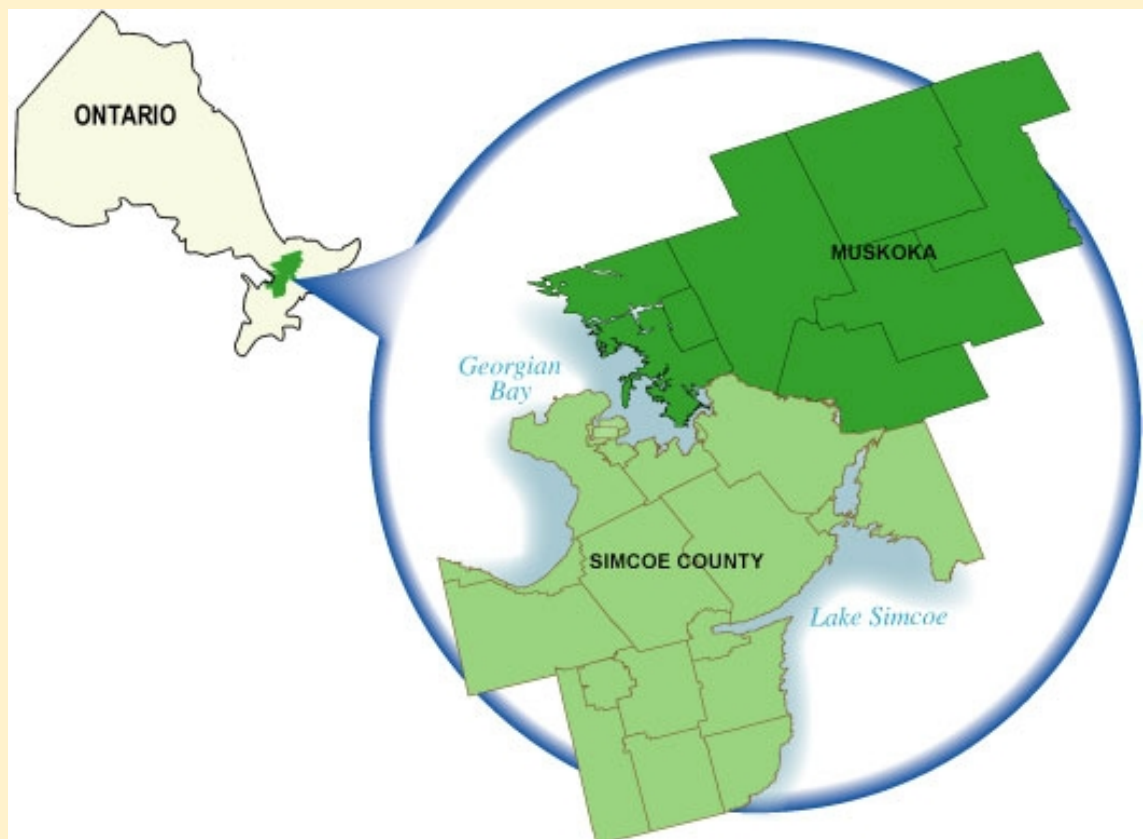


# Simcoe/Muskoka Literacy Network Literacy Services Plan 2019-20

## Community Report March 2019



## Acknowledgements

This report is a collaboration of the members of the four Literacy Services Planning and Co-ordination (LSPC) committees in the Simcoe/Muskoka Literacy Network catchment area:

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Participants of the Getting Connected 2018 event

**We value your opinion. Please provide feedback on this service plan report at**

<https://forms.gle/HUkZ87mAd7DiWYj7>



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## Table of Contents

About Simcoe/Muskoka Literacy Network	4
What's happening in Simcoe County and Muskoka	4
Literacy and Essential Skills	9
The Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) Program and the Literacy Services Planning and Co-ordination (LSPC)	10
Issues, Opportunities and Actions	14
Upgrading Providers in Simcoe Muskoka	19
References	20

**NOTE:** The views expressed in this report are those of Simcoe/Muskoka Literacy Network and do not necessarily reflect those of the Province.

## About Simcoe/Muskoka Literacy Network

The Simcoe/Muskoka Literacy Network (SMLN) supports literacy services planning and coordination in the District of Muskoka and most of Simcoe County. SMLN's area does not include Bradford and the South Georgian Bay/Collingwood area, which are supported by other Regional Literacy Networks. This 2019-20 Literacy Services Plan (LSP) Report is the product of an annual planning cycle through the Literacy Service Planning Committees (LSPC) in Barrie-South Simcoe, Muskoka, North Simcoe and Orillia.

## What's happening in Simcoe County and Muskoka

### Population

Between 2011 and 2016, Ontario's population grew by 4.6%. Muskoka's population more or less matched the provincial increase, while Simcoe County's outpaced it. Table 1 presents the results for Ontario, Simcoe County and Muskoka, and for some of their larger municipalities. The population of the area is expected to

continue to grow for several decades, especially in and around Barrie and South Simcoe. By 2041, the population of Simcoe County is projected to increase by 38% and that of Muskoka by 20%. About 41% of Simcoe County's population and 50% of Muskoka's is expected to be 55 and over.

**Table 1: Population data, Simcoe Co. and Muskoka, 2011-2016**

Community	2016	2011	% change 2011-2016
ONTARIO	13,448,494	12,851,821	4.6%
<b>SIMCOE</b>			
SIMCOE	479,650	446,063	7.5%
Barrie	141,434	136,063	3.9%
Innisfil	36,565	32,727	11.7%
New Tecumseth	34,242	30,234	13.3%
Orillia	31,166	30,586	1.9%
<b>MUSKOKA</b>			
MUSKOKA	60,599	58,017	4.5%
Huntsville	19,816	19,056	4.0%
Bracebridge	16,010	15,414	3.9%
Gravenhurst	12,311	12,055	2.5%

2016 Census

## Employment

According to 2016 Census data, about 287,280 (65%) Simcoe Muskoka residents 15 years of age and older were part of the labour force. Of people in the labour force, 7% (or 20,010) were unemployed. In comparison, the unemployment rate in Ontario in 2016 was a bit higher at 7.4% (or 529,525 unemployed). Unemployment numbers among men and women were very similar in Simcoe Muskoka, with 9,540 women and 10,470 men unemployed in 2016.

The youth unemployment rate in Simcoe Muskoka has increased from 13% in 2006 to **16.7%** in 2016, while the Ontario youth unemployment rate increased from 13% in 2006 to **14%** in 2016.

The youth unemployment rate is more than double the unemployment rate for Simcoe Muskoka's population 15 years and older (6.3%).

The number of employed residents grew by 5.0% in Ontario between 2011 and 2016. In Simcoe, that rate was considerably higher, at 9.3%, while the growth in Muskoka was slightly lower, at 4.3%.

The two largest occupation categories by employed residents in Simcoe were

- Sales & Service Occupations (24.1% of all employed residents)
- Trades, Transport & Equipment Operators (17.6%)

The same top two occupation categories represented the top employment for Muskoka residents

- Sales & Service Occupations (25.3% of all employed residents)
- Trades, Transport & Equipment Operators (20.4%)

**Table 2a: Employment by industry, Simcoe Co.**

Greatest Employment (Industry)	%	Largest increases (Industry)	employed residents	Largest decreases (Industry)	employed residents
Retail Trade	12.5	Construction	+4,495	Transportation & Warehousing	-620
Health Care & Social Assistance	11.4	Health Care & Social Assistance	+3,700	Arts, Entertainment & Recreation	-585
Manufacturing	11.2	Retail Trade	+2,460		
Construction	9.7	Accommodation & Food Services	+2,455		
Accommodation & Food Services	7.2	Administrative & Support	+2,235		

**Table 2b: Employment by industry, Muskoka**

Greatest Employment (Industry)	%	Largest increases (Industry)	employed residents	Largest decreases (Industry)	employed residents
Retail Trade	15.0	Retail Trade	+350	Public Administration	-175
Construction	14.6	Construction	+340	Manufacturing	-150
Health Care & Social Assistance	11.2	Administrative & Support	+295		
Accommodation & Food Services	9.2	Professional, Scientific & Technical Services	+215		
Public Administration	5.9	Accommodation & Food Services	+155		

## Educational Attainment

Among residents aged 15 to 24 years of age, compared to the Ontario averages, Simcoe County and Muskoka both have considerably higher proportions of youth with no high school diploma, as well as slightly higher proportions of college graduates, and considerably fewer university graduates.

Among those aged 25 years and older, compared to the Ontario averages, Simcoe County and Muskoka residents have higher levels of residents with a high school diploma, an apprenticeship certificate or a college diploma, but considerably fewer residents with a university degree.

## Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO)

Tables 3a and 3b, below, show EQAO results for Muskoka and Simcoe County from 2014-16 to 2016-18.

If we assume that the grade 6 students in 2016-18 were the grade 3 students in 2014-16, we can see that

- reading is the only skill that increased significantly from grade 3 to grade 6
- for the first time in several years, there was a slight increase in the results for writing from grade 3 to grade 6 in

Simcoe County, but there was no real change in Muskoka.

A student not reading at his or her grade level by the end of the third grade is four times less likely to graduate from high school. They are six times less likely to graduate from high school if they also live in low-income households.

- in Grade 9 applied math tests, only 40% in Simcoe and 57% in Muskoka are reaching the standard; 74% in Simcoe

and 90% in Muskoka are reaching the standard in academic math

- about 22%-24% of the students who did take the Grade 10 literacy test were not successful, so we can estimate that at least this percentage of Grade 10 students lack the literacy skills needed to complete high school or get and keep a job

Based on these results, we predict that for the next decade, the number of youth entering adult upgrading programs to upgrade core skills will continue to increase.

For a variety of reasons, it's somewhat more difficult to analyse the EQAO scores for the French schools. The children in French immersion schools tend to be those with higher skills levels, and the reading and writing scores reflect this. However, there are still issues with math. The math scores show that only 50% of grade 9 applied math and 79% of academic math participants reached the standard in 2016-18. This indicates that for the next decade the number of youth entering French adult upgrading programs for math, at least, will likely continue to increase also.

**Table 3a: EQAO results for Muskoka schools - % of students at or above the provincial standard.**

	Reading			Writing		
	2014-16	2015-17	2016-18	2014-16	2015-17	2016-18
Grade 3	62	61	66	66	60	59
Grade 6	75	75	73	67	66	67
	2014-16	2015-17	2016-18			
Grade 10 Literacy Test	78	77	78			

**Math**

	2014-16	2015-17	2016-18
Grade 3	57	52	50
grade 6	45	36	32
Grade 9 applied	56	59	57
Grade 9 academic	88	90	90

**Table 3b: EQAO results for Simcoe County English schools - % of students at or above the provincial standard (combined for 2 school boards)**

	Reading			Writing		
	2014-16	2015-17	2016-18	2014-16	2015-17	2016-18
Grade 3	68	69	69	72	70	69
Grade 6	79	77	78	73	72	79
	2014-16	2015-17	2016-18			
Grade 10 Literacy Test	78	78	76			

### Math

	2014-16	2015-17	2016-18
Grade 3	63	58	57
grade 6	45	40	40
Grade 9 applied	37	38	39
Grade 9 academic	77	76	74

## High School Graduation Rates

For 2016, the provincial average graduation rate is 79.6% for students taking 4 years to graduate and 86.5% for those taking 5 years. In Simcoe Muskoka, looking at an average of the 3 English school boards, 78.9% of 4-year students and 83.1% of 5-year students graduated. These rates are slightly lower than the provincial averages. The average for the 2 French school boards was 88.5%

for 4-year students and 92.5% for 5-year students. These rates are slightly higher than provincial averages.

Although graduation rates have increased over the past several years, there are still many students who may need to seek out continuing education to complete their diploma or equivalent.

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## Poverty

In 2015, 53,580 persons or 11.4% were in low income, while in 2005, 9.8% of the persons in Simcoe lived in low income. In 2015, the low-income rate for persons under 18 years of age was 16.0%, compared to 10.7% for persons aged 18 to 64 and 9.6% for persons 65 and over.

In 2015, 7,540 persons in Muskoka or 13.0% were in low income, while in 2005, 11.3% of the persons in Muskoka lived in low income. The low-income rate for persons under 18 years of age was 16.9% compared to 13.0% for persons aged 18 to 64 and 10.3% for persons 65 and over in 2015.

According to the 2016 Census, 11.6% of Simcoe Muskoka's population (or 61,115) were considered to be living in low income

based on the Low Income Measure After Tax (LIM-AT) in 2015.

## Social Assistance

The Ontario Works (OW) caseload in the County of Simcoe has experienced ongoing decreases since 2012. (A case can be a single individual or a family). The average monthly caseload in 2017 was 5,653, which is down by 12.8% from 2016. Some of the decrease has been due to some clients transferring to the Ontario Disabilities Support Program (ODSP). It is notable that caseloads have yet to return to pre-recession levels of 4,584, the Ontario Works caseload in 2008.



Approximately 13% of residents of Muskoka are living in poverty. The average monthly OW caseload in Muskoka has decreased from a high of 1,701 in 2012-13 to approximately 826 in 2017-18. Approximately 60% of Muskoka cases are

singles. Only 50% of OW Clients have earned a high school diploma.

For ODSP, the average monthly caseload has increased by 28% in Simcoe County and 27% in Muskoka from 2009-10 to 2015-16.

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## Literacy and Essential Skills

Literacy is much more than just reading, writing and counting skills.










**Literacy is a means of identifying, understanding, interpreting, creating and communicating in our digital, information-rich and fast-changing world** (adapted from UNESCO, n.d.).

The Government of Canada, along with other national and international agencies, identified key literacy and essential skills. These skills are used in nearly every job, throughout daily life in different ways and at varying levels of complexity (from level 1 – basic, to level 5 – advanced) (Government of Ontario, 2015).

### Literacy and essential skills

- are needed for work, learning and life
- are the foundation for learning all other skills
- help people evolve with their jobs and adapt to workplace change

The Essential Skills are

-  Reading
-  Writing
-  Document Use
-  Numeracy
-  Computer Use/Digital Skills
-  Thinking<sup>1</sup>
-  Oral Communication
-  Working with Others
-  Continuous Learning

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<sup>1</sup> problem solving, decision making, critical thinking, job task planning and organising, significant use of memory, finding information

The Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework (OALCF) was developed to correspond to the first 3 levels of the Essential Skills. The framework is used by all Ontario adult upgrading programs that are funded through the Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) Program of Employment Ontario.

The International Survey of Adult Skills assesses the skills of adults (aged 16-65) in literacy, numeracy and problem-solving in technology-rich environments. The last assessment was conducted in 2012. When analyzing results from the Survey of Adult Skills, adults with higher essential skills have better outcomes in the labour market

(OECD, 2016). They also typically have higher wages.

However, a large proportion of Canadian adults have poor reading skills (17% scored at or below level 1) and poor numeracy skills (23% scored at or below level 1). These are adults who can only complete reading tasks that involve only short and simple texts and math tasks involving only basic operations. Low proficiency in literacy and numeracy can adversely affect employment opportunities and can be a significant barrier to using digital technology – an ever-increasing critical skill in the workforce.

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## **The Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) Program and the Literacy Services Planning and Co-ordination (LSPC)**

Adult literacy and essential skills upgrading agencies in Ontario are funded by the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development through the Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) Program of Employment Ontario, Ontario's Employment and Training Network. Both the terms "literacy" and "basic skills" are often misunderstood by people, but LBS is the term we have to use. We use both "LBS" and "upgrading" in this plan report.

These LBS service providers help adults develop and apply communication, numeracy, digital and other essential skills to achieve their goals. The agencies serve Anglophone, Francophone, Indigenous and

Deaf learners. Programs are delivered by community-based agencies, school boards and community colleges. We work with people living in poverty, marginalized groups and underrepresented groups with multiple barriers to employment. Service providers design programming to address the specific cultural and linguistic needs of learners.

LBS is a springboard for 5 pathways:

- a) apprenticeship
- b) employment
- c) independence
- d) post-secondary
- e) secondary school credit

In the Simcoe/Muskoka area, there are 4 LSPC committees, centred in Barrie-South Simcoe, Muskoka, North Simcoe and Orillia and district. Simcoe/Muskoka Literacy Network (SMLN), the regional learning network, facilitates and supports the work of the LSPC committees.

### **The Challenge**

Low literacy skills and the lack of educational credentials create barriers to employment and the ability to fully participate in the community.

### **The Goal**

In Simcoe-Muskoka, adults will have access to co-ordinated services that

- provide individualized training and upgrading
- support their pursuit of further education, employment and greater independence

LBS contributes to the vision of “Building the Workforce of Tomorrow: A Shared

Responsibility” (2016) and the Lifelong Learning and Skills Plan announced in the 2017 budget by helping people develop a strong foundation in literacy, numeracy and other essential skills.

There are many benefits to participating in adult upgrading programs, including being more likely to

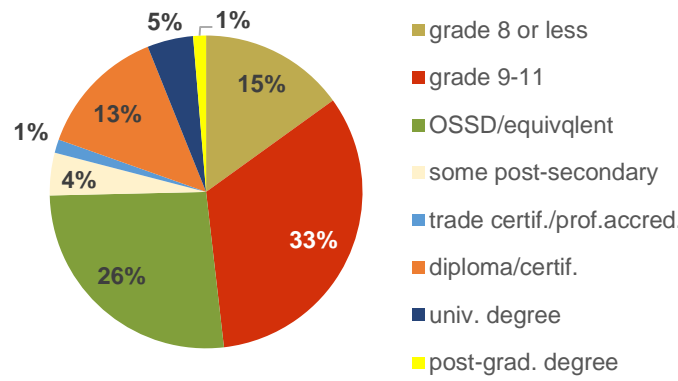
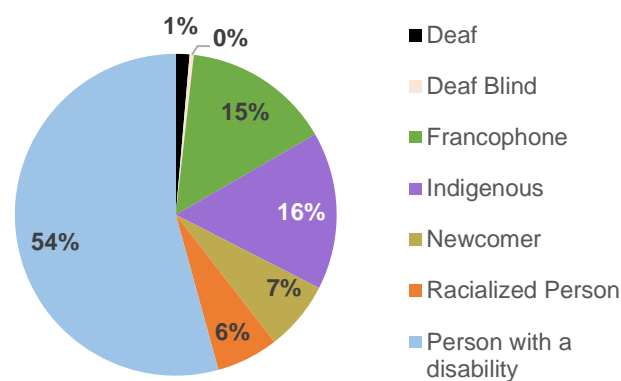
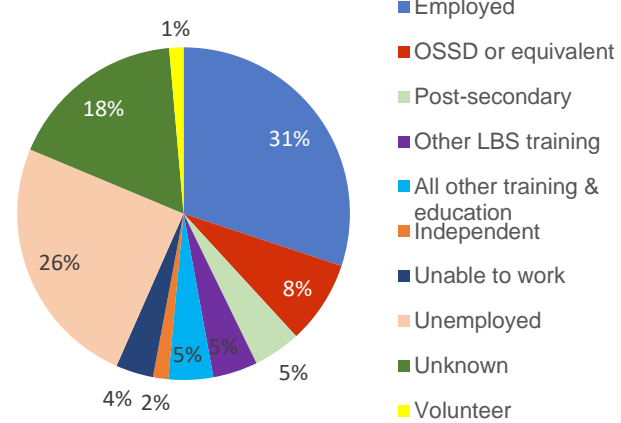
- a develop improved literacy skills
- b improve confidence and self-esteem
- c obtain a high school diploma or equivalent
- d pursue post-secondary education
- e earn more income over time and manage it effectively
- f increase “soft skills” for further education and employment
- g learn how to learn

These outcomes contribute to a healthy economy, increased employment, reduced public assistance needs and lower health care costs. (ProLiteracy, 2017).

## **Who We Served (2017-18)**

The Simcoe/Muskoka Literacy Network area includes all of Muskoka and most of Simcoe County, except for Bradford-West Gwillimbury and the South Georgian Bay area (Collingwood-Wasaga Beach). When developing this plan for 2019-20, we analysed statistics from 2017-18, the most recent year for which we had full-year stats. In 2017-18, upgrading programs in the SMLN area provided services to 1738 people.

<p><b>Age of Learners - % of total</b></p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Age Group</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>&lt;18</td> <td>1%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>18-24</td> <td>27%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>25-29</td> <td>15%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>30-44</td> <td>24%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>45-54</td> <td>17%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>55+</td> <td>14%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Age Group	Percentage	<18	1%	18-24	27%	25-29	15%	30-44	24%	45-54	17%	55+	14%	<p>Approximately 44% of learners were under the age of 30; the two highest age categories were 18-24 (27%) and 30-44 (24%). 45-64 year-olds made up 27% of learners.</p>		
Age Group	Percentage																
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<p><b>Goal Paths - % of total</b></p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Goal Path</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Employment</td> <td>34%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Apprenticeship</td> <td>11%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Independence</td> <td>16%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Secondary School Credit</td> <td>15%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Post-Secondary</td> <td>24%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Goal Path	Percentage	Employment	34%	Apprenticeship	11%	Independence	16%	Secondary School Credit	15%	Post-Secondary	24%	<p>Employment was the immediate goal for 34% of learners. Another 39% wanted to complete their high school diploma or a post-secondary program, both of which may also be needed for employment.</p>				
Goal Path	Percentage																
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<p><b>Source of Income - % of total</b></p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Source of Income</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>OW</td> <td>21%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>ODSP</td> <td>9%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>EI</td> <td>7%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Employed</td> <td>27%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>No Source</td> <td>26%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Dependent of ODSP/OW</td> <td>2%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Other</td> <td>9%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Source of Income	Percentage	OW	21%	ODSP	9%	EI	7%	Employed	27%	No Source	26%	Dependent of ODSP/OW	2%	Other	9%	<p>About 56% of the clients entering upgrading programs were either receiving social assistance or had no income; many of these people were seeking employment or training. Another 27% were employed people seeking to keep or improve their jobs. Clients in the “Other” category could be supported by a parent or spouse, retired or chose not disclose their source of income.</p>
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<p><b>Highest Level of Education - % of total</b></p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ grade 8 or less</li> <li>■ grade 9-11</li> <li>■ OSSD/equivqlent</li> <li>■ some post-secondary</li> <li>■ trade certif./prof.accred.</li> <li>■ diploma/certif.</li> <li>■ univ. degree</li> <li>■ post-grad. degree</li> </ul>	<p>48% of learners had less than a high school education or equivalent. While these people are a main focus for upgrading programs, many others find they need to upgrade various skills they have not had to use in previous jobs or training courses. Another 26% of learners had high school diplomas or equivalent and 13% had a diploma or certificate.</p>
<p><b>Client Self-identified status - % of total</b></p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Deaf</li> <li>■ Deaf Blind</li> <li>■ Francophone</li> <li>■ Indigenous</li> <li>■ Newcomer</li> <li>■ Racialized Person</li> <li>■ Person with a disability</li> </ul>	<p>Agencies asked learners to self-identify if they were part of the following groups: Indigenous, Deaf, Deaf-Blind, newcomer, Francophone, racialized person/visible minority and person with a disability. 54% of learners self-identified. Of these, 54% identified as a person with a disability, 19% as Indigenous, and 14% as Francophone.</p>
<p><b>Outcomes at Exit - % of total</b></p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Employed</li> <li>■ OSSD or equivalent</li> <li>■ Post-secondary</li> <li>■ Other LBS training</li> <li>■ All other training &amp; education</li> <li>■ Independent</li> <li>■ Unable to work</li> <li>■ Unemployed</li> <li>■ Unknown</li> <li>■ Volunteer</li> </ul>	<p>LBS providers in Simcoe-Muskoka continue to successfully help learners transition to their next steps. At exit, 26% were employed and 21% were in education/ training. 26% exited unemployed, though many were referred to Employment Services and were conducting job searches.</p>

## Issues, Opportunities and Actions

The adult upgrading providers provide a full range of upgrading to address the needs of a wide variety of people – from those who want or need to learn to manage their finances or read to their children to those who want to complete their high school diploma to those who are heading to further training or education. As a critical foundation to developing a highly skilled workforce, LBS providers support people seeking employment, whether for entry-level or highly-skilled positions. LBS also contributes to the maintenance of a highly skilled workforce by helping those already employed who have discovered a gap in their skills and who need training in order to be successful, or to move into promotions or new occupations.

LBS works with people in poverty, as well as marginalized and underrepresented groups, acting as a safety net where they can build self-confidence and self-efficacy in a supportive environment. LBS is also a springboard providing pathways to secondary school credit program, post-secondary and apprenticeship.

### Current demands in the community

1. The demand for training in digital technology continues to grow; it is emerging in everything.

LBS providers will continue to offer a range of computer/digital technology training at upgrading locations and at Employment Services (ES) locations, if requested.

Practitioners will work to further embed digital technology into training, sharing resources and best practices. Some training will focus on using computers for job search and job readiness and employability, to attract more clients from Employment Services, Ontario Works (OW), etc. LBS providers can develop other training to meet the needs identified within the community.

2. There is still a demand for upgrading from people who want to get the GED certificate, whether for employment or further training.

The fee-for-service GED exams are not as easy as many people think, and we highly recommend that people brush up their core skills before writing them. Both community-based agencies and Georgian College can help people prepare to write the GED. Service providers will maintain regular meetings with front-line OW staff to encourage more referrals from OW.

3. There is an increase in the number of learners who are self-reporting that they have mental health issues; practitioners find they need ongoing training around

mental health awareness and dealing with clients in crisis.

SMLN and service providers will continue to connect their staffs with appropriate professional development around mental health, so they are better able to both identify anxiety and stress in learners and to know how to help learners reduce their anxiety. We are interested in collaborating with community partners whose staffs also want this kind of training.

4. There is growing interest in Employment Ontario (EO) services from local parole and probation offices, public libraries, Indigenous services agencies and the school board's Personal Support Worker (PSW) program.

LBS providers will build on relationships with both provincial and federal probation and parole offices and the PSW Co-ordinator, to enhance access to LBS and ES services. We will strengthen referrals between LBS and the libraries, which offer a wide variety of services that could benefit learners. SMLN will support specific outreach to Indigenous agencies planned by the school board, Gateway Centre for Learning, Barrie Literacy Council and Georgian College-Midland. This could include targeted programming to address specific learner needs.

5. In some parts of Simcoe Muskoka, access to LBS is difficult or impossible for employed people who can't attend

during the day but want to find better employment – they need out-of-business hours even for initial assessment.

In North Simcoe, the three upgrading agencies have partnered to provide services in the evenings. For Francophone learners, La Clé meets with individual learners in the evening, as requested. In Muskoka and Orillia, service providers will determine the best way to address any increase in demand.

6. There is an increase in people registering for college/trades entrance in September. This often means many people need to do their upgrading in the summer to pass entrance exams.

LBS programming is available year-round at community-based agencies, and at the Barrie Learning Centre, but they cannot offer Academic and Career Entrance (ACE courses). ACE courses are available on-line but that does not suit all learners. Georgian College will determine how to enhance on-site summer programming at all campuses, within available resources.

7. There is a steady increase in the number of newcomers who need ESL training, including some who need LBS upgrading as well. Some newcomers and immigrants who have been here many years don't fit under the OALCF, but still have needs for upgrading in English. Service providers are not



always sure where these people fit on the ESL-LBS continuum.

While LBS providers are not funded by Employment Ontario to provide ESL training, they refer people to the Simcoe County District School Board's (SCDSB) Welcome Centre and the LINC program at the YMCA in Barrie. In other Simcoe County communities, SCDSB Learning Centres will run an ESL class if enough people request it. Through private funding, Gateway Centre for Learning offers some ESL training in Midland, as does the YMCA in Huntsville. We can also refer people to on-line ESL courses, as appropriate. LBS providers can accept newcomers who have English language skills at approximately Canadian Language Benchmark (CLB) level 6. It may be possible to work with community partners, such as the public libraries, to set up or expand English conversation circles in communities with no ESL services.

French as a Second Language (FSL) is offered by Collège Boréal on a fee-for-service basis, and by La Clé d'la baie through conversation circles at local libraries.

8. Despite factory closures, poor success in finding or keeping jobs or pursuing further training, many people do not see the importance of upgrading skills for the attainment of their goals.

We will continue to work with Employment Services (ES) providers and other

community partners to provide information and tips to help clients see the value in upgrading their employability skills for both getting and keeping a job.

## **Current Trends in the Local Labour Market**

1. There are many jobs available but businesses have difficulty finding employees to take these jobs. Main jobs are minimum-wage in customer services and in manufacturing. At job fairs, some employers are hiring on the spot, often for full-time jobs. There is an overabundance of entry-level positions within the labour market, primarily in manufacturing and call centres. The shortage of workers is resulting in higher turnover in many businesses – if not happy in one job, employees move on to another.

SMLN and upgrading providers will support any work with employers being done by the ES providers, Simcoe Muskoka Workforce Development Boards and municipal Economic Development offices to address issues of attracting and retaining employees.

2. Employers are looking more for good soft skills in employees, and placing less emphasis on education credentials, especially for entry-level jobs. Successful job seekers (and job maintainers) need to have excellent



workplace, computer and communication skills. Employers say many job seekers lack the “soft” employability skills. At the same time, with the increase in minimum wage, employers expect more from employees – job seekers need to upgrade their skills more to be successful.

Soft skills needed by all employees are embedded in the Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework (OALCF) and can be a focus for any student learning plan. Several agencies also offer a targeted “Soft Skills Solutions®” (SSS) program for both their learners and other job seekers. We will continue to work closely with the Simcoe Muskoka Workforce Development Board (SMWDB) as they promote the training to employers. Barrie Literacy Council has worked with the Barrie Native Friendship Centre (BNFC) to augment the SSS curriculum to be culturally appropriate. Georgian College sometimes offers “Keys to Success”, an on-line course and “Pathways to Employment”, which focuses on soft skills, among other topics.

3. Many jobs require training certifications with industry specific requirements, e.g. Working at Heights. Construction job applicants need support in the areas of measurement, math, comprehending instructions, problem solving, reading blueprints, pricing out estimates.

Upgrading programs can tailor learning plans to support learners in completing

these certification courses and to practice skills in an occupational context.

4. It is challenging for employers to find skilled workers within the trades

Manufacturers and other industries are having trouble finding the skilled tradespeople they need. Both municipal economic development offices and the provincial are promoting the trades. If more people go into the skilled trades, many will need to upgrade their core skills first. LBS providers can provide upgrading in occupational contexts.

5. There is an ongoing and increasing need for Personal Support Workers (PSW). SMLN and LBS providers will support the PSW awareness initiative planned by the SMWDB for 2019-20. Some PSW candidates might need upgrading to be successful in the PSW training.

6. There is greater use of on-line applications and screening by both employers and some community services. Digital skills are needed on the job in more and more occupations. Job seekers need to have good digital technology skills for success in finding a job.

This results in long-term need for digital skills upgrading at LBS programs.

7. There is still a lot of seasonal employment and an increase in the

number of part-time / temporary / contract employment opportunities.

We need to encourage these people to do upgrading at the same time, as many would like better jobs.

8. Employers are learning better strategies for employment; some are starting to realise they need to invest in upgrading

for employees to be able to keep good employees. They are also being more flexible with hours, work schedules and helping employees improve their soft skills on the job.

There is an opportunity for LBS providers to support employers with soft skills education for their current workers.

## **LBS Upgrading Providers in Simcoe Muskoka**

### **Barrie Literacy Council**

[www.barrieliteracy.ca](http://www.barrieliteracy.ca) (705) 728-7323

### **Collège Boréal**

[www.collegeboreal.ca/our-locations/access-centres/barrie](http://www.collegeboreal.ca/our-locations/access-centres/barrie) (705) 737-9088

### **Gateway Centre for Learning**

[www.gatewaycentreforlearning.ca](http://www.gatewaycentreforlearning.ca) (705) 527-1522

### **Georgian College – College & Career Preparation**

<https://www.georgiancollege.ca/academics/academic-and-career-preparation/tab/overview>

Barrie (705) 728-1968 ext. 1157

Midland (705) 526-3666 ext. 3713

Muskoka (705) 646-7629

Orillia (705) 325-2740 ext. 3028

### **La Clé d'la baie**

<http://lacle.ca> Barrie (705) 725-9755 Penetanguishene (705) 549-5227

### **Literacy Society of South Muskoka**

Website under construction (705) 687-9323

### **Next Step- Literacy Council of South Simcoe**

<https://nextstepliteracy.ca/> (705) 435-5624

### **Orillia & District Literacy Council**

[www.odlc.ca](http://www.odlc.ca) (705)327-1253

### **The Learning Centres, Simcoe County District School Board**

[www.thelearningcentres.com](http://www.thelearningcentres.com)

Alliston (705) 435-7778 x34 Barrie (705) 725-8360

North Simcoe (705) 549-1890 Orillia (705) 325-9279

### **YMCA Learning Services**

<http://ymcaofsimcoemuskoka.ca/literacy-services> (705) 789-1850

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*Simcoe/Muskoka  
Literacy Network*

[www.literacynetwork.ca](http://www.literacynetwork.ca)

(705) 326-7227 1-888-518-4788