aid Alberta has an effective online application that lets you know almost immediately if you are eligible and how much funding you will receive. If you are not able to apply online, PDF versions of the applications are available to download at [studentaid.alberta.ca](http://studentaid.alberta.ca). You do not need prior approval or an assessment conducted in order to apply to Student Aid Alberta.

Student Aid Alberta has already taken the boldest steps in Canada to expand access to student loans and grants. Part-time earnings, savings, scholarships and vehicles are no longer used to assess eligibility for our loans or grants. A flat rate contribution model was introduced. Learners are expected to contribute \$1,500 a year towards the costs of their education.

You can come up with your contribution any way you choose – summer employment, part-time employment during the school year, a scholarship or bursary. Some assets, mostly liquid assets like GICs, are taken into consideration.

Single parents are not expected to contribute anything. Spousal contributions have been relaxed so that more married students are able to get access to funding. Based on the belief that funding should be provided to those who need it, Student Aid Alberta also eliminated the forced parental contribution in 2012.

**L8. How long does it take to find out if Student Aid Alberta will fund my occupational training program?**

Applying for Student Aid Alberta is easy and fast. If you apply online at [studentaid.alberta.ca](http://studentaid.alberta.ca), you may immediately find out if you are eligible. PDF versions of applications and forms are also available to download from the website. If you apply using a paper or PDF application, determining eligibility for funding can take between four and six weeks.

**L9. I am from another province and plan to enroll in an Alberta occupational training program that is 12 weeks or longer. Do I qualify for Alberta Student Aid?**

If you meet the residency requirements of another province, you can apply for student aid in that province. If you live in Alberta, and not have established residency in another province, you can apply to Student Aid Alberta. Eligibility requirements for Student Aid Alberta funding, including residency requirements, is available at <http://www.studentaid.alberta.ca/before-you-apply/eligibility/>.

**L10. What happens if I fail Student Aid Alberta's credit check?**

Fewer than 1% of Student Aid Alberta clients fail credit checks. Fair appeal processes are in place for students who are denied funding or who think they need additional money to cover extra costs. For more information on the appeal process, you can contact the Student Aid Alberta Service Centre at 1-855-606-2096.

**L11. What help is available to me when it's time to pay back my student loan?**

Student Aid Alberta is committed to ensuring you can manage your debt repayment after graduation. In 2011, the Repayment Assistance Plan was implemented to make sure effective tools are in place to help if you are struggling to make payments on either your Alberta or Canada student loans. Other flexible options are also available so you can set a repayment plan that fits your life, employment outcomes, family situations and financial priorities.

**L12. Will I have to pay interest on my loan while I'm enrolled in occupational training?**

Government student loans are interest-free for the entire time you're enrolled in your occupational training program and payments are not required. If you have an Alberta student loan and move from full-time to part-time studies, you are not charged interest for your loan and you do not have to begin paying it until you've completed the program. Student Aid Alberta also provides an interest-free grace period between the time you leave your studies and the time you need to begin repayment. In addition, interest rates have been capped at the prime lending rate, which has remained low for several years. All of these measures are intended to keep the costs of borrowing low.

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## **TRAINING PROVIDERS Q&A**

### **T1. Several of the programs we deliver will no longer be eligible for Alberta Works funding. What will this mean for my business?**

We want to ensure Albertans have access to consistent, equitable funding supports for education and training so they can reach their full employment potential. Our decision to transition funding responsibility for occupational training programs that are 12 weeks and longer to Enterprise and Advanced Education, may have implications for some training providers who deliver occupational training programs. We expect that aligning our student funding programs will reduce duplication and streamline processes for both you and your learners. Once the transition occurs, training providers who only deliver occupational training programs 12 weeks or longer, will no longer have two sets of performance measures, and attendance and refund policies.

### **T2. Some of our learners are vulnerable Albertans. Do you think they will be impacted by the funding changes to occupational training programs that are 12 weeks or longer?**

We remain committed to supporting vulnerable Albertans to achieve their educational goals. We do not anticipate that this change will impact Albertans who are already receiving Alberta Works funding to attend occupational training programs. We encourage learners to work with their Service Manager to determine how the change will impact training that's planned for the future.

Alberta Works will continue to offer funding for occupational training programs that are less than 12 weeks long.

Enterprise and Advanced Education has made improvements to Student Aid Alberta so it's easier for Albertans to get the funding they need to help cover their post-secondary education costs. In addition, Student Aid Alberta is implementing a new grant on August 1, 2013 that's specifically designed for low-income learners in one-year, post-secondary certificate programs. For more information about the grant, learners can visit [studentaid.alberta.ca](http://studentaid.alberta.ca) or contact the Student Aid Alberta Service Centre at 1-855-606-2096.

### **T3. Do you think enrollment will decline when learners in occupational training programs 12 weeks or longer are required to apply for Student Aid Alberta funding?**

No, we don't believe enrollment rates will be affected. There are multiple factors impacting enrollment and demand for student funding, including the economy and demographics. There are also multiple factors impacting an individual's decision to pursue occupational training including their academic levels, family situation, income, location, and parents' educational levels. Getting a post-secondary

education is an investment – one that more than 5,500 students in one-year occupational training programs understood last year. These Albertans were among the more than 58,000 students who applied for and received funding through Student Aid Alberta last year to help them reach their post-secondary education and career goals.

**T4. Who do I contact if I have questions about the funding changes to occupational training programs?**

To support a smooth transition, products, such as this Q&A and the online fact sheet, have been and will continue to be created to ensure stakeholders receive clear, concise and timely information. Over the coming months we will continue to implement the changes needed and are committed to sharing more details as soon as we can. Your regional Human Services representative will work with you to address questions as we transition funding for occupational training 12 weeks or longer from Alberta Works to Student Aid Alberta.

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## **STAFF Q&A**

### **S1. Why are we transitioning funding for occupational training programs that are 12 weeks or longer to Enterprise and Advanced Education?**

We want to ensure Albertans have access to consistent, equitable funding supports for education and training so they can reach their full employment potential. Currently, both Human Services and Enterprise and Advanced Education provide funding for occupational training programs that are between 12 and 52 weeks long.

Starting April 1, 2014, we are aligning our student funding programs to reduce duplication and streamline the application process for learners. Albertans who are pursuing approved occupational training programs that are 12 weeks or longer and start on or after April 1, 2014, will apply for funding through Student Aid Alberta.

Human Services will continue to provide Alberta Works funding to eligible Albertans participating in full- and part-time apprenticeship technical training, integrated training, immigrant bridging, pre-employment programs and contract-based occupational training.

We are also maintaining the same eligibility requirements for Work Foundations programs including Academic Upgrading, Basic Skills, English as a Second Language, and University and College preparation programs.

### **S2. Under the Labour Market Development Agreement, Human Services is a “designated authority” and can recommend Employment Insurance (EI) recipients attend training. How will the funding changes to occupational training impact the Feepayer policy?**

Human Services will continue to be a “designated authority” for the purposes of referring active EI recipients to training. The Feepayer policy and business process are being reviewed as a result of the occupational training funding transition. Once all of the details have been finalized, a policy manual update will be distributed.

### **S3. Under the Labour Market Development Agreement, Human Services is a “designated authority” and can counsel an individual to leave their employment to attend training. How will the funding changes to occupational training impact the Counsel to Leave Employment policy?**

Currently, Human Services staff’s “designated authority” does not extend to counseling an individual to leave their employment to attend training as a

Feepayer. The policy will not change and there are no plans to change this position in the future.

**S4. How will the funding changes to occupational training impact the Duration policy?**

There are no plans to change the policy as a result of this change. At this time, we will not be modifying the combined maximum for all Training for Work programs. Keeping the maximums the same for the 4 different learning streams is administratively simpler and will not require system modifications to the Learning Stream Counter in Mobius.

**S5. Currently an EI recipient, who applies for a loan to attend occupational training programs between 12 and 52 weeks in length, receives a notice that they cannot apply for a loan and are referred to Human Services to apply for Alberta Works funding. Will these individuals be able to apply for a loan?**

Yes. Enterprise and Advanced Education will update its policy and make the necessary adjustments to allow EI recipients to apply for a combination of grant and loan funding through Student Aid Alberta for programs starting on or after April 1, 2014.

Human Services is reviewing its Feepayer policy and will work with Enterprise and Advanced Education to develop a business process that will allow eligible Albertans to continue to collect their Employment Insurance. Human Services will share information with staff and training providers as soon as it is finalized.

**S6. What happens to Alberta Works learners who don't qualify for a loan because they don't meet the eligibility criteria for Student Aid Alberta? (e.g. provincial residency requirement, credit check, etc.)**

In the rare event that a former Alberta Works learner applies for and is found to be ineligible for Student Aid Alberta, they can ask for a review of their application based on their unique situation. Information on how to request a review or submit an official appeal is available at [studentaid.alberta.ca](http://studentaid.alberta.ca).