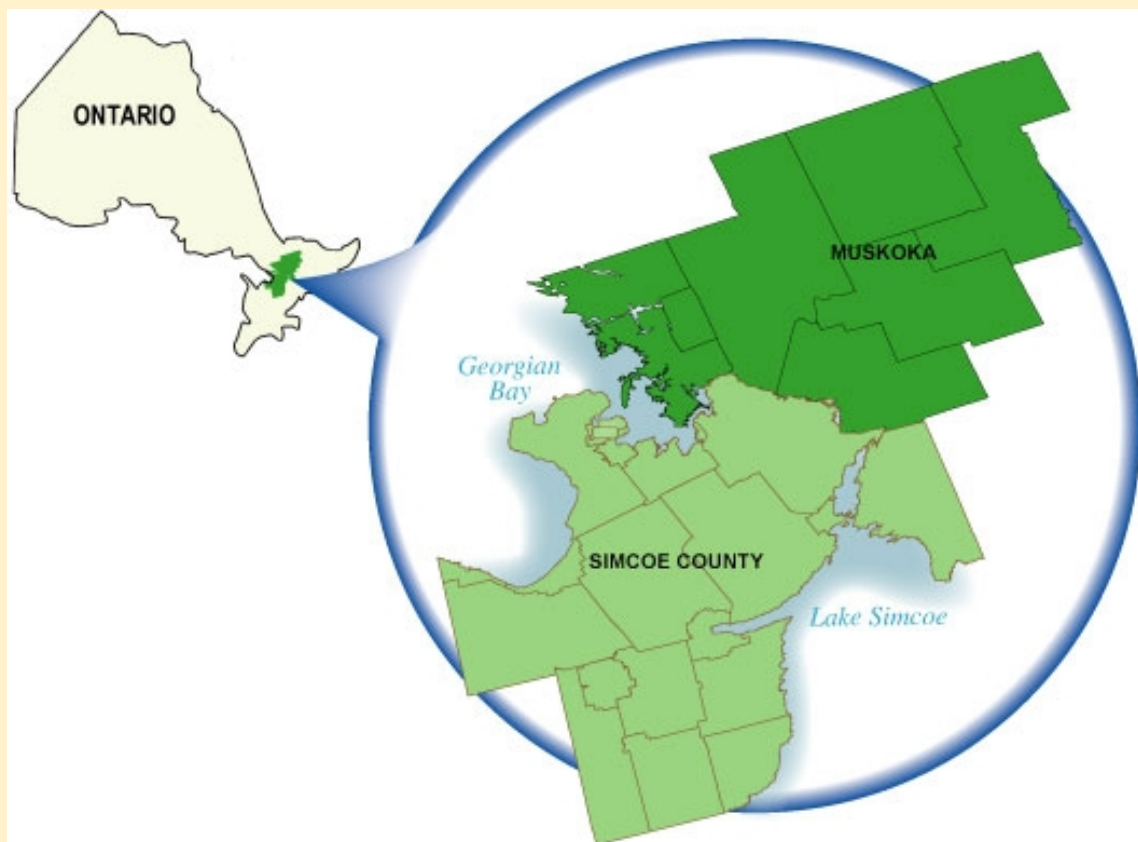


# Simcoe/Muskoka Literacy Network Literacy Services Plan 2018-19

## Community Report May 2018



## Acknowledgements

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

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

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/KF7FWXB>



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The Simcoe/Muskoka Literacy Network (SMLN) supports literacy services planning and co-ordination 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 2018-19 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, 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<br>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.**

| <b>Greatest Employment (Industry)</b> | <b>%</b> | <b>Largest increases (Industry)</b> | <b>employed residents</b> | <b>Largest decreases (Industry)</b> | <b>employed residents</b> |
|---------------------------------------|----------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 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)

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

|                        | Reading |         |         | Writing |         |         |
|------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
|                        | 2013-15 | 2014-16 | 2015-17 | 2013-15 | 2014-16 | 2015-17 |
| Grade 3                | 62      | 61      | 66      | 66      | 60      | 59      |
| Grade 6                | 74      | 74      | 72      | 66      | 65      | 65      |
|                        | 2013-15 | 2014-16 | 2015-17 |         |         |         |
| Grade 10 Literacy Test | 81      | 80      | 80      |         |         |         |

**Math**

|                  | 2013-15 | 2014-16 | 2015-17 |
|------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| Grade 3          | 57      | 52      | 50      |
| grade 6          | 46      | 35      | 31      |
| Grade 9 applied  | 58      | 63      | 60      |
| Grade 9 academic | 85      | 93      | 85      |

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

|                        | Reading |         |         | Writing |         |         |
|------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
|                        | 2013-15 | 2014-16 | 2015-17 | 2013-15 | 2014-16 | 2015-17 |
| Grade 3                | 68      | 69      | 70      | 76      | 75      | 72      |
| Grade 6                | 78      | 79      | 78      | 75      | 76      | 75      |
|                        | 2013-15 | 2014-16 | 2015-17 |         |         |         |
| Grade 10 Literacy Test | 80      | 79      | 79      |         |         |         |

**Math**

|                  | 2013-15 | 2014-16 | 2015-17 |
|------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| Grade 3          | 66      | 63      | 60      |
| grade 6          | 51      | 46      | 42      |
| Grade 9 applied  | 41      | 39      | 38      |
| Grade 9 academic | 79      | 78      | 76      |

If we assume that the grade 6 students in 2015-17 were the grade 3 students in 2013-15, we can see that

- reading is the only skill that increased significantly from grade 3 to grade 6
- there was no real change in the results for writing skills from grade 3 to grade 6.

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 38% in Simcoe and 60% in Muskoka are reaching the standard; 76% and 85%, respectively, are reaching the standard in academic math
- about 20%-21% 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 learners 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 60% of grade 9 applied math and 79% of academic math participants reached the standard in 2015-17. This indicates that for the next decade the number of youth entering French adult

## 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. The low-income rate for persons under 18 years of age was 15.0%, compared to 10.7% for persons aged 18 to 64 and 9.6% for persons 65 and over in 2015.

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

upgrading programs for math, at least, will likely continue to increase also.

## 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.

to 13.0% for persons aged 18 to 64 and 10.3% for persons 65 and over in 2015.

## Ontario Works

The Ontario Works (OW) caseload in the County of Simcoe has experienced ongoing decline since 2012. Year-over-year from 2015 to 2016, there was an overall decrease of 11%. In 2016, the average monthly caseload was comprised mainly of singles with no children and singles with children. The average time on assistance was 28 months. Although positive and reflective of

the economic recovery, it is notable that caseloads have yet to return to pre-recession levels of 4,584, the total Ontario Works caseload in 2008.

Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) are growing needs in Muskoka. In 2016, the average monthly OW Caseload was 32% higher than

the 20-year trend (742). Compared with the province, Muskoka OW and ODSP caseload remains 25% higher per 1,000 population. About 64% of single OW clients are Male; half of which are 35 years of age or older. Only 50% of OW Clients have earned a high school diploma. The average monthly caseload in 2016 was 983.

## 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.).

### 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 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).



Reading



Writing



Document Use



Numeracy



Computer Use/Digital Skills



Thinking



Oral Communication



Working with Others



Continuous Learning

The Essential Skills are



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

## **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.

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

## **Who We Served (2016-17)**

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 2018-19, we

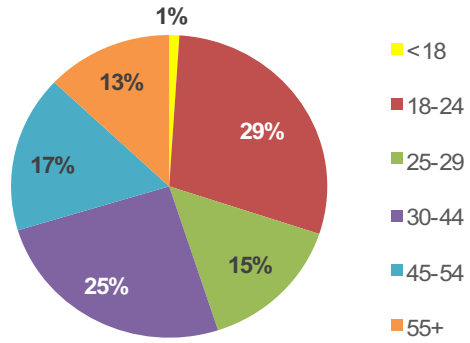
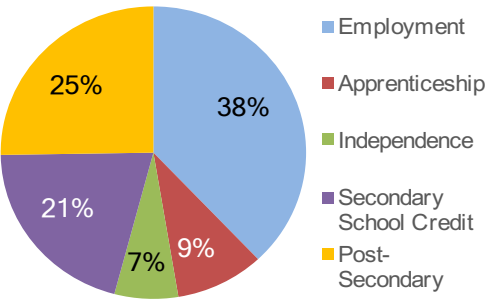
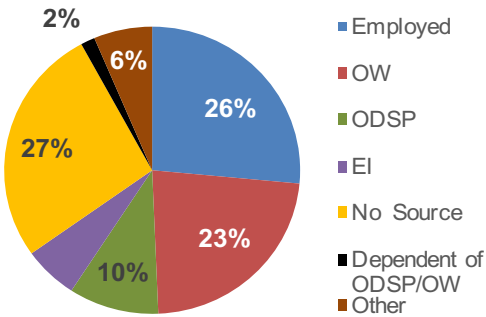
Responsibility” (2016) and the Lifelong Learning and Skills Plan announced in the 2017 budget by helping people develop a strong foundation in literacy, numeracy and other essential skills.

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

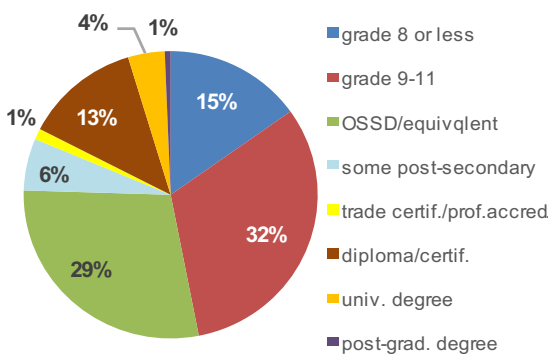
- a develop improved literacy skills
- b obtain a high school diploma or equivalent
- c pursue post-secondary education
- d earn more income over time and manage it effectively
- e increase “soft skills” for further education and employment

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

analysed statistics from 2016-17, the most recent year for which we had full-year stats. In 2016-17, upgrading programs in the SMLN area provided services to 1748 people.

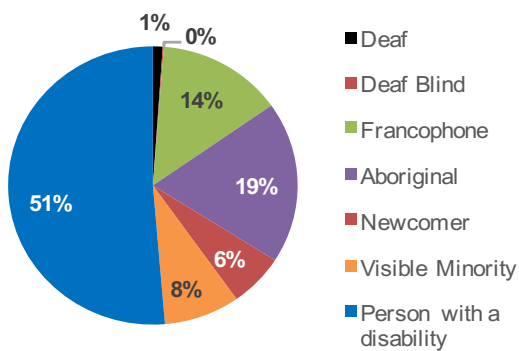
| <p><b>Age of Learners - % of total</b></p>  <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Age Group</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>&lt;18</td> <td>1%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>18-24</td> <td>29%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>25-29</td> <td>15%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>30-44</td> <td>25%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>45-54</td> <td>17%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>55+</td> <td>13%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>   | Age Group        | Percentage | <18        | 1%  | 18-24          | 29% | 25-29        | 15% | 30-44                   | 25% | 45-54          | 17% | 55+  | 13% | <p>Approximately 45% of learners were under the age of 30; the two highest age categories were 18-24 (29%) and 30-44 (25%). 45-64 year-olds made up 27% of learners.</p> |    |   |
|--|------------------|------------|------------|-----|----------------|-----|--------------|-----|-------------------------|-----|----------------|-----|--|-----|--|----|---|
| Age Group  | Percentage       |            |            |     |                |     |              |     |                         |     |                |     |  |     |  |    |   |
| <18  | 1%               |            |            |     |                |     |              |     |                         |     |                |     |  |     |  |    |   |
| 18-24  | 29%              |            |            |     |                |     |              |     |                         |     |                |     |  |     |  |    |   |
| 25-29  | 15%              |            |            |     |                |     |              |     |                         |     |                |     |  |     |  |    |   |
| 30-44  | 25%              |            |            |     |                |     |              |     |                         |     |                |     |  |     |  |    |   |
| 45-54  | 17%              |            |            |     |                |     |              |     |                         |     |                |     |  |     |  |    |   |
| 55+  | 13%              |            |            |     |                |     |              |     |                         |     |                |     |  |     |  |    |   |
| <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>38%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Apprenticeship</td> <td>9%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Independence</td> <td>7%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Secondary School Credit</td> <td>21%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Post-Secondary</td> <td>25%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>  | Goal Path        | Percentage | Employment | 38% | Apprenticeship | 9%  | Independence | 7%  | Secondary School Credit | 21% | Post-Secondary | 25% | <p>Employment was the immediate goal for 38% of learners. Another 46% 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       |            |            |     |                |     |              |     |                         |     |                |     |  |     |  |    |   |
| Employment   | 38%              |            |            |     |                |     |              |     |                         |     |                |     |  |     |  |    |   |
| Apprenticeship   | 9%               |            |            |     |                |     |              |     |                         |     |                |     |  |     |  |    |   |
| Independence   | 7%               |            |            |     |                |     |              |     |                         |     |                |     |  |     |  |    |   |
| Secondary School Credit  | 21%              |            |            |     |                |     |              |     |                         |     |                |     |  |     |  |    |   |
| Post-Secondary   | 25%              |            |            |     |                |     |              |     |                         |     |                |     |  |     |  |    |   |
| <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>Employed</td> <td>26%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>OW</td> <td>23%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>ODSP</td> <td>10%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>EI</td> <td>10%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>No Source</td> <td>27%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Dependent of ODSP/OW</td> <td>2%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Other</td> <td>6%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> | Source of Income | Percentage | Employed   | 26% | OW             | 23% | ODSP         | 10% | EI                      | 10% | No Source      | 27% | Dependent of ODSP/OW   | 2%  | Other  | 6% | <p>About 60% 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 26% 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> |
| Source of Income   | Percentage       |            |            |     |                |     |              |     |                         |     |                |     |  |     |  |    |   |
| Employed   | 26%              |            |            |     |                |     |              |     |                         |     |                |     |  |     |  |    |   |
| OW   | 23%              |            |            |     |                |     |              |     |                         |     |                |     |  |     |  |    |   |
| ODSP   | 10%              |            |            |     |                |     |              |     |                         |     |                |     |  |     |  |    |   |
| EI   | 10%              |            |            |     |                |     |              |     |                         |     |                |     |  |     |  |    |   |
| No Source  | 27%              |            |            |     |                |     |              |     |                         |     |                |     |  |     |  |    |   |
| Dependent of ODSP/OW   | 2%               |            |            |     |                |     |              |     |                         |     |                |     |  |     |  |    |   |
| Other  | 6%               |            |            |     |                |     |              |     |                         |     |                |     |  |     |  |    |   |

**Highest Level of Education - % of total**



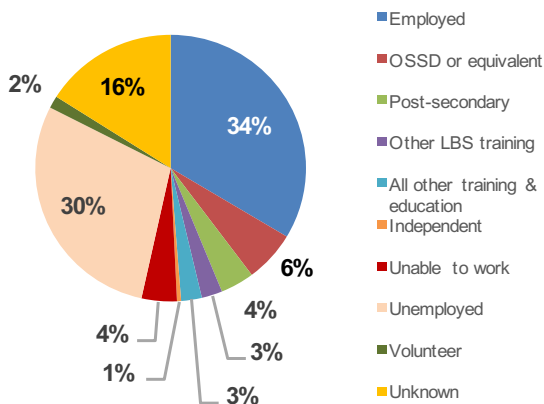
47% of learners had less than a high school education or equivalent. While these people are a main focus for upgrading programs, many others find they need to upgrade various skills they have not had to use in previous jobs or training courses. Another 29% of learners had high school diplomas or equivalent and 13% had a diploma or certificate.

**Client Self-identified - % of total**



Agencies asked learners to self-identify if they were part of the following groups: Indigenous, Deaf, Deaf-Blind, newcomer, Francophone, visible minority and person with a disability. 48% self-identified. Of these, 51% identified as a person with a disability, 19% as Indigenous, and 14% as Francophone.

**Outcomes at Exit - % of total**



LBS providers in Simcoe-Muskoka continue to successfully help learners transition to their next steps. At exit, 33% were employed at exit and 14% were in education/ training. 30% exited unemployed, though many were referred to Employment Services and were conducting job searches.

## Issues and Actions

The LBS 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 the suite of computer/digital technology

training currently available at LBS locations and at Employment Services (ES) locations, if requested. Some training will focus on using computers for job search and job readiness/employability, to attract more clients from Employment Services, Ontario Works (OW), etc. Practitioners will work to further embed digital technology into training, sharing resources and best practices.

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

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.

4. There is growing interest in Employment Ontario (EO) services from local parole and probation offices, and the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU).

LBS providers will build on relationships with both provincial and federal probation and parole offices and SMDHU to enhance access to LBS and ES services. This may include target 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 will partner 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 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 sure where these people fit on the ESL-LBS continuum.

While LBS providers are not funded by the Ministry to provide ESL training, they can refer people to the Simcoe County District School Board's (SCDSB) Welcome Centre and the LINC program at the YMCA in Barrie. In other communities, the SCDSB Learning Centres will run an ESL class if enough people request it. 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.

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

LBS providers plan to work with ES providers to provide information/hands-on workshops around transferable skills to learners and clients – teach them how to determine their transferable skills and articulate them on job applications/résumés.

### **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, for the first time ever, 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.
- 2.** Employers are looking for more soft skills, and less education. Employment Service (ES) Providers have reported that employers are looking to lower-skilled workers, reducing minimums in education to fill entry-level positions. Successful job seekers (and job maintainers) need to have excellent workplace skills as well as computer and communication skills (Essential Skills/OALCF Competencies). Employers say many job seekers lack the soft skills and 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. LBS providers and SMLN will continue to work closely with the Simcoe Muskoka Workforce Development Board (SMWDB) as they update the SSS curriculum and 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 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

Currently, manufacturers and other industries are experiencing difficulty in 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 greater use of on-line applications and screening by both employers and some community services. Job seekers need to have good digital technology skills to job search and apply for work.

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

6. 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.

7. The planned Hydro One technology hub development in Orillia will create a significant number of highly-skilled, knowledge-based jobs; and fibre optics upgrades within the city.

Job seekers will need at least an OSSD or equivalent for most of these jobs. Other workers who need upgrading may be needed to back-fill for people who move into these positions.

We also expect to see a number of new agricultural jobs, specifically for new facilities in the area for growing and processing medical and recreational marijuana.

The LBS programs can provide help upgrading in sciences and related topics for people seeking these 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.



# Simcoe Muskoka Literacy and Basic Skills Providers

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

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