

## 2020-21 Toronto Sector Skills Academy

**GUIDELINES & 2020 APPLICATION** Revised April 20, 2020

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### Introduction

**Due to COVID-19, the 2020-21 cohort of the Toronto Sector Skills Academy has been delayed. All rescheduled dates, including the application deadline, retreat and workshop dates, and special receptions will be announced in October 2020. Please check our website for updates.**

Our workforce system needs to equip workers for success and maximize their access to opportunities and advancement. For low-income people who are seeking to enter or to advance in today's labour market, the challenges are profound. A high-capacity, responsive, nimble workforce ecosystem is critical for sustainable and equitable economic growth. Solutions that improve equitable economic opportunities and outcomes for local workers can be complex and are shaped by many factors: the local labour market, the assets and needs of local workers, the resources and capacity of institutions, the policy and funding environment, and existing partnerships and initiatives. Effective responses require high levels of collaboration amongst the various actors in the workforce system. Fostering this collaboration means investing in the knowledge, skills, and relationships of workforce leaders.

**Sector strategies** are promising practices that seek to improve opportunities for low-income workers while also working to build a stronger economy. Sector strategies focus on two outcomes. One is helping workers move into better jobs by removing barriers and skills gaps, or *building ladders*. The second is improving the quality of low-wage jobs, or *raising the floor*.

It is a critical time to invest in the capacity of workforce leaders. In spring 2019, the provincial government announced an extensive overhaul of employment services, apprenticeships, and education programs, as well as social assistance reforms, with the goals of driving improved employment outcomes, and better aligning the skills and training system with the needs of business. The federal government has prioritized strengthening skills training to lead to good quality jobs; and the City of Toronto's poverty reduction strategy commits to quality jobs and livable incomes, specifically for equity-seeking communities that are distant from the labour market.

Through the [Toronto Sector Skills Academy](#), the **Metcalf Foundation**, in partnership with The Counselling Foundation of Canada, aims to foster leadership and invest in local talent that understands and can apply sector strategies to the local economy. In partnership with The Aspen Institute, the Toronto Sector Skills Academy provides an opportunity for leaders in the workforce development field to learn from experts; use case studies to explore innovative services and change strategies; reflect on their work;

engage with peers; consider new ideas and perspectives; develop and strengthen partnerships and relationships; and acquire new skills to explore, catalyze, and enable sector-focused workforce strategies. Over a 10-month period Fellows will attend three retreats and three workshops.

The leadership development model used by the Toronto Sector Skills Academy was created by the highly-regarded Aspen Institute. In 2017, 23 Fellows graduated from the inaugural Toronto Sector Skills Academy. In 2018, another 24 Fellows graduated from the Toronto Sector Skills Academy. This 2020-21 cohort will be the third and final Academy. Graduates from the Toronto Sector Skills Academy become Aspen Economic Opportunity Fellows, joining the international network. Interested parties will find the full application for the Toronto Sector Skills Academy, beginning on page 7.

## **Metcalf Foundation**

The George Cedric Metcalf Charitable Foundation's mission is to enhance the effectiveness of people and organizations working together to help Canadians imagine and build a just, healthy, and creative society.

We encourage success by:

- supporting dynamic leadership,
- nurturing new ideas and practices, and
- fostering integrated thinking.

The Foundation's Inclusive Local Economies program leads the Toronto Sector Skills Academy. The Inclusive Local Economies program is focused on long-term strategies that create sustainable economic opportunities for low-income people and communities in Toronto. For the last decade, Metcalf Foundation has been a leader in supporting innovation in workforce development. It has been a catalytic funder of several workforce development organizations; it invests in workforce research and policy analysis; it provided technical assistance on provincially-funded Sector Partnership Planning grants; and is currently supporting the establishment of the Toronto Workforce Funders Collaborative.

The Counselling Foundation of Canada, committed to championing life-long learning and career development that empowers people in Canada to develop their skills and talents, is a partner in the Toronto Sector Skills Academy.

## **The Aspen Institute**

The Aspen Institute is an educational and policy studies organization based in Washington D.C. Its mission is to spark intellectual inquiry and exchange, create a diverse worldwide community of leaders committed to the greater good, and provide a nonpartisan forum for reaching solutions on vital public policy issues.

For nine years The Aspen Institute's Economic Opportunities Program ran the Sector Skills Academy, a year-long leadership program. The goal of the Sector Skills Academy was to improve the quantity, quality, and sustainability of sector efforts on the ground. In 2014, Aspen Institute's Economic Opportunities Program conducted an extensive review of its Sector Skills Academy program. The review

affirmed the value of the Academy's methodologies. These include: value of peer networks, value and usefulness of tools, and systems change results.

In 2015-16, The Aspen Institute's Economic Opportunity Program delivered a train-the-trainer program to a small group of experienced workforce or training professionals. The Metcalf Foundation and Hospitality Workers Training Centre participated in this training with the purpose of bringing this proven model to Canada. The result is the Toronto Sector Skills Academy, launched in October 2016. The Aspen Institute has supported eight partnerships to establish Workforce Leadership Academies, growing a network to strengthen, invent, drive, and sustain workforce strategies and collaborate more effectively to better serve workers' and businesses' needs.

## Toronto Sector Skills Academy

The Toronto Sector Skills Academy is a 10-month fellowship. It is designed for leaders in workforce development who are focused on improving employment outcomes for low-income workers in the GTA region. The Toronto Sector Skills Academy provides a forum for workforce leaders to work collaboratively to identify local and regional system-based challenges and craft shared solutions and change strategies. The Academy aims to strengthen Fellows' capacity to develop and sustain effective and equitable workforce strategies, help Fellows collaborate more effectively with employers and other strategic partner organizations, and expand the number and quality of leadership who can develop approaches that advance equitable opportunities for low-wage workers and job seekers while meeting industry talent needs. The Toronto Sector Skills Academy creates and supports peer-learning communities of workforce leaders from nonprofit organizations, business associations, colleges, union-based training efforts, and public agencies.

Fellows will explore innovative workforce development policy, practice and strategies that are grounded in strong evidence; work with peers from a variety of organizations from across the region; hear from experts in the field; engage in facilitated discussions; and explore new strategic approaches in areas such as employer engagement, systems change, strategic communications, and cross-sectoral partnerships. Fellows build skills needed to strengthen the capacity of their organizations to engage in sector strategies, build new relationships and networks, and gain a fuller appreciation of the scope of workforce systems in Toronto.

The goals of the Toronto Sector Skills Academy are to:

- build capacity among workforce practitioners and policy-makers to develop and deliver sector strategies in Toronto;
- create and support a learning community of workforce leaders that expand and deepen professional networks and partnerships;
- strengthen organizational and system leadership skills;
- apply a systems-change framework to Fellows' work to improve low-income individuals' access to good jobs and improve job quality for low-wage work; and
- deepen understanding of effective strategies and programs in the broader workforce development and poverty reduction field.

Up to 25 people will be selected to participate in the 10-month fellowship. The fellowship consists of three, 3-day retreats and three Toronto workshops (12 days of in-person events) as well as ongoing learning, application, and collaboration activities between events. Fellows must commit to participate fully and actively in all of the Toronto Sector Skills Academy events, both to enhance their individual experience and to contribute to the peer learning elements for the group as a whole.

The program cost per participant is \$1,500, which covers food, lodging, and program materials. The Metcalf Foundation is committed to ensuring that cost is not a barrier to participation. The Foundation will provide bursaries, as needed, to participants from non-profit organizations.

## Workforce Development and Sector Strategies

Workforce development encompasses more than traditional employment training. It includes an array of strategies to ensure career advancement of job seekers while also addressing industry needs. Building a strong workforce development system requires the engagement of employers, community networks, non-profit organizations, intermediaries, education providers, researchers, labour, philanthropy, and all levels of government.

Sector strategies are industry-specific workforce development approaches. The Aspen Institute defines a sector strategy as a systems approach to workforce development, typically on behalf of low-income individuals, that:

- targets a specific industry or cluster of occupations;
- intervenes through a credible organization, or set of organizations, crafting workforce solutions tailored to that industry and its region;
- supports workers in improving their range of employment-related skills and ability to compete for work opportunities of higher quality;
- meets the needs of employers; and
- creates lasting change in the labour market system.

Leaders in the field use a variety of strategies tailored to the regional economy, industry sectors, and worker populations. Sector strategies promote systemic change by restructuring internal and external educational opportunities, employment and business practices, and public policies. Sector strategies cultivate a win-win environment that is beneficial to employers, low-wage workers, and low-income job seekers.

Sector strategies:

- help workers move into better jobs by removing the barriers and skills gaps that impede them from getting those jobs (building ladders); and
- improve the quality of low-wage jobs within sectors with poor job quality, such as the restaurant and retail industries (raising the floor).

## Eligibility

The Toronto Sector Skills Academy is designed for experienced senior level managers of nonprofit organizations, public agencies, business associations, businesses, social enterprises, union-based training efforts, and colleges. Candidates are required to be in leadership positions, have decision-making authority and standing to execute strategies on behalf of their organizations, and demonstrate interest in strengthening their local workforce system. They must be committed to exploring equity and value the opportunity to reflect on their current work, explore leadership practices, and gain feedback from colleagues. Job titles of qualified candidates will vary. For example, a candidate might be an executive or program director at a community-based organization or workforce intermediary, director of workforce programs of a community college, a high road employment director for a worker centre or social enterprise, a manager of workforce programs at a labour-management partnership, or a director or manager in areas of social policy, workforce development, or economic development in government or public agencies.

**All applicants engaged in or planning workforce development efforts that target specific industries are invited to apply.**

Applicants must:

- be leading existing workforce initiatives, policy development, or leading industry programs that are seeking to develop sector strategies;
- hold positions of leadership and decision-making authority regarding workforce development;
- be based and active within the Toronto region; \*
- submit a letter of support from their supervisor approving their participation in the Toronto Sector Skills Academy; and
- commit to full participation over these dates:
  - **Welcome reception** – ~~September 10, 2020~~ **To be rescheduled**
  - **Retreat 1** – ~~September 29 – October 2, 2020~~ **To be rescheduled**
  - **Retreat 2** – ~~November 18 – 20, 2020~~ **To be rescheduled**
  - **Retreat 3** – ~~May 26 – 28, 2021~~ **To be rescheduled**
  - **Dates to be confirmed** (these dates will be confirmed by the application deadline):
    - The in-town Toronto workshops – ~~February 2021~~ (2 days) **To be rescheduled**
    - The closing presentation and graduation reception – ~~June 2021~~ **To be rescheduled**

Inclusivity and diversity of race, ethnicity, and gender are core values of the Toronto Sector Skills Academy. Members from equity seeking groups are encouraged to apply.

\* While the geographic catchment for the Toronto Sector Skills Academy is the Toronto region, applicants living outside the GTA with a strong sector-focused approach to workforce development will be considered.

## Selection Process

Applications will be reviewed by an advisory committee. The selection process will be based on demonstration of leadership competencies; commitment to improving job opportunities for low-income people; ability and desire to design, implement, and strengthen sector-focused workforce development initiatives; and interest in learning about sector strategies to advance systems change.

## Application Deadlines & Support

The Toronto Sector Skills Academy application deadline is **2:00 pm on June 16, 2020 To be rescheduled**. No late applications will be accepted. We encourage you to submit your application prior to the deadline. All applicants will be notified of the status of their applications by mid-July.

On **March 31, 2020** we will hold a Toronto Sector Skills Academy Information Session to review the program and answer questions. Register at: <https://tssa-2020-info-session.eventbrite.ca>. Space is limited.

On **April 20, 2020** we will hold a webinar to review the program and focus on the application. Register at: <https://tssa-2020-webinar.eventbrite.ca>.

## 2020-21 Toronto Sector Skills Academy Application

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Thank you for your interest in applying to participate in the Toronto Sector Skills Academy.

**The 2020-21 Toronto Sector Skills Academy application deadline is  
2:00pm on ~~June 16, 2020~~ To be rescheduled.**

**A completed application with all of the required attachments must be sent electronically to:  
SectorSkills@MetcalfFoundation.com**

**The materials for submission include:**

- A completed application form
- Your resume
- Your photograph and bio (this will be used for the Toronto Sector Skills Academy cohort announcement)
- Organizational chart (the chart should show your supervisors as well as staff reporting to you)
- Two references (your direct supervisor and a professional partner external to your organization). The letters should include the referee's relationship to you, a description of your strengths and achievements, and comments on how you might benefit from, and contribute to, the Academy.
- Signed *Commitment to Participate* Form
- Signed *Authorization to Participate* Form

If you have any questions about the Toronto Sector Skills Academy, your eligibility to apply, or the application process, please e-mail your questions to Adriana Beemans at [ABeemans@MetcalfFoundation.com](mailto:ABeemans@MetcalfFoundation.com)

If you have technical difficulties with the application process, please contact [SectorSkills@MetcalfFoundation.com](mailto:SectorSkills@MetcalfFoundation.com)

We will hold an information session on **March 31, 2020** and a webinar on **April 20, 2020**. If you want to register, go to: <https://tssa-2020-info-session.eventbrite.ca> for the information session, and to: <https://tssa-2020-webinar.eventbrite.ca> for the webinar.

**This application form is available in a Word document at <http://metcalffoundation.com/downloads>**

## A. Applicant Information

### 1. Please complete the following personal information.

Name of Applicant:

Job Title:

Organization:

Email:

Telephone:

Full Mailing Address (including City & Postal Code):

### 2. How did you hear about the Toronto Sector Skills Academy?

### 3. Please insert your professional biography (*no more than 150 words*).

### 4. Tell us about your current role and responsibilities. How is it focused on improving employment opportunities for low-income people and/or advancing equitable economic development? Why are you well positioned and motivated to be part of the Toronto Sector Skills Academy?

### 5. Please attach your resume and photograph to your application.

## B. Organizational Information

### 1. What type of organization do you work for? *Check all that apply.*

- Community-based organization
  - Workforce development organization
  - Professional, business or industry association
  - Economic development agency
  - College or University
  - Labour union or Labour-management partnership
  - Industry intermediary or sector partnership
  - Philanthropic organization or funders' collaborative
  - Government
  - Governmental/public agency
  - Worker Centre
- Other (*please specify*):

### 2. How many staff does your organization (or division of a very large organization) employ?



3. Do you supervise any staff?  Yes  No

*If yes, how many?*

4. **What is the approximate annual operating budget of your organization or division of your organization?** For example, a division of a community college that deals with workforce development.
5. **Please provide a brief summary about your organization's (or department's) history of advancing workforce development?** Describe an example of a project, program, partnership, or policy that your organization/department has been involved in that has improved the economic outcomes for low-income workers. What role did your organization play and what outcomes were achieved?
6. **Please provide your supervisor's information.**

Name of Supervisor:

Job Title:

Email:

Telephone:

7. **Please attach an ORGANIZATIONAL CHART of your organization or division to your application.** The chart should show your supervisors and as well as staff reporting to you.

## C. Sector Initiative

**Sector strategies** are promising practices that seek to improve opportunities for low-income workers while also working to build a stronger economy. Sector strategies focus on two outcomes. One is helping workers move into better jobs by removing barriers and skills gaps, or *building ladders*. The second is improving the quality of low-wage jobs, or *raising the floor*.

Sector strategies embody a diverse mix of industry-linked specific approaches. These include: providing training and skills development, conducting research about the industry or working conditions, convening businesses to discuss their challenges, advocating for public policy changes, helping workers organize, or providing other services designed to meet the needs of both workers and businesses.

Sector strategies strengthen social enterprises, social procurement of anchor institutions, local hiring commitments, and community benefit agreements.

For practitioners that may participate in several industry-specific initiatives, for purposes of this application we ask you *to focus your answers on one primary initiative only*. Please choose the one that you plan to concentrate on during the Toronto Sector Skills Academy.

For policy leaders, we ask you to describe the workforce strategies you seek to apply your learnings to. For organizations that primarily focus on “raise the floor” strategies, we recognize that your answers to these questions will likely be in relation to your targeted advocacy and system change efforts.

For the purpose of this application, the term “sector initiative” refers to both existing sector/industry-targeted employment programs and employment or economic development strategies that are not yet sector strategies as we have defined them.

**1. Please answer the following points below, to describe the sector-focused project, program, partnership, or workforce policy initiative that you are engaged in. While you may participate in several workforce strategies, we ask that you use one example that you expect to focus on as part of your fellowship experience. Please address each point below in one to three sentences.**

- a. What are the goals and objectives of the initiative?
- b. When was the project launched or when will it be launched?
- c. What is the key industry sector or key employers your initiative targets?
- d. Please identify partner organizations (colleges, unions, community-based organizations) with which you engage, or hope to engage. What roles will they play in your strategy?
- e. How do you engage employers in this industry sector? Who are some of the key employers in this industry that you partner with or envision partnering with? How do employer-partners support your industry initiative?
- f. What is the target population (jobseeker, underemployed worker, and/or incumbent worker) and their characteristics that your initiative is focused on (i.e age, geography, barriers etc)?
- g. What steps and planning have you taken towards the project and how long have you have been working on it?
- h. What are the initiative’s major accomplishments to date or major lessons/identified opportunities? (Please describe these both qualitatively and quantitatively, to the extent possible.)
- i. What is the problem your initiative currently addresses or would like to address with respect to both businesses in your target industry and low-income participants seeking to obtain employment or advance in the industry?
- j. Have you identified or articulated system changes or goals your initiative is trying to achieve?
- k. What are the primary goals and activities you see for the sector initiative and your work within that initiative over the next year?
- l. What are your current responsibilities in relationship to this initiative?

2. Most sector focused employment development programs provide training to individuals, including incumbent workers and the unemployed, either directly or through partnerships (i.e. adult basic education, English as a Second Language (ESL), life skills/behavioural training, employment/job readiness, internships apprenticeships, or on-the-job training etc).

**Which types of training are offered or enabled as part of your sector initiative? Which types of training are you considering offering as part of your sector initiative?**

3. Some sector programs also deliver a range of non-training services to their business customers/employers or to their industry generally. These are services that are ultimately geared toward helping businesses in the region compete more effectively and continue to provide jobs locally. Services may include industry research, technical assistance, human resources services, convening and networking, and other services. **Do you provide any non-training business services?**

Yes

No

Considering

*If “Yes” or “Considering” please describe briefly below in 250 words or less.*

4. **Is there any additional information you think we should have about your current or previous work in other industry sectors or policy development, to properly evaluate your candidacy?**

*Provide any additional information in 250 words or less.*

## **D. Sector Initiative Challenges & Opportunities**

1. **What do you think are the key issues challenging your sector initiative and/or workforce strategy? What are the key issues challenging the evolution of the program into a full sector strategy that engages partners to achieve systems change? Please describe in 150 words or less.**
2. **What do you perceive to be the key opportunities to advance your sector initiative? Please describe in 150 words or less.**

## **E. Partnerships**

1. A focus on partnerships and collaboration is central to the design of the Toronto Sector Skills Academy.

**Please provide us with the following in 500 words or less:**

- a. **An example of a current partnership with another organization you are working with.**  
In your response, please share the goals of the partnership, your role, and what has been rewarding and/or challenging?
- b. **What are the opportunities your organization sees, or is exploring, for additional collaboration across the workforce development system?**

## F. Systems Change

Sector strategies often catalyze broad support within industries or communities to create systemic change. This change can come in many forms, affecting institutional processes and rules, public policies and regulations, or business relationships that influence low-income workers' access to opportunity. (For an explanation and examples of systems change please see pages 20-35 in Sectoral Strategies for Low Income Workers at <https://assets.aspeninstitute.org/content/uploads/2007/10/Sectoral-Strategies.pdf>)

- 1. Please give a specific example of how you have already worked to effect systems change. If you have not yet addressed systems change in an existing program, please outline an idea you have for transforming the industry, workforce development system, education and training infrastructure, support services system, and/or other entities to support economic opportunities for low-income workers while at the same time supporting healthy and sustainable business practices.** In your answer, please describe the specific changes you are seeking to bring about, or are considering working toward. Please include mention of the type of organizations (CBOs, business, government, educational institutions, etc.) that you and/or your organization hope to engage in the process, what has been or what you anticipate to be most challenging, and what there is to learn from these partnerships. *Please describe in 500 words or less.*
- 2. Please provide your working definition for equity and inclusion. How does this definition impact your professional work?**

## G. Leadership Development, Personal Motivation, and Goals

Effective sector leaders exercise a variety of leadership practices to lead people, programs, partnerships, and change. They engage in self-reflection for their continual growth and development as leaders. In answering the following questions, feel free to illustrate with examples from your current work.

- 1. How would you describe yourself as a leader, and in what ways would you like to develop and grow your leadership skills?**
- 2. Please briefly state what motivates you to work in the workforce development field.**
- 3. What goals do you have for participating in the Toronto Sector Skills Academy? In your response, please include your personal goals, goals for your organization or program/initiative, and goals for the workforce system. *Bullet form is acceptable.***

## H. Instructions for References

Along with your application, please include a letter of reference from the individual who holds direct responsibility for overseeing your work, explaining why you would be an appropriate candidate for participation in the Toronto Sector Skills Academy. In addition, please provide a reference from a

professional partner who is external to your organization, so from another organization or working with an employer you partner with or are considering partnering with on workforce development issues.

The letters of reference should provide the following:

- Professional relationship to applicant;
- Contact information including name, organization, title, address, email, and telephone number;
- Examples of the applicant's leadership competencies, achievements, and commitment to his/her work;
- Areas in which the Toronto Sector Skills Academy might benefit the applicant and the organization that he/she represents; and
- Expression of commitment to support the applicant, if selected for the Toronto Sector Skills Academy, in his or her efforts for meaningful inquiry and practical application of concepts to his or her current work.

## I. Final Checklist

**Please review the following checklist and ensure that you submit all of the following documents:**

- A completed application form
- Your resume
- Your photograph and bio (this will be used for the Toronto Sector Skills Academy cohort announcement)
- Organizational chart
- Two references (your direct supervisor and a professional partner external to your organization)
- Signed *Commitment to Participate Form* (Section J - Page 14)
- Signed *Authorization to Participate Form* (Section K - Page 15)

**COMPLETE APPLICATIONS MUST BE RECEIVED NO LATER THAN**

**~~JUNE 16, 2020~~ at 2:00PM. To be rescheduled.**

**ALL MATERIALS MUST BE SEND ELECTRONICALLY TO:**

**[SectorSkills@MetcalfFoundation.com](mailto:SectorSkills@MetcalfFoundation.com)**

## J. Commitment to Participate Form

By checking the box below you agree that, if selected for this program, you will commit to full participation in all activities of the Toronto Sector Skills Academy including:

### 1. Three 3-day retreats:

- **Retreat 1** – ~~September 29 – October 2, 2020~~ **To be rescheduled**
- **Retreat 2** – ~~November 18 – 20, 2020~~ **To be rescheduled**
- **Retreat 3** – ~~May 26 – 28, 2021~~ **To be rescheduled**

### 2. Three events/workshops held in Toronto:

- **The welcome reception** – ~~September 10, 2020~~ **To be rescheduled**
- **The Toronto workshops (2 days)** – ~~February 2021~~ **To be rescheduled**
- **The closing presentation and graduation reception** – ~~June 2021~~ **To be rescheduled**

### 3. Peer group discussion between retreat sessions

### 4. Program cost of \$1,500

I commit to full participation

I require a bursary to enable my participation in the Toronto Sector Skills Academy

**Agreed by** (print applicant's name):

**Signature:**

**Date Signed:**

## K. Authorization to Participate Form

The Toronto Sector Skills Academy is designed for emerging leaders. In order to qualify for this program an applicant must hold a position of authority and be involved in, or responsible for, the development and implementation of a sectoral employment initiative or policy.

This form should be completed by the **Executive Director, Chair of the Board of Directors, President,** or other **senior executive** responsible for overseeing the work of the applicant.

**Applicant's Name:**

**Organization:**

**Job Title:**

I fully support the applicant's petition to participate in the 2020 Toronto Sector Skills Academy. I understand that he/she will be attending three retreats and three events from ~~September 2020 to June 2021~~ **To be rescheduled**, as a part of his/her work responsibilities.

I also agree to attend and participate in the ~~June 2021~~ **To be rescheduled** session with the applicant.

**Agreed by** (printed name):

**Signature:**

**Title:**

**Organization:**

**Signature:**

**Date Signed:**