



2026-2027

**BRANT,
HALDIMAND
AND NORFOLK
COUNTY**

**LITERACY
SERVICE
PLAN**

This Literacy Service Plan (LSP) was developed for the Ministry of Immigration, Labour, Training and Skills Development. Literacy Services Plans are completed annually by regional networks and are used to identify the network's catchment area's literacy needs and demand for services based on demographics, labour market information, and local intelligence.

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- Haldimand-Norfolk-London Learning Centres
- Six Nations Polytechnic
- Six Nations Achievement Centre
- Social Services/OW
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2026-2027 Literacy Service Plan Brant, Haldimand and Norfolk Counties

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Section 1: Community and Learner Context

The Brant, Haldimand, Norfolk (BHN) region, like many others, is experiencing significant shifts in the labour force along with demographic changes that affect the demand for Get SET services. Some notable trends include:

1. An increase in people **entering the labour market** in the region (a gain of 7,000 since September 2024), which contrasts with declining participation rates elsewhere.
2. With the increase in participation, the region is also seeing **higher unemployment rates** (9.9%, the highest in Ontario). This is driven more by the increased number of job seekers rather than by a shrinking job market. This situation contributes to competition for entry-level work and an increase in people working multiple jobs to meet their financial needs.
3. Exceptionally high unemployment rates for **youth** aged 18 to 25 (around 23%). Female youth, in particular, are experiencing higher unemployment compared to their male counterparts.
4. **Gender disparity** is demonstrated by older women (55+) are seeing increasing employment, while men in the same age group are experiencing job losses, particularly in sectors impacted by automation and AI.
5. Growth in **healthcare, construction, and manufacturing**, while **service-sector** jobs (such as retail, accommodation, and transportation) are declining.
6. The rise of **AI and automation** is reducing the number of available jobs, particularly in manufacturing and sales/service roles, even as production increases.
7. Employers are **hiring faster** (average hiring timelines dropped from 52 to 17 days), but fewer jobs are posted overall. More hiring is happening through internal networks and the "hidden job market."

“The demand for skilled workers in construction, manufacturing, transportation, and healthcare highlights the need for programs that provide foundational skills, digital literacy, and sector-specific upgrading to prepare learners for entry into these fields.”

Get SET program staff

These trends point to a growing need for Get SET services, particularly in areas like digital literacy, soft skills, workplace communication, and employability skills. Regionally, populations most impacted include:

- **Newcomers:** Many newcomers face challenges like a lack of Canadian experience, non-recognition of credentials, language barriers, and discrimination. The growing newcomer population increases demand for foundational skills, workplace communication, and digital literacy training.

“Demographically, we are seeing a higher proportion of younger learners (18-25) whose education was interrupted by the pandemic, as well as diverse adult learners, including newcomers and individuals returning to education after time in the workforce.”

Get SET program staff

- **Disengaged youth (NEET):** With high unemployment, youth are often disengaged from the labour market due to a lack of skills, experience, and opportunities such as co-op placements. The region’s youth unemployment rate is one of the highest, emphasizing the need for targeted literacy and employment training.

- **Women:** Women, especially younger women, are seeing job losses in sectors traditionally dominated by females (for example, service-sector jobs) and often face challenges when entering high-demand fields like trades and manufacturing.
- **Older Adults:** Older workers, particularly men aged 55+, are impacted by automation and the need to retrain, especially as they face age-related biases in the job market. There is a growing need for upskilling and reskilling programs for older adults to remain competitive.
- **Persons with Disabilities:** Individuals with disabilities face physical accessibility barriers, discrimination, and a lack of tailored training, creating additional barriers to participation in the labour market.

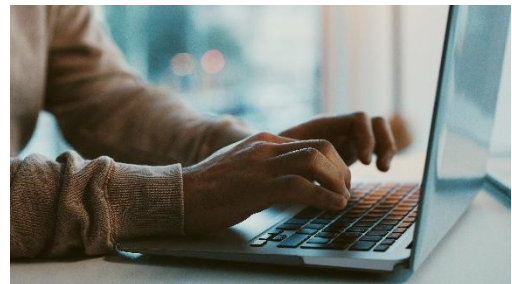
“These labour market and demographic shifts are increasing the demand for Get SET services, especially in programs that build digital, employability, and adaptable skillsets.”

Get SET program staff

These demographic and labour market trends are increasing demand for Get SET services in a variety of ways:



- With high youth unemployment, there is a need for **youth-focused programs** to build essential skills, job-readiness, workplace communication, and digital literacy.
- Workers, especially older adults in sectors affected by automation and AI (i.e. retail, food service, and transportation), need **reskilling** to transition to new roles. This is especially true in manufacturing and service sectors where AI is replacing certain job functions, and there is a need to transition to emerging industries.
- As the **newcomer population** grows, the demand for language, digital, and workplace communication skills training rises, as well as the need for support to navigate the hidden job market.
- Many individuals in low-wage or precarious work face challenges accessing training, particularly in rural areas where program delivery is more limited. There is an increased demand for **flexible, accessible training options**.
- As employers increasingly prioritize digital and communication skills, Get SET programs must adapt to provide foundational **digital literacy** alongside **essential skills** and **sector-specific training**, particularly in healthcare (e.g., PSWs, health support staff), and skilled trades (e.g., construction, manufacturing).
- Additional demand for support for learners seeking to enter the skilled trades through an **apprenticeship**, who are also looking for training for working at heights, first aid, and driving a forklift.



Get SET programs in the region are evolving to meet these demands by:

- Expanding offerings in **digital literacy**, including beginner-level training.
- Integrating foundational literacy with workplace communication and **employability skills**.
- Providing **flexible learning formats** (online, hybrid, modular) to accommodate learners balancing work, family, and caregiving responsibilities.
- Providing support for **newcomers**, especially those with low or intermediate English skills, by connecting them to ESL programs and workplace literacy supports.
- Developing **partnerships with employers** to create more targeted, sector-specific training programs and ensure that learners can transition successfully into employment.

“With employers placing greater emphasis on digital skills, workplace communication, and credentials, gaps in foundational literacy, and digital literacy make job applicants less competitive.”

Get SET program staff

Overall, these labour market and demographic trends highlight the increasing demand for Get SET services to support foundational skill building, digital literacy, adaptability, and sector-specific training to prepare individuals for a changing labour market. It’s noteworthy that FEDCAP, the Service System Manager for the region, also identified many of these gaps and needs during their Literacy Service Planning consultations.

Section 2: Literacy System Capacity and Service Gaps

Current strengths of Get SET service delivery

Get SET programs in the Brant, Haldimand and Norfolk County region demonstrate strong community integration, offer flexible programming, and provide highly supportive learning environments. A major strength is the network of well-established partnerships among EO providers, community organizations, settlement services, Indigenous associations, and workforce planning groups. These connections support client/learner referrals, allow for coordinated wrap-around supports, and demonstrate strong communication between agencies.

Get SET programs in the region are recognized for their flexibility and learner-centered design, offering continuous intake, individualized learning plans, small group and one-to-one instruction, and multiple learning formats (in-person, online, and hybrid). This adaptability helps meet the needs of diverse learners, including adults with work or family commitments, newcomers, youth, individuals on OW/ODSP, and learners with disabilities.

“Get SET service delivery in Brantford is strengthened by strong community connections, responsive programming, and a learner-centered approach. ... Because programs are smaller and community-rooted, learners experience a sense of belonging, encouragement, and safety. This environment helps learners build confidence, reduce isolation, and increase persistence, especially for adults returning to learning after long absences.”

Get SET program staff



Get SET providers also deliver goal-oriented, real-world skills training, integrating essential skills, digital literacy, task-based learning, and employment-focused content aligned with local labour market needs. This includes preparation for in-demand sectors such as healthcare, trades, and manufacturing, as well as reskilling and upskilling opportunities.

The region benefits from experienced, creative instructors and volunteer tutors skilled in adult literacy, ESL, digital skills, workplace literacy, and adaptive teaching strategies. Their ability to support varied learning styles and technology comfort levels contributes to high learner engagement and success.



Get SET programs offer safe, inclusive, community-based environments, including Indigenous-led programming both on and off reserve, that foster belonging, increase learner confidence, and reduce isolation. Brant, Haldimand and Norfolk providers maintain a strong local reputation as trusted community resources that help learners transition to further education, training, or employment.



The focus on digital skill development continues to grow, with a need for computer skills driving attendance at many programs. As a result, Get SET programs are equipping learners across the region with the competencies needed for online applications, modern workplaces, and daily life in the digital world.

Get SET programs are offered across the College, School Board and Community-Based sectors in the region. While all Get SET programs are skilled at supporting learners with a variety of goals, this diversity allows for specialization as well. College-based Get SET programs are, for example, especially well-positioned to support learners pursuing ACE credits or post-secondary pathways, while school board programs ease the transition from upgrading to high school credit, prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR), and achieving an Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD).

Current service delivery gaps

Get SET service delivery in Brant, Haldimand and Norfolk Counties and surrounding rural and Indigenous communities face several persistent gaps related to geography, learner groups, and program capacity.

The most significant barrier is limited access for rural learners, including those in Brant County, Six Nations, and Haldimand-Norfolk. These areas lack public transportation, reliable internet, and nearby program locations, making it difficult for learners to participate in in-person classes. Providers respond with mobile/outreach services, hybrid and online options, and target partnerships to extend reach into underserved areas.

Several learner groups experience unmet needs, including:

- **Youth aged 18 to 25**, especially those not in employment, education or training (NEET), who are unaware of Get SET programming and what it does, or lack motivation to engage.
- **Newcomers and refugees**, who often require intensive language and essential-skills training beyond what Get SET alone can provide, a challenge that is compounded by long waitlists for ESL programs.
- **Learners with complex barriers**, such as mental health challenges, homelessness, trauma, and disabilities.
- **Younger adults on OW**, who may be hesitant to enroll despite the potential benefits.

“Over the past fiscal year, we identified several service delivery gaps, including limited access for learners in rural areas, learners with interrupted education, and those requiring flexible delivery options due to work, family, or other commitments.”

Get SET program staff

Get SET programs are working to address these gaps through strengthened partnerships with settlement agencies, youth programs, social services, EO partners, and Indigenous organizations. Providers are using trauma-informed practices, improving referral pathways, and expanding access to wrap-around supports.

A major challenge is the digital divide: many learners lack devices, connectivity, or confidence to participate in online or hybrid learning. In response, programs offer beginner digital-skills training, access to loaner devices, have computers for use on-site, and provide scaffolded, hands-on technology support.

Scheduling and capacity constraints also limit access—particularly for working adults, parents, and shift workers—due to limited evening or weekend programming. While capacity is tied to funding and staffing, agencies are expanding hybrid options, providing continuous intake, and exploring targeted training schedules.

“There’s a lack of awareness about available Get SET programs - efforts are being made to improve information dissemination and guidance to help service providers, employers, individuals, etc. become aware of, and utilize the Get SET system.”

Get SET program staff

A persistent, system-wide issue is low public awareness of Get SET, including among employers, potential learners, and some community partners. Misunderstanding of Get SET services affects referrals and program utilization. Agencies address this by increasing outreach through partnerships, workforce tables, social media, and awareness campaigns. With the rebranding of Literacy and Basic Skills to Get SET, an investment from MLITSD in marketing for the program, along with increased funding to ensure the program's ability to deliver high-quality service, would be timely.

Additional gaps identified include:

- **Limited employer partnerships**, which restrict access to sector-specific training and smoother transitions to employment.
- **Year-long wait lists** to access ESL programs in Brantford, as outlined during FEDCAP Literacy Service Planning consultations.
- A **lack of local ESL classes** in rural areas requires access to a vehicle and long travel times for newcomers who can get into ESL programs. This drives an increasing number of language learners to Get SET programs.
- The growing number of **newcomers seeking upgrading** raises capacity issues among Get SET programs, compounded by increased demand for digital literacy and skilled trades–aligned programming.

- There is **insufficient funding** to expand programming for newcomers, youth, older adults, and persons with disabilities, or to coordinate better across ES, SDF, and other ministry-funded programs.
- Increased demand for more integrated **digital literacy** within foundational skills training, including financial literacy, time management, and other short-term training programming.

Despite these challenges, providers continue to adapt to support learners and each other.

Duplication or overlap in services



In the Brant, Haldimand and Norfolk region, Get SET agencies work closely with EO partners, settlement agencies, and other community organizations to minimize duplication and ensure that learners are directed to the most appropriate programs. Regular meetings, joint planning, and clear referral pathways help agencies differentiate their services, align their programming, and streamline the

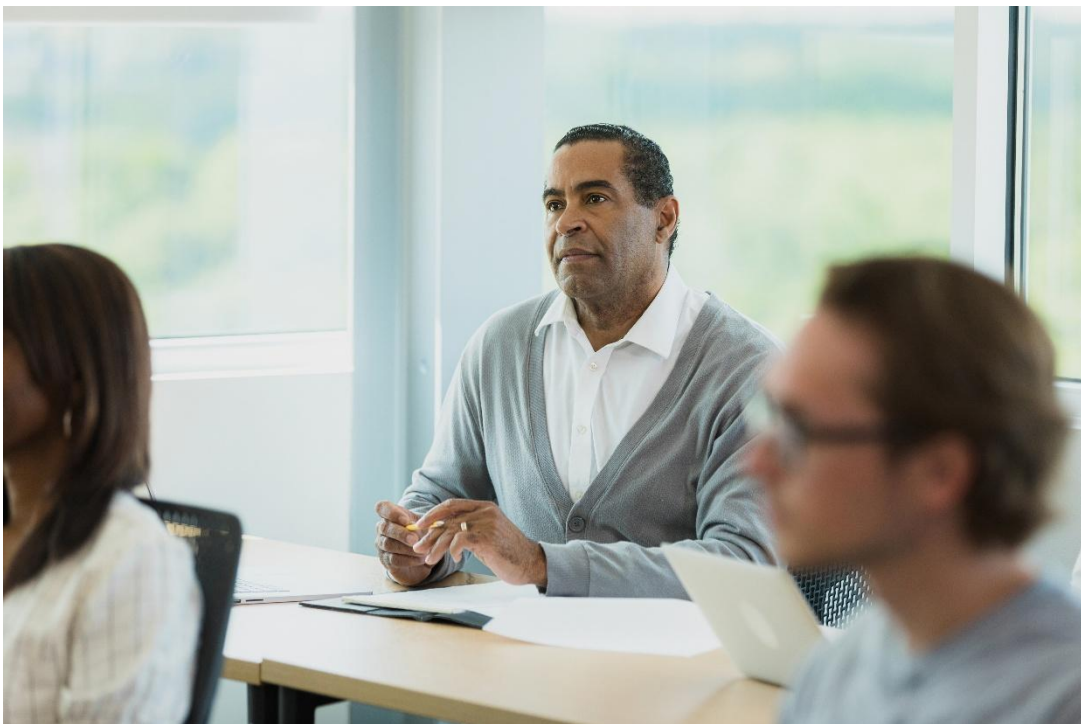
learner/client experience, making duplication rare. Where overlap does occur, it is mitigated through collaboration rather than competition, allowing for effective coordination of service delivery.

However, challenges exist in certain areas. Employability workshops, training, and Skills Development Fund (SDF) programs offered by multiple agencies often lack consistent integration with Get SET. This leads to gaps in learner progression. The lack of mandate for SDF programs to utilize Get SET means that even when they do, the funding and coordination between Get SET and SDF programs are not always aligned. This can result in fragmented delivery, with learners moving between different programs without achieving measurable outcomes, wasting public resources, and contributing to inefficiency.

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Additionally, multiple agencies applying separately for SDF or other funding for similar workforce training programs can lead to duplicated efforts targeting the same learner populations. This fragmentation undermines consistent, longer-term skill development and leads to a host of similar-sounding programs with large marketing budgets competing for clients and confusing learners. A more coordinated, collaborative approach to planning and funding for SDF and other workforce development programs would reduce duplication, maximize the impact of public funds, and ensure that programs complement each other rather than overlapping unnecessarily.

Overall, while there is minimal duplication across Brant, Haldimand, and Norfolk’s Get SET programs, greater coordination and collaboration, particularly in the integration of SDF programs with Get SET, could improve the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery. Increased direction from MLITSD around this kind of collaboration would help reduce overlaps and streamline resources to create clearer, more successful pathways for learners.



Section 3: Learner Profile and Focus



In the Brant, Haldimand and Norfolk region, learners come from a diverse range of backgrounds, life experiences, and circumstances, though they share some common characteristics. Many learners have gaps in education, limited digital skills, have experienced interrupted schooling, or lack confidence.

Other demographic trends of note include:

Age range: The largest number of learners across the region are in the 25 to 44 age group. The biggest change in age groups was in learners over the age of 65 - Brant saw a 54% decrease in learners over 65, while Haldimand/Norfolk saw a 47% increase. Older adults (55+) continue to seek Get SET services in this region, particularly those re-entering the workforce as retirement becomes less of an option financially.

Education level: The largest population of learners served had completed their high school education. Many learners had partially or fully completed post-secondary education, earning a diploma or degree. This is a clear indicator that credentials do not always guarantee someone has the essential skills they need to be successful.

Source of income: The number of employed individuals accessing Get SET programs in the region is growing, with part-time or full-time work as a leading source of learner income, along with OW and “no income.”

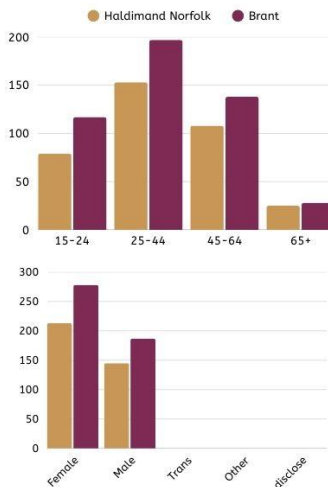
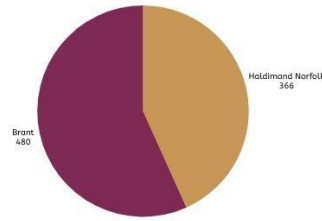
Challenges: Commonly reported challenges among learners include mental health issues, low income, housing instability, and negative prior school experiences.

“The learners accessing our Get SET services in Brantford and Brant County are diverse, reflecting a range of educational backgrounds, ages, abilities, needs, and life experiences. We have noticed that many are seeking to improve skills for employment, followed by apprenticeship, independence, postsecondary, and then secondary (people seeking the CAEC often don't fall under this goal path, but rather under employment, apprenticeship or postsecondary).”

Get SET program staff

1 Overall numbers: How many in-person learners did we serve in this region?

We served 846 learners, representing 1.8% of the learners served in Ontario. 56.7% of those learners were in Brantford/Brant, and 43.3% in Haldimand/Norfolk.



2 What was the age and gender breakdown of our learners?

Trend spotting: Provincially, the greatest percentage of learners served (48%) are 25-44. Locally, it's only 41%.

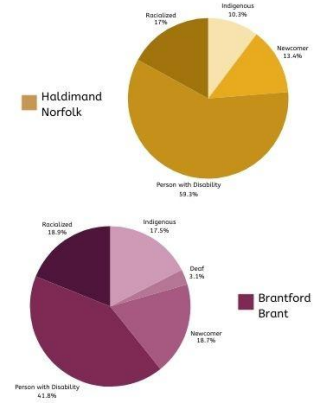
3% of learners in our area were aged 65+, as compared to the provincial average of 5.5%.

A Transgender category was added, with numbers not reflecting any learners in our area at this time. 58% of learners in our area identified as female. Provincially female learners are 60%.

5 How did our learners self-identify?

Trend spotting: 253 learners in Haldimand/Norfolk and 423 learners in Brantford/Brant identified themselves as being part of a designated group.

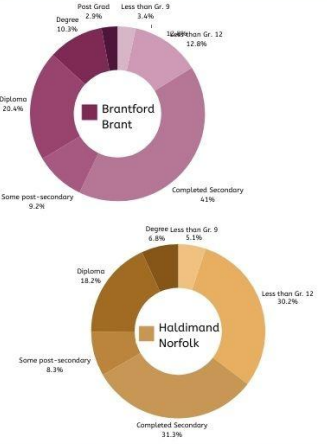
Both Haldimand/Norfolk and Brantford/Brant serve a greater percent of learners who identify as having a disability than the provincial average (29%).



3 What level of education did our learners have?

Trend Spotting: In our area, the largest education group Completed Secondary education. Brantford/Brant (41%) and Haldimand/Norfolk (31.3%) were both higher than the provincial average (27%).

Haldimand/Norfolk didn't serve any learners with a post-graduate education while Brantford/Brant served 14 (2.9% of their learners). Compared to 4% provincially.



7 Who referred learners to us?

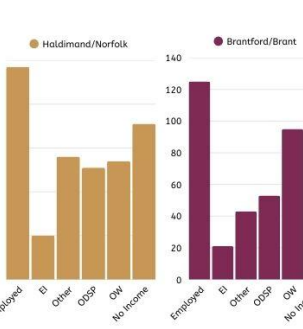
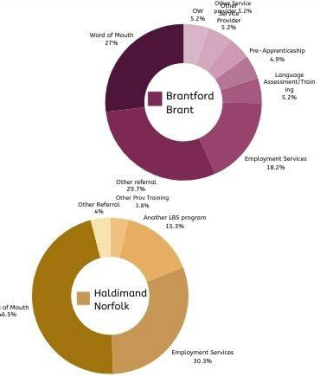
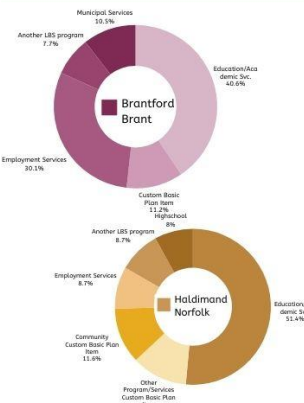
Trend spotting: More referrals were received from other LBS programs in Haldimand/Norfolk (53) than Brantford/Brant (21) despite Haldimand/Norfolk serving fewer learners overall.

There were not enough referrals to LBS from OW in Haldimand/Norfolk to be counted in CMSM data.

6 What goal paths were our learners on?

Trend spotting: The largest goal path in Haldimand/Norfolk is Postsecondary (44%), higher than Brantford/Brant (26%) and Provincially (34%).

Employment is the largest goal path in Brantford/Brant (44%), higher than provincially (34%).



4 What was the employment status of our learners?

Trend spotting: The highest employment in our area is Employed (26%), slightly below provincial (30%). Other relevant employment areas were no source of income (19%) Haldimand/Norfolk and (26%) Brantford/Brant.

Unemployment levels are higher (67%) Brantford/Brant (64%) Haldimand/Norfolk, than (60%) provincial levels.

8 Who did we refer learners to?

Trend spotting: The percentage of learners referred out to Employment Services in Brantford/Brant (9%) exceeds the provincial average (5%).

Haldimand/Norfolk increased referrals out to 138. The largest referrals was to Educational/Academic Services (19%), exceeding the provincial average (13%).

Several factors driving learners to Get SET programs in the region include:

- Learners aiming for a career in the skilled trades, not having completed high school and with limited employment history
- Learners focused on postsecondary education, with many needing to obtain specific high school credits or skills before they can be accepted into programs
- Older adults seeking to re-enter the workforce after retirement or upskill for part-time work, needing to upgrade digital skills.
- A growing number of newcomers looking to improve their English language skills and integrate into the local workforce

“We have seen an increase in learners with interrupted education, diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and a greater need for wrap-around supports such as mental health and wellbeing strategies. To respond, we have strengthened our trauma-informed and learner-centered approaches, incorporated more flexible delivery models (including online, hybrid, and continuous intake options), and embedded employability and digital literacy skills alongside core upgrading.”

Get SET program staff

While Get SET services are reaching a broad range of learners, there are still several populations who remain underrepresented or harder to reach, including:



- People living in **rural or remote** areas, who face transportation challenges and limited access to services.
- **Disengaged and unemployed youth**, particularly those not connected to school or employment programs (NEET).
- **Low-German-Speaking Mennonites**, a local community with limited English reading and writing skills, often homeschooled and hesitant to connect with government programs.
- **Newcomers** who have higher CLB levels but still require "language + essential skills" support for workplace integration.

- Individuals experiencing **housing instability** or complex mental health needs, requiring more flexible and wrap-around support.
- **Employees** in industries like retail, food service, and transportation, who may need retraining but are unaware of Get SET pathways.
- **Adults balancing work, family, or caregiving responsibilities** and who require more extensive evening, weekend, or flexible learning options.



To meet the diverse needs of learners, Get SET programs in the region offer flexibility through a combination of one-on-one sessions, small group instruction, hybrid, and online learning options to accommodate varying schedules, learning paces, and personal circumstances (such as work and childcare).

Recognizing the diverse challenges learners face, including past educational disruptions or mental health concerns, Get SET programs offer a trauma-informed and learner-centered approach. They emphasize building confidence and reducing anxiety, which is supported by offering smaller class sizes and individualized support. The personalized support offered to learners of all kinds is especially impactful for learners with special needs, including those with learning differences, newcomers, and older adults. Programs have also strengthened partnerships with community services, settlement agencies, and EO to ensure learners receive the support they need to be successful.

Programs also actively respond to emerging trends, such as the discontinuation of the GED, by shifting focus to high school equivalency pathways like the CAEC and ACE. There has also been a growing demand for specific academic upgrading to meet college entry requirements. As technology becomes more critical both at home and work, they have expanded digital literacy programming across all goal paths, from beginner to advanced.

“Following the announcement of the discontinuation of the GED, we observed a temporary increase in interest in GED test preparation. Once the GED was officially retired, enrollment shifted toward our Academic and Career Entrance (ACE) courses. With the introduction of the new Canadian Adult Education Credential (CAEC), our staff now provide learners with comprehensive guidance on the various pathways to achieving high school equivalency.”

Get SET program staff

Get SET programs regularly receive Labour Market Information (LMI) from the Grand Erie Workforce Planning and Development Board, allowing them to closely align programming with local labour market trends, focusing on sectors such as healthcare, manufacturing, and trades. They offer short, goal-focused modules and employment-linked learning to help learners quickly transition into the workforce.



Despite these efforts, several challenges persist:

- Limited funding, which has not kept pace with inflation, restricts the ability to expand services or maintain individualized support.
- Growing demand for Get SET services from diverse groups, including youth, seniors, and newcomers. While adaptations have been made, sustained funding and resources are essential to meet the needs of these learners.

“Although Get SET is supporting diverse groups, several populations remain underrepresented or harder to reach, including:

- Disengaged and unemployed youth, particularly those not connected to school or employment programs*
- Newcomers with higher CLB levels, but still needing "language + essential skills" support*
- Rural and county residents, who face transportation and access barriers*
- Precariously housed individuals or adults with complex mental health needs, who require more wrap-around and flexible supports than traditional programming offers*
- Workers in declining sectors (retail, food service, transportation) who may need retraining but are unaware of LBS pathways*
- Working adults with caregiving responsibilities, who need evening, weekend, or flexible modular learning options*

These groups would benefit from Get SET but require more outreach, flexible formats, and targeted partnerships to engage effectively.”

Get SET program staff

Section 4: Collaboration and Coordination

In the past year, Get SET providers in Brant, Haldimand and Norfolk Counties have actively engaged in various coordination activities aimed at enhancing service delivery, improving access for learners, and reducing duplication of services.

Key collaborations include:

- Get SET providers met with local EO partners, including IES, and other community organizations to align programming with local labour market needs. These sessions helped ensure services were relevant and responded to community needs.
- Program staff organized and participated in shared events such as career fairs and workshops. These events aimed to raise awareness of local training opportunities and connect learners with resources and employers.
- Locally, discussions continue regarding the referral pathways between Get SET programs, employment services, settlement agencies, and youth programs. Learners and clients are increasingly being connected with the most appropriate support for their needs.
- Programs participated in workforce planning tables and provincial community of practice meetings, sharing information and discussing emerging labour market trends. This helped strengthen connections between service providers and ensured learners had access to relevant labour market information.



- Get SET staff took part in various community initiatives, such as Francophonie Day, Open House events for Francophone schools, and "Lunch and Learn" sessions with community partners. These efforts helped share information about Get SET services and provided opportunities to improve collaboration.

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“Over the past year, Get SET service providers in Brantford have actively collaborated with SSMs, Employment Ontario partners, and community organizations to improve access and reduce duplication. These activities have strengthened connections between organizations, making it easier for learners to navigate services and access opportunities.”

Get SET program staff

- Partnerships with public libraries and community hubs expanded access to learning spaces and to technology for digital literacy initiatives.
- Relationships built with community organizations, housing initiatives, women's shelters, health teams, and addiction and mental health services helped facilitate access to wrap-around services critical to have in place so people can learn.
- Additional partners include OW, ODSP, immigrant and settlement services, and local employers.
- Get SET providers work with local school boards and youth programs to facilitate transitions from secondary education to adult programs, employment, or postsecondary training. This is especially important for youth at risk of disengagement.
- Collaborative efforts have been made with Six Nations Polytechnic, Six Nations and New Credit Ontario Works to provide services to Indigenous communities in the region.
- Partnerships with settlement agencies help provide support to newcomers, such as language training and orientation services, and play a key role in helping newcomers access Get SET services.
- Partnerships with postsecondary institutions like Conestoga College and apprenticeship programs ensure learners connect with relevant training and education for their goals. Get SET providers also work closely with local employment centers to ensure learners receive integrated support.



The coordinated efforts of area Get SET providers have led to several positive outcomes:

- Streamlined referral systems and joint programming have made for better access to services and easier to navigate resources to connect learners with appropriate support.
- Coordination efforts have led to better outcomes, with more participants successfully entering employment, apprenticeship programs, or further education.
- An increase in awareness of Get SET programs, particularly among youth, newcomers, and community partners, has resulted in higher engagement and participation in programs.
- By aligning programs and partner expertise, there has been reduced duplication in services such as digital literacy, employment preparation, and foundational skills training, allowing resources to be used more efficiently.

“We have established a partnership with the Norfolk Community Help Centre to engage the low-German-speaking Mennonite population. During the previous year’s Skills for Success program, we were able to further promote our program and build trust with a population that can be cautious about government programs. Participants who developed digital skills through the program are now aware that they can refer family members to Get SET.”

Get SET program staff

- Collaboration has strengthened relationships with local employers, ensuring Get SET programming aligns with labor market needs. This prepares learners for in-demand sectors such as healthcare, trades, and manufacturing.



- Partnerships with community organizations, libraries, and employment services have expanded the reach of Get SET services, helping more underserved populations get access to upgrading.

Section 5: Priorities and Strategic Planning

The following are the top priorities for Get SET service providers in Brant, Haldimand and Norfolk for the upcoming year:

Expanding Outreach and Increasing Program Capacity

Get SET programs in the region hope to expand their outreach to underserved populations, particularly those with high needs. The focus would be on the following groups:

- **Newcomers:** Ensuring that immigrant populations have access to the necessary language and literacy support to integrate into the workforce or pursue further education.
- **Rural Residents:** Addressing the barriers faced by individuals in rural areas, such as transportation and unreliable (or non-existent) internet access, by expanding access to services in these regions.
- **NEET Youth:** Re-engaging youth who are not currently involved in school or employment by offering supportive and flexible learning options.
- **Adults with Disabilities:** Tailoring services to meet the unique needs of adults with disabilities, ensuring they receive accessible, individualized instruction.

With sufficient funding, Brant Haldimand and Norfolk service providers would:

- **Increase program capacity** to serve these populations.
- Enhance **flexible delivery options**, such as online, hybrid, and continuous intake models, to better accommodate the varying circumstances and needs of learners.

Strengthening Service Coordination and Partnerships

Programs would prioritize deepening existing partnerships and improving coordination across service providers to streamline the learner journey. This includes:

- **Strengthening referral networks:** Building stronger connections with EO partners, settlement agencies, community organizations, libraries, social service providers, and other relevant interest-holders.
- **Reducing service duplication:** Improving communication between agencies to ensure that learners can easily access the services they need without encountering redundant processes.
- **Cross-agency collaboration:** Continuing to work with community centers, local employers, schools, and other educational institutions to provide seamless pathways for learners transitioning into employment or postsecondary education.

These efforts will focus on better supporting learners' navigation through adult literacy, training, and employment programs, ensuring they have access to all supports available.

Enhancing Learner-Centered Programming

Adapting programming to the evolving needs of learners is a priority for the coming year. Key areas of focus will include:

- **Expanding trauma-informed practices:** Many learners face personal barriers, including mental health challenges or past traumatic experiences. Get SET programs will continue to expand their trauma-informed approaches to create a supportive, safe, and responsive learning environment.
- **Embedding digital and employability skills:** In line with labor market trends, there will be a continued focus on equipping learners with essential digital skills and enhancing their employability through practical, workplace-focused training.
- **Flexible delivery models:** Adapting to learners' circumstances, programs will offer additional flexible learning options, such as online and hybrid models, along with continuous intake to ensure learners can access programming when it suits them.

These steps will welcome learners, inviting them to engage with Get SET programs in a manner that aligns with their personal goals and learning preferences.

Fostering Stronger Community Partnerships

Get SET programs recognize the importance of ongoing collaboration with local community organizations and key partners. In the coming year, priority will be given to:

- **Strengthening partnerships** with organizations like Six Nations Polytechnic, OW, and the Norfolk Community Help Centre to reach more learners and provide holistic support.
- **Collaboration** with Power of Possible (POP) Workshops: These workshops, offered through EO, provide an opportunity to connect learners who may have additional learning needs with relevant Get SET services. Strengthening this connection will ensure that eligible learners are properly referred and supported throughout their journey.

Additionally, Get SET providers plan to continue ties with local libraries, social services, and employers to enhance opportunities for learners and create a network of support.

Community Outreach & Awareness

A crucial component of the Brant, Haldimand and Norfolk strategy for the coming year will be targeted marketing to increase awareness of Get SET services and engage potential learners:

- **Sharing success stories** from past learners to demonstrate the impact of Get SET services and attract new participants
- **Highlighting pathways** to employment and postsecondary education as part of the Get SET offerings, helping learners see clear, achievable goals
- **Collaborating** with local businesses and community organizations to promote Get SET programs and attract a diverse range of learners



These efforts, supported through a hoped-for increase in funding for Get SET programs, will help ensure that more individuals are aware of and take advantage of the support available from Get SET upgrading programs.

Local Planning

Brant, Haldimand and Norfolk Get SET providers will focus on several key strategies over the coming year:

1. Expanding flexible learning options

To accommodate the diverse needs of working adults, caregivers, and rural learners, Get SET providers will continue to offer, and when possible, expand hybrid learning options. This allows learners to balance their educational goals with work and family responsibilities. Additionally, modular courses will be introduced, enabling learners to access smaller, targeted learning opportunities that fit their schedules and don't leave them with the uncertainty of not knowing how long they might be in a Get SET program.

2. Targeting outreach to underserved populations

To engage populations that are currently underrepresented, Get SET programs will collaborate with youth programs, settlement agencies, and community organizations. This will help identify and reach learners who may otherwise not be aware of available literacy services.

3. Enhancing access to wrap-around support

Recognizing that some learners face barriers to participating in courses due to a lack of technology or transportation, Get SET providers will continue to seek affordable solutions for these challenges. This could involve providing devices or digital support to learners, as well as transportation assistance to ensure they can attend classes (funding dependent).

Get SET programs do not always have the resources or capacity to fully support learners with multiple barriers, such as mental health challenges or childcare needs. To ensure those needs are addressed, learners will be referred to community services to ensure they have access to the wrap-around supports necessary for success.

“We continue to seek affordable transportation and internet solutions for our learners. Additionally, we provide bridging between programs to ensure there is support and sometimes to provide a stable internet connection and digital support for those progressing to their next steps.”

Get SET program staff

4. Aligning Get SET with the local labour market

“We local workforce data to adapt curriculum and offer sector-specific pathways and skill-building opportunities.”

Get SET program staff

To ensure programs reflect local workforce needs, Get SET programs will expand their partnerships with local businesses and the Grand Erie Workforce Planning Board, allowing them access to local labour market data that can be used to tailor their curriculum to the demands of the local labour market. This alignment will help ensure that learners gain information about and skills relevant to the sectors and industries most in demand in the region. If supported by LMI, sector-specific training in key fields such as healthcare, trades, and manufacturing can be developed. That type of training, especially if it's short-term, is appealing to potential learners who want to prepare for employment in those sectors.

5. Providing individualized learning support

Each Get SET learner will continue to have an individualized learning plan that is tailored to their specific needs and goals. This personalized approach ensures that learners receive the support they need to succeed, whether they are preparing for further education or training, employment, or independence. Programs will also integrate trauma-informed practices, ensuring that learners feel safe, supported, and respected throughout their educational journey.



6. Expanding delivery locations

To improve access for learners who may face transportation or other barriers, Get SET providers will continue to deliver programs at partner locations across Brant, Haldimand and Norfolk Counties. This will make it easier for learners to access services closer to home, reducing the logistical challenges of travelling to sometimes distant central locations.

7. Increasing recognition of Get SET programming

“Funding for Get SET programs has largely remained status quo and has not kept pace with inflation, placing limits on capacity and program growth. With additional funding, expansions would increase program reach, reduce barriers, and improve learner outcomes, ensuring that Get SET services in Brantford-Brant are sustainable, responsive, inclusive, and aligned with local labour market demands.”

Get SET program staff

To increase program visibility and attract new learners, Get SET providers will use free social media platforms and, recognizing that not all potential learners are active social media users, will investigate other avenues of advertising.

With the rebranding of Literacy and Basic Skills to Get SET, now is the ideal time for an MLITSD investment in marketing for the Get SET system. With funding, targeted marketing campaigns can be designed to engage the community and raise awareness about Get SET upgrading services, ensuring that more people are informed about the value of these programs and how they can help people meet their goals.

Local Innovations

Despite the financial challenges increasingly impacting Get SET service providers, they continuously update and enhance their services to meet the needs of learners. In the upcoming year, they will introduce several changes to increase accessibility, enhance learner engagement, and align programming with emerging trends in education and the workforce.

Get SET providers will expand the use of **hybrid learning models**, combining in-person instruction with online modules both of their own design (when available) and as provided through eChannel. This will allow learners to balance their education with other responsibilities such as work, family, or transportation constraints.

To accommodate learners with varying schedules, several Get SET providers will offer **flexible learning** options, including morning, afternoon, and evening classes. This flexibility ensures that learners can access upgrading at times that suit their personal and professional commitments.

A new focus will be placed on reaching **youth in or from extended society care** (ex. Crown Wards “aging out” of the foster care system) and learners with **interrupted education**.

This outreach will include **developing relationships** with new organizations, including those offering mental health supports, establishing clear referral pathways with community partners, and incorporating additional **trauma-informed supports** to help these learners transition through long-term, deeply impacting trauma so they can succeed in their educational journey.

College-based Get SET staff will develop learner-facing **pathway maps** to help students understand the progression from Academic Upgrading into college diploma programs and other postsecondary opportunities. These pathway maps will provide a clear, visual guide for learners to see the steps they need to take to achieve their educational and career goals.

Programs will also offer **digital skills workshops** and resources and create opportunities for learners to practice retail skills using POS systems and other industry-specific tools.

Get SET programs in the region will continue to use learner feedback and outcome data to **refine** their curriculum, teaching methods, and support services. Regular monitoring and feedback loops will ensure that programming remains relevant and effective.

Targeted marketing strategies will be implemented to raise awareness of Get SET programs and services. This includes testimonials, case studies, and outreach to local community centers, businesses, and employment agencies. The aim is to increase engagement with underrepresented groups, particularly youth, newcomers, and adults with interrupted education. Partnerships with local businesses and community organizations will also be expanded with the goal of Get SET services becoming more widely known and accessible to those who need them most.

To maintain high-quality programming, programs will invest in **staff development** and **updated curriculum resources**. Technology is continually evolving, and with funding for resource development, Get SET curriculum can evolve along with it. Continuous staff training, again, should funding be available, will ensure that Get SET educators are equipped with the skills and knowledge they need to meet evolving learner needs, including the trauma-informed practices needed by so many learners in Get SET programs.

By implementing these changes, Get SET providers aim to offer more accessible, flexible, and relevant programs to meet the evolving needs of learners in Brant, Haldimand and Norfolk.

Potential stabilization and growth

If additional funding were available, Get SET providers across Brant, Haldimand and Norfolk Counties would expand capacity, improve access to their programs, and strengthen supports for underserved learners.



A top priority is **increasing staffing**. Having faced increasing costs due to inflation without an increase in core funding for so many years, hiring more instructors and support personnel is a key priority. This will help to reduce waitlists, enhance one-to-one and small-group instruction, and allow programs to serve a larger and more diverse learner base.

Additional funding resources would also allow programs to **extend service hours**, as many have cut back their hours or days of delivery. A financial investment would allow them to offer more flexible delivery options, including expanded evening, weekend, hybrid, and online learning.

Many agencies would **invest in technology** by providing devices, software, and digital learning tools to support learners who lack access, as well as maintaining or expanding equipment such as Purchase of Service (POS) systems used in sector-specific training. Improving internet access and digital support for rural and low-income learners would also be possible.



Expanded funding would strengthen **outreach** efforts, particularly to underserved groups such as youth, newcomers, rural residents, adults with interrupted education, and individuals facing complex barriers. This could include targeted marketing, rural itinerant sites, partnerships with Indigenous communities, and service delivery in additional community locations. Introductory computer courses could be offered in high-need neighbourhoods or other non-program settings.

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Get SET programs also identify opportunities to **develop specialized programming** aligned with high-demand employment sectors—such as health care, the skilled trades, and manufacturing. Workforce-integrated literacy modules could be developed with input from local employers, ensuring they met their employment requirements. Enhanced collaboration with

employment, mental health and addiction support, settlement, housing, and social service partners could be greatly enhanced with dedicated staff able to coordinate wrap-around supports and help learners navigate access to help more effectively.

Some agencies would expand their **culturally grounded** or **community-specific programming**, including our local Indigenous-led Get SET program. An investment in core funding would help eliminate barriers caused by limited access to culturally relevant programming and resources.

With increased funding, organizations could develop more up-to-date and relevant learner-facing **resources**, including clear pathway maps from Get SET into next-step goals like high school completion, college, apprenticeship, and employment.

Overall, additional investment would allow Get SET service providers in Brant, Haldimand and Norfolk Counties to grow their reach, modernize and expand their delivery, reduce barriers, and improve outcomes for all learners.

Section 6: Reflections and Evaluation

This year, the community began a slow return to in-person literacy service planning meetings – something that hasn’t happened since the pandemic. While online meetings cut down on travel (and considerable risk during the winter months), and the time saved is valuable, the benefits of meeting face-to-face are recognized. Conversation is more natural; it’s easier for participants to share their perspectives, and deeper connections can be made. We anticipate several in-person meetings in the year ahead.

A consistent theme during this year’s literacy service planning discussions was the importance of adaptability. Get SET service providers discussed how learner needs, technology expectations, and community conditions continue to shift rapidly, making flexible delivery and responsive programming essential. Collaboration emerged as a major strength, with agencies noting that shared planning, communication, and referral pathways significantly increase their reach and reduce duplication compared to working in isolation.

“Overall, the Literacy Service Planning and Coordination process has reinforced the importance of collaboration, flexibility, and continuous improvement. By addressing funding limitations, expanding outreach, including Get SET in community projects / initiatives such as SDFs, and building on successful innovations, Get SET programs can further enhance the impact of literacy services in our communities.”

Get SET program staff

The process of literacy service planning also underscored persistent funding limitations and inequities, particularly the disparity between community-based, school board, and college-based Get SET allocations. Stagnant funding that has not kept pace with inflation makes it challenging to maintain individualized instruction and has been demoralizing to many Get SET teams. Expanding outreach or scaling services to underserved groups is impossible without adequate funding, leaving program staff frustrated and many individuals who would benefit from Get SET programming stuck in a cycle of poverty. The demand for Get SET programming is only expected to grow in the years ahead, as we see increased needs among young adults affected by pandemic-era learning disruptions, rising demands for digital literacy upgrading, and greater requirements for “slow and steady” programming that allows learners to also access wrap-around supports such as mental health resources, transportation, and stable housing.

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Programs identified the value of developing clearer and more consistent referral pathways among Get SET, Employment Services, Better Jobs Ontario, and Academic Upgrading through service coordination, as well as the usefulness of more intentional data sharing at literacy service planning meetings, which helps to guide their decision-making.

The recognition of different programs offering different delivery models, combining in-person, hybrid, and online, was discussed as essential, as no single format meets all learner preferences. The process also highlighted the growing importance of digital skill development, including emerging needs related to AI, and confirmed strong demand for math refresher programming, especially for learners preparing for or entering the skilled trades. Some programs also saw particular success with targeted training, such as math refresher courses for tradespeople.

What worked well this year included regular communication among service providers, shared learning across different programs, and effective coordination in regions with well-established, trusted networks. Collaboration in Norfolk County was noted as especially strong, allowing programs to maximize limited resources while still meeting community needs.



Areas for improvement were identified as a need for further service coordination, to grow the network of community partners, and to improve access to up-to-date digital learning resources - especially those integrating AI.

Participants in literacy service planning also noted structural challenges with planning timelines: the overlap between Workforce Planning Board Annual Reports, regional Literacy Service Plans and Get SET service provider business plans sometimes results in duplicated work or misaligned timing. Some suggest finalizing business plans before the regional Literacy Service Plan is developed to ensure consistency.



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Overall, the literacy service planning and process reinforced that effective Get SET service delivery depends on collaboration, flexibility, adequate funding, and ongoing responsiveness to learner needs. The Get SET programs in this region are truly a collaborative entity working together to support residents in their communities. Service providers agreed that with more resources, they could strengthen outreach, expand programming, enhance digital capacity, and better support learners across the Brant, Haldimand, and Norfolk County region.

If you have any questions about this Literacy Service Plan, please contact Literacy Link South Central at literacylink@llsc.on.ca or 519-681-7307.