

Ontario Job Creation Partnership Program

Final Report

September 2026

The purpose of this Ontario Job Creation Partnership project is to enhance the accessibility and effectiveness of the Local Food Skills Program by addressing the increasing emotional, social and physical barriers faced by participants.

The Local Food Skills Program is a 2-week employment readiness training program, designed to help participants obtain industry relevant certifications and deliver practical experience in a commercial kitchen.

The Local Food Skills curriculum is a combination of fixed kitchen assignments and ever-changing culinary curriculum (based on the release of new monthly Larder menus and tailoring to student interest/ability). Due to this flexibility, the learning modules developed are designed to reform the accessibility of our fixed curriculum. The fixed curriculum is equivalent to common skills and duties needed to work in most professional kitchen environments, such as opening and closing duties, recipe literacy, and knife skills.

Our aim with the developed modules is to provide materials to assist culinary educators as they train individuals with increased barriers.

Approach

We started this project by defining what success in the Local Food Skills program entails. Using previous experience we identified 6 common barriers to success. From this information, we developed a *Learning Outcome Report* to record any incidents where barriers may have impacted a participant's learning, and the *LFS Profile Template*, to keep track of information relevant to each participant.

The *Learning Outcome Report* was later streamlined into an updated *LFS Profile Template*, to consolidate information about participants. After each run of the Local Food Skills Program, we developed a *Monthly Barriers Report* to summarize the barriers encountered and solutions used.

Intake

We developed and implemented an *Intake Self-Reflection* form to screen for barriers early in the program. In previous runs of this program, we would encounter and identify barriers after the participants start kitchen training, which did not allow much time for developing solutions and resources. The *Intake Self-Reflection* form provided a confidential channel for participants to communicate about skills they struggle with, and allowed for earlier implementation of solutions.

The *Exit Self-Reflection* form was developed to understand the participant's self-assessment of their success in overcoming barriers. It provided an opportunity to reflect on their improvement, and offer suggestions for the program.

Through the various iterations of the *Intake Self-Reflection* and *Exit Self-Reflection* forms, we focused on developing questions specific to OJCP goals and understanding barriers.

Barriers in the Kitchen

We measure success in the LFS Kitchen by recipe literacy, employable behaviour and a job readiness attitude. *Recipe Literacy* is the ability to comprehend various recipes, calculate scale adjustments and prepare products successfully. *Employable Behaviour* is the ability to understand directions, being punctual, organized, and execute expected tasks in a timely manner. *Job Readiness Attitude* is the ability to be coachable, work effectively with classmates, seek clarification when needed, and work independently.

We teach these skills by demonstrating how to read, measure, and execute multiple recipes, while maintaining a commercial kitchen. Participants interact with audio and written instructions, aided by demonstrations and coaching from instructors. Through individual work, participants practice culinary techniques, time management, organization and multitasking responsibilities. Instructors are able to assess recipe comprehension and offer assistance.

During groupwork, participants are able to practice collaboration and effective communication. Kitchen maintenance offers opportunities for delegation amongst peers and personal responsibility. Tasks are first demonstrated by an instructor, then participants are expected to complete tasks as a group, independent from instructor's aid.

Figure 1. LFS Success Markers describes the skills we commonly see Local Food Skills participants struggle with. This chart was streamlined into the *LFS Profiles Template* along with the *Learning Outcome Report*. Barriers often prevent participants from successfully developing or practicing one or more of these skills.

With the *Intake Form* to recognize barriers earlier, and modules outlining support strategies, we were able to more effectively bridge the gap between the needs of participants and LFS success markers.

LFS Success Markers
Attention Span
Understanding of Audio Instructions
Literacy (Written Instructions/Recipes)
Math Skills
Coachability (redirection and responsive to constructive criticism)
Organization (Mise en Place)
Organization (Papers)
Communication (Peers)
Communication (Instructors)
Punctuality

Figure 1.

Modules

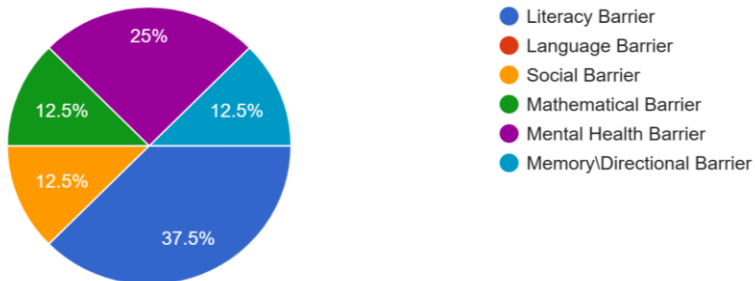
The modules were created with the intention to specifically recognize barriers in a training kitchen environment, even if not disclosed. Often participants are unaware or unable to communicate about their experience with barriers, or their struggles were only recognized later into the program, not allowing for enough time to effectively implement solutions. The modules

offer an array of support strategies for various kitchen tasks, with specific approach techniques for instructors.

We initially developed the learning modules based on previous experience with participants in the LFS Program. During the OJCP, we redeveloped each module with the new support techniques and solutions that were used in each run of the Local Food Skills program.

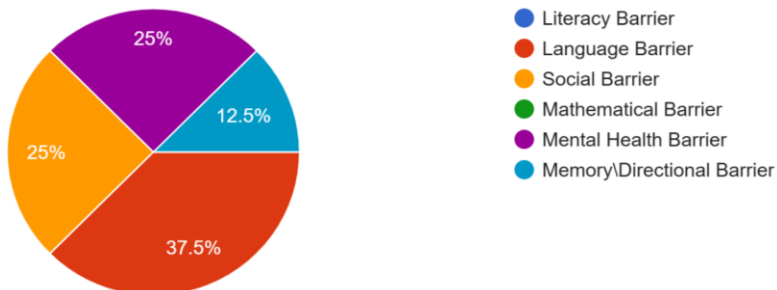
Please indicate the top 3 most prevalent barriers you have observed.

8 responses



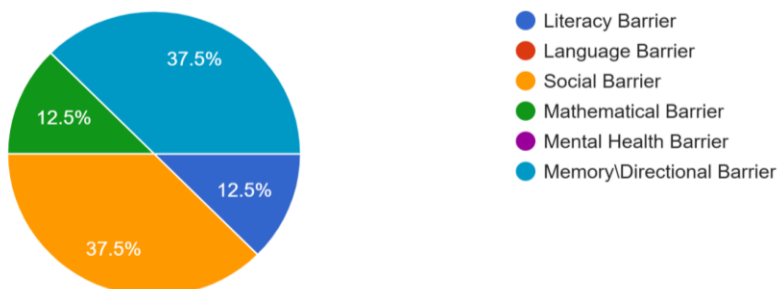
Second Most Prevalent

8 responses



Third Most Prevalent

8 responses



the challenges and noticeable barriers students face.

The creation of *Working with ADHD* and *Working with Autism* modules were a direct response to the barriers participants faced. Research into identified barriers aided in the creation of support techniques, improvement of LFS accessibility and redevelopment of the modules.

Culinary Barriers Survey

To better understand the overall trend of barriers in culinary education, we created an online survey, and distributed it to culinary educators across institutions in southwestern Ontario.

Some of these institutions include Fanshawe College, Stratford Chef School, George Brown Polytechnic, and Growing Chefs Ontario.

Despite each institution's differences in curriculum and targeted demographic; the insight from educators was invaluable to understanding

From the data collected, literacy, language, memory and social barriers are the most evident. With this knowledge, it's our hope that funding and projects such as this OJCP will continue to research and develop support strategies to address these barriers.

Conclusion

Through the completion of this OJCP we were able to effectively identify barriers, develop and implement modules and improve the accessibility of the Local Food Skills Program.

In reflection, the implementation of the *Intake Self Reflection* form was very constructive to identifying barriers earlier in the Local Food Skills Program, along with tracking progress in *LFS Profiles*. Collaboration between instructor and participants to tackle barriers was most successful when a sense of trust developed and solutions were implemented early, to allow time for trial and error analysis.

Looking forward, continuing research into barriers will improve the accessibility of culinary education offered through the Local Food Skills Program. Training for instructors to learn how to work with highly barriered participants may also be advantageous going forward.

It is our hope that these modules developed through this OJCP will be of immediate value to employers and the culinary educator community; assisting them to identify barriers and modify curriculum and training, to see more success with students and employees.

