Health and Safety Excellence program

Program guidelines | July 2023

wsib ONTARIO | Health and Safety Excellence program

Table of Contents

Introduction

Thank you for joining the Health and Safety Excellence program – you've taken an important step toward a healthier and safer workplace. Together, we're on a journey to make Ontario the safest place to work.

Now that you've joined, you may have questions about how the program works. We recommend that you read this guide before you begin the program as it includes tips and information to help you:

- understand key program terms and requirements
- set up your profile in the digital tool
- learn where to go for additional support

We recommend you connect with your provider to learn more about accessing our digital tool, which contains helpful program guides, FAQs and practical examples to support your health and safety journey. Many of these resources are also linked at the end of this guide.

To assist you with navigating this guide, we have included a clickable table of contents and a **return to table of contents** button at the bottom of every page. Please contact us at healthandsafetyexcellence@wsib.on.ca if you have any suggestions about how to improve this guide.

About the Health and Safety Excellence program

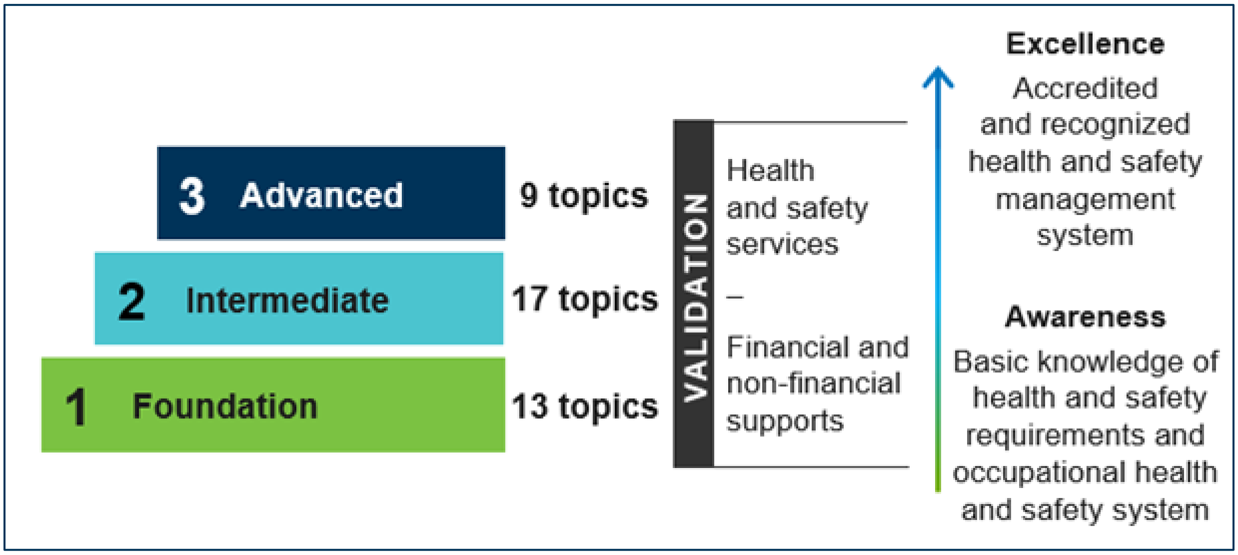
The Health and Safety Excellence program is a voluntary incentive program that rewards businesses for investing in health and safety. By completing program topics, you'll help make your workplace safer and contribute to a stronger health and safety culture.

The program helps you improve health and safety in your workplace, whether you're just getting started or want to address gaps in the systems and processes you already have in place. We launched the Health and Safety Excellence program in November 2019 at the same time as the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training, and Skills Development launched its Supporting Ontario's Safe Employers accreditation program. If you want to work towards Supporting Ontario's Safe Employers accreditation, the Health and Safety Excellence program can help.

The program allows you to focus on the health and safety issues that matter most to you. There are 39 health and safety topics available to choose from in each of the three levels:

Step 1: Join

Program levels



Level 1: Foundation (13 topics available)

- You're forming the foundation

Level 2: Intermediate (17 topics available)

- You're building and customizing

Level 3: Advanced (9 topics available)

- You're integrating and optimizing

Use our digital tool to manage your progress through the program. The digital tool is home to our program guides, reference documents and other useful resources. And it's available 24/7 so you can access it from anywhere at any time.

Your journey through the program

There are four key steps in the program: Join, Develop, Demonstrate and Achieve. We've developed a guide for each of the steps.

Step 1: Join

- register with an approved program provider

Return to table of contents

- complete your health and safety assessment and culture survey, and select health and safety topics for your action plan

Step 2: Develop

- develop and implement your chosen action plan topics in your daily work activities

Step 3: Demonstrate

- show us how your topics have been implemented, and how they're living and breathing in your workplace
- the WSIB will validate your topics to ensure they meet program requirements

Step 4: Achieve

- Receive:
  - a rebate on your WSIB premiums
  - an achievement report
  - badges for completing program levels

Rebates

Through the program, you'll receive rebates on your WSIB premiums[1] when you complete health and safety topics. The rebate amount varies from business to business. The minimum rebate for each topic is $1,000 and the maximum is $50,000 (or up to 100 per cent of the amount a business paid for their prior year's WSIB premiums).

To calculate your rebate, please talk to your provider.

Support for smaller businesses

Smaller businesses (1-99 full-time employees) will receive double the rebates for every validated program topic they complete up until December 31, 2024. Speak to your program provider to learn more.

Digital badges

More than ever, job seekers, employees and customers want to make sure the companies they do business with are healthy and safe. Through the program, you can earn badges to showcase your organization's commitment to health and safety. You can use your badges in a number of ways – feel free to check out our Terms of Use at the end of this guide.

[1] Schedule 1 businesses with at least one employee.

Tip: Consider using your badges on your company's website, email and/or letterhead. You can also print the badge and display it in your storefront, on vehicles or any other spot that would help you showcase your commitment to health and safety.

Member badges

When you join the program, and once your first action plan is approved, you'll receive a member badge. People can also see your member badge on the WSIB's Safety Check, which is used by job seekers and consumers to find information about businesses' health and safety data.

Level badges

As you progress through the program, you'll earn level badges – foundation, intermediate and advanced – when you successfully complete all topics within the program level.

See the FAQs link at the end of this guide for more information.

Eligibility for rebates and badges

Once you've completed the topics in your action plan, you'll be eligible to receive your rebate and possibly a new badge, if your business meets these criteria:

Member badge

- be a Schedule 1 or Schedule 2 business registered in the program
- have an **approved** action plan
- if a business is waiting on a decision regarding a workplace fatality claim, they're not eligible for a badge until a decision about that fatality is made

Rebate

- be a Schedule 1 business (you're covered by the WSIB and you pay premiums based on your insurable earnings)
- have one or more action plan topics validated as **complete**
- comply with the *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act*
- have no allowed traumatic fatality claims from the date your action plan was approved to the date the rebate is issued
- if a business is waiting on a decision regarding a workplace fatality claim, they're not eligible for a rebate until a decision about that fatality is made

Level badge

- be a Schedule 1 or Schedule 2 business registered in the program
- have previously completed at least one successful action plan

- comply with the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act
- have no allowed traumatic fatality claims from the date your action plan was approved to the date the rebate is issued
- complete all topics within the level
- if a business is waiting on a decision regarding a workplace fatality claim, they're not eligible for a badge until a decision about that fatality is made
- once a member earns a level badge, their future action plans can't include a foundation-level topic (except for repeating the Control of Hazards topic)

Note: When we're determining whether your business is eligible for a rebate or a badge, the severity and frequency of any non-compliance issues may influence this decision.

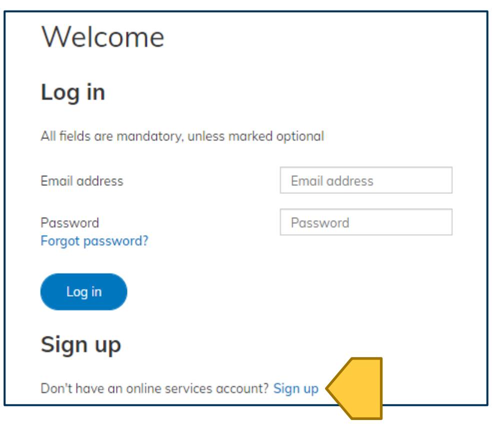
Getting started with the digital tool

Your log in and profile

To get started, you'll need a WSIB online services account and a profile in our digital tool.

1. Follow the link provided by your program provider, which will direct you to the WSIB's online services page.

2. Click the **Sign up** link if you need a new online services account. This process will only be required the first time you sign up.

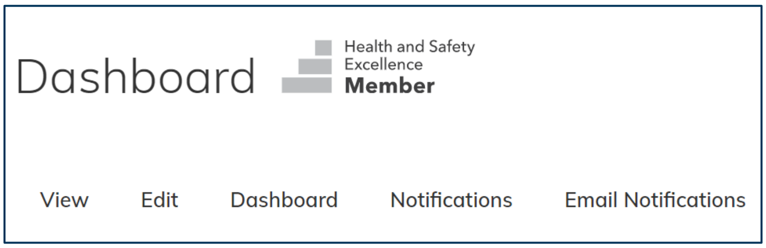


3. Enter your email address on the next screen and click on the **Get a verification code** button.

4. Copy the verification code from your email, and paste it in the **Email verification code** window. Click on the **Verify code** button.

5. Once your code is verified, choose a password and click the **Create** button.
6. On the employer representative registration form, input your name, WSIB account number, business name and contact information, and click **Save** on the next screen.

Your profile is now complete, and the page will display your company name with five buttons along the top: **View**, **Edit**, **Dashboard**, **Notifications**, and **Email Notifications**.



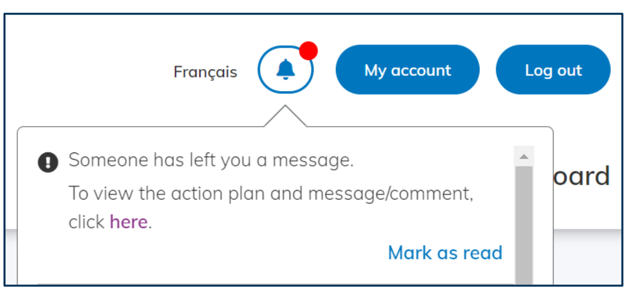
Tip: The next time you visit **wsib.ca**, click on the **Log in** button at the top of the page, and you'll be directed to the business home page. Click the **Go** button next to "Access health and safety programs" to access the digital tool.

Notification preferences

There are two types of notifications in the digital tool – dashboard and email – that we use to send you notifications about key activities that require your attention.

You're automatically set to receive email notifications, but if you'd like to turn email notifications off:

1. click **Dashboard** at the top of your screen and select **Email Notifications**
2. under settings, click **Unsubscribe**
3. click **Save**



You'll see a blue bell button at the top of the **Dashboard** screen – a red dot will appear beside the bell when you receive a dashboard message. Once you've read the notification, the red dot will disappear, and notifications older than 30 days will automatically be deleted.

Download your member badge

You'll be able to download your member badge once your action plan has been approved by your provider.

To access your member badge go to your dashboard, scroll down to the **Badges earned** table. Click the **Download badge** button.

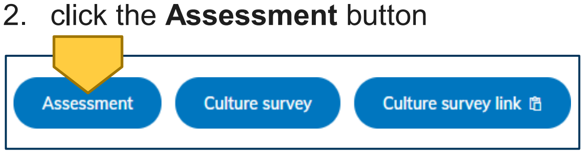
The health and safety assessment

There are 39 topics for you to choose from to enhance the health and safety of your business. To help you select suitable topics for your business, you'll need to complete a simple health and safety assessment. The assessment should be completed by your company's owners/operators and those involved in the health and safety of your workplace. It shouldn't take any more than 15 minutes to complete, but if you're unable to complete it in one session, you can save it and complete it later by clicking the **Save draft** button.

One assessment is required for each WSIB account registered in the program unless they share the same organizational ID. If you have multiple accounts under the same organizational ID, you can choose to complete one assessment and apply the results to all related accounts. See the FAQs at the end of this guide for more information.

To complete the assessment on the digital tool:

1. click the **Dashboard** button
2. click the **Assessment** button



3. once you've answered all of the questions, click the **Done** button

The assessment results will indicate a foundation, intermediate or advanced program level and a list of recommended topics for you to consider (look for the star beside the topic names). However, you're not limited to the recommended topics; you can select any of the 39 topics based on the needs of your business. See **Categories** for topic selection and **Selecting your health and safety topics** sections in this guide for more information.

The health and safety culture survey

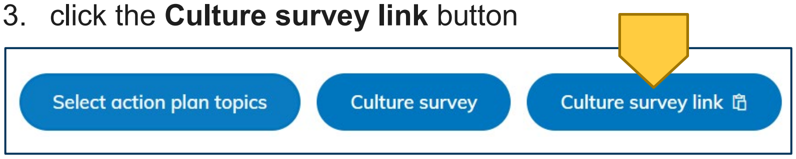
The WSIB's health and safety culture survey is another resource to help you identify program topics you may want to work on – it helps you assess how your employees feel about your business's health and safety practices. This 13-question survey is optional and anonymous.

To complete the culture survey while logged into the digital tool:

1. click the **Dashboard** button
2. click the **Culture survey** button

To share the survey with your employees:

1. log into the digital tool
2. click on the **Dashboard** button
3. click the **Culture survey link** button



4. paste the link in the body of an email and send it to all of your employees or a representative group of employees. When an employee clicks on the link, they will be able to complete the survey.

Please refer to our **Health and Safety Culture Survey Guide** linked at the end of this guide for more information on the survey benefits and how to interpret your score.

Choosing topics

Now that you're familiar with the digital tool, your next step is to figure out what topics you'd like to include in your action plan. We've also included some helpful information in this guide and in the FAQs linked at the end of this guide.

Selecting health and safety topics

Choosing the most appropriate topics requires planning. You'll want to think about your current health and safety program and how you might build on it. Your health and safety assessment results will help, and you can look at your injury record on Safety Check, review inspection reports, employee feedback, internal audit assessments and other sources of information to understand where your health and safety program can be developed. Consider the following:

- What hazards are causing your employees to become injured or ill?
- Are parts of your health and safety program broken or not working as intended?
- Are you meeting legislative compliance requirements?

- Have you received any compliance assistance or orders from the Ministry of Labour, Immigration Training and Skills Development?

Tip: You can review descriptions of each health and safety topic, topic requirements and examples of topic submissions on the digital tool.

Categories for choosing topics

Once you've identified areas to build your health and safety program, you can select topics that will matter most to you. You'll need to select topics that are either:

- new initiatives for your business
- related to efforts that you've made in the past that aren't working well and aren't improving health and safety the way you thought they would

There are five categories of topic selection:

1. a health and safety initiative that is **new** to your business
2. a health and safety initiative that you previously implemented, but due to a **significant gap**, has not been effective in controlling risks
3. a **significant change** in your workplace, such as adjusting your business model during the pandemic, where the change has led to risks not being controlled
4. addressing a hazard in your workplace that has not been previously controlled. In this case, you would select the Control of Hazards topic
5. Re-selecting a previously selected topic that was not completed (i.e., on a previous action plan, you deferred the topic or it was deemed **incomplete** by the WSIB validator). To re-select a topic, it must meet topic selection requirements.

Please see the FAQs at the end of this guide for more information and speak with your program provider for additional guidance.

Ineligible for selection – continuous improvement

When choosing which topics to work on, it is important to note that topics already implemented and in a continuous improvement cycle are not eligible. Continuous improvement is the ongoing review and updating of policies, procedures or health and safety processes.

Note: The control of hazards topic can be repeated as many times as needed to address hazards that haven't been controlled. Talk to your program provider to learn more.

Creating an action plan

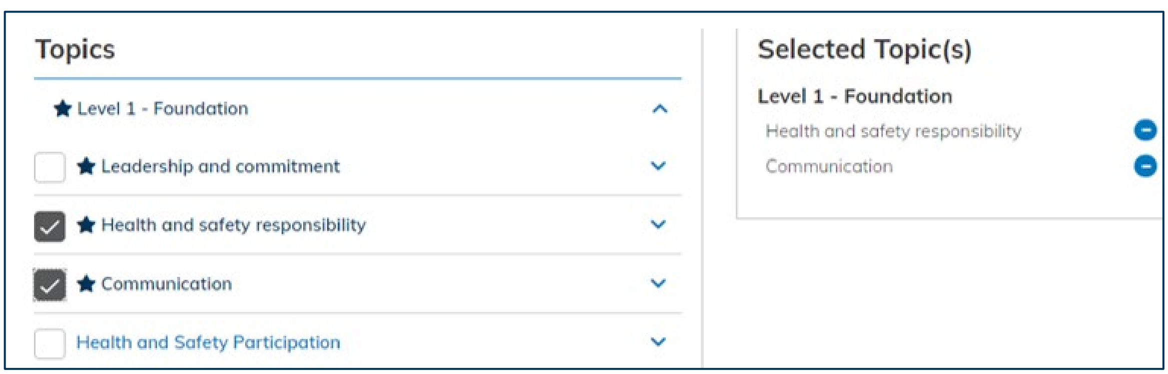
Once you've decided which topics you want to work on, you need to confirm your choices on the digital tool. The collection of topics you select is called your **action plan**.

Selecting your topics

To create your action plan, first confirm your topic choices:

1. click the **Dashboard** button
2. click the **Select action plan topics** button

3. You'll notice that the topic and level recommendations from your health and safety assessment are marked with a star. To see a description of the topic, click it or the drop-down menu beside it. On this screen you may also see information on topics that support each other – if you want to choose those topics, we recommend that you work on them at the same time.
4. Select between one and five topics from the drop-down list by checking the box beside it. Once you check the box, the topic is displayed in the box on the right titled **Selected Topic(s)**. If you need to remove a topic from your **Selected Topic(s)** list, click on the circle beside the topic you want to remove.



Scoping

While some businesses may have the resources to implement their action plan throughout their entire business, others won't. Businesses with multiple locations or lines of business can choose to implement their action plan across part, but not all, of their organization – this is called scoping. You may be interested in scoping your action plan if you don't think you'll be able to fully implement your chosen topics throughout your entire business.

If you've decided to implement your action plan in less than 100 per cent of your lines of business, locations or sites, you'll need to indicate that you'll be scoping your action plan. To scope your action plan, click the **Scoping implementation** button and input the percentage of your payroll impacted by the action plan (where the change will be made). Please see our FAQs for more information and speak with your program provider for additional guidance.

Providing a rationale for topics

Note: This section only applies to businesses with 100 or more full-time employees. If your business employs fewer than 100 full-time employees, skip to the section on saving your action plan.

If you've selected topics that you've implemented in the past (categories two or three), you must provide a rationale for re-selecting them that answers the following questions:

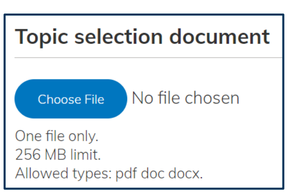
- Which category is your topic in?
- Why are you selecting the topic?
  - For category two: explain why your existing initiative is not working. Include any data about the effectiveness gap and its significance to support your statements.
  - For category three: explain the significant change in the workplace.
- How will developing the topic again make your workplace healthier and safer?
- What meaningful outcomes do you expect to achieve by working on this topic?

Tip: Provide your rationale by either uploading a topic selection document in the digital tool or by providing a comment in your draft action plan. Check with your provider on which option to use.

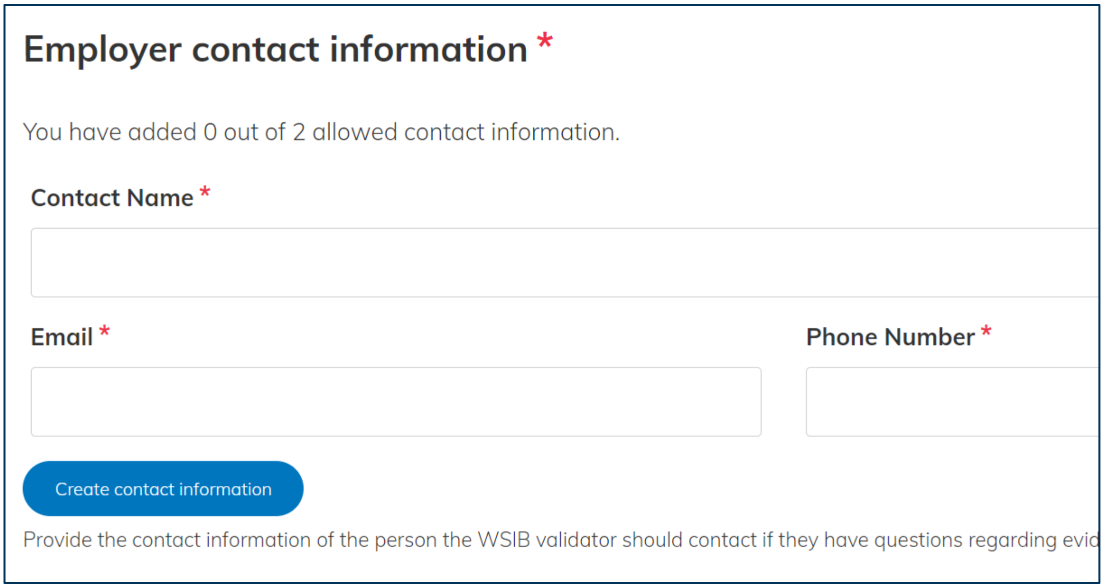
Uploading your rationale (if required)

To upload a rationale as a topic selection document:

1. Click the **Choose File** button under the Topic Selection document header and upload your document.

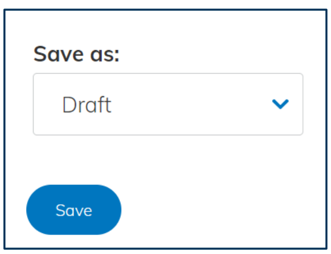


2. Follow the on-screen prompts to enter your contact information. Click the **Create contact information** button to save your contact information. This will make your information available to the WSIB team, as we may need to contact you while you're in the program.



Saving your action plan as Draft

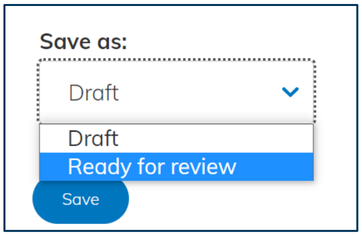
1. Click the Save button at the bottom of your page. The **Save as** box at the bottom of the screen should display **Draft** when you save a version that you're not yet ready to send to your provider for approval.



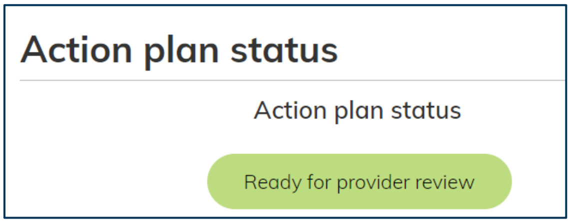
2. If you want to go back into your **Draft** action plan, simply click on the **Dashboard** button and then the **View/edit** action plan topics button.
3. Once you've saved your draft action plan, you can add notes to help explain your topic selection. Comments are visible to everyone, including your program provider and the WSIB. In the **Action plan status** table, click the **View** button beside your **Draft** action plan to add notes or comments. For example, if you've chosen the Control of Hazards topic, this is where you would include the specific hazard you plan to work on.
4. Add your comments in the displayed field, and click the **Save** button under the table.

Saving your action plan as Ready for Review

1. To submit your **Draft** action plan to your provider for review, scroll down to the **Change to** box at the bottom of the screen and click the down arrow to change the status of your action plan from **Draft** to **Ready for review**. Click the **Save** button.



2. You'll receive a confirmation message at the top of your screen that shows the status of your action plan. This will change from **Draft** to **Ready for provider review**.



Once you've saved your draft action plan, your provider will be notified that it's ready for review. Your provider must approve your action plan within 90 calendar days, or it will expire.
Once your provider approves your action plan:

- you'll receive an email telling you that it's approved (if you've chosen to leave your email notifications on)
- your action plan status in the digital tool will change from **Ready for provider review** to **Approved**

Note: If your provider doesn't approve your draft action plan within 90 days, your action plan status will change from Draft to Draft expired. If this happens, please contact your provider.

Step 2: Develop

Introduction

Now that you've selected your Health and Safety Excellence program topics and created an action plan, it's time to develop and implement them so they're a part of your business's everyday activities.

Developing a topic means implementing the new process or initiative into your business. For your topic to be considered fully developed and implemented, that new process or initiative must become an integrated part of your everyday business operations.

Timeline for implementing a topic

You have up to 12 months to implement all of the topics in your action plan and have your work validated by a WSIB team member. Once you've completed all the topics in your action plan you'll be eligible for your rebates.

The time it takes to develop a topic depends on the topic(s) you've selected and the resources available at your business. Your action plan will expire up to one year after it's approved – if you're worried that you won't complete all of your topics in the 12-month period, please talk to your program provider.

Developing a health and safety topic

Your program provider will help you as you develop your topics and will be there to support you through the planning, communicating, training, testing and analysis work you'll do for each topic.

You'll need to choose an implementation model to help you develop your topic and make sure it becomes a part of your business's everyday processes. An implementation model helps you develop and implement your topic by breaking down your activities into smaller, actionable steps. You'll also use the steps in your implementation model as the basis for your evidence story, which is described in the next section.

Your program provider will help you choose an implementation model based on which model will meet your business's needs – here's a list of the options:

- Option 1: The WSIB's five steps to managing health and safety
- Option 2: The Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) model
- Option 3: Another model that your program provider approves

The implementation model you choose will give you a framework to develop the topic by considering:

- What are you hoping to achieve in developing this topic?
- What are the topic requirements?

- What resources do you currently have to draw from?
- What is the best way to communicate with employees?
- What is the best way to train your employees on this topic?
- Who'll be impacted by the implementation of this topic?
- How will you measure success and make any necessary improvements?

Once you've developed a topic and have implemented a new process or initiative, you'll need time to analyze how it's working to refine it and then acknowledge your results.

Here's an outline of what happens during each step of the two most frequently used implementation models (PDCA and the WSIB's five steps to managing health and safety). You can also find examples of each step in the **Sample Evidence Stories for Health and Safety Excellence program Topics** document that is posted on the digital tool and is linked at the end of this guide.

Step 1: Plan or set a standard

The first step in implementing a health and safety topic is planning (or setting the standard) for what needs to be done to integrate the topic into your everyday business operations. During this step, you'll create documentation, like a policy or procedure that outlines:

- Your business's expectations and commitments regarding health and safety – the "what"
- The overall goal you want to achieve and how the workplace will be healthier and safer when you implement this new standard – the "why"
- A list of actions that need to occur – the "how"
- A list of how the new process will impact employees, contractors and customers/visitors – the "who"
- Timing for your plan on making the changes – the "when"
- A list of which of your locations, site or lines of business will be impacted by the change – the "where"

Consider the topic requirements when creating these documents (policies or procedures). We've made the topic requirements document available on the digital tool, so you can reference it whenever you need it.

Step 2: Do or communicate and train

After your business has approved the plan (or standard) and any related documents, it's time to take action. This step involves communicating, training and embedding your health and safety initiatives into everyday business operations, so the topic is living and breathing in your organization.

Tip: communication and training are not the same. Communication involves telling your team about the changes that are being made, when they can expect training and what the results of the work are expected to be. Training involves learning new skills and knowledge.

Be sure to check with your program provider about any required training related to your chosen topics. All of your impacted employees will need to be provided with the necessary training – impacted employees include anyone who'll use the new information in their job.

Although communication is a priority in this step, you'll want to make sure that you engage with employees throughout the development of your topic.

Step 3: Check or evaluate

You'll need to monitor your health and safety topic throughout implementation, but you'll perform a formal evaluation in this step. You'll test whether the implementation of your health and safety topic is working the way you intended.

If a flaw or gap is detected, you'll want to know where the issue started. Look for opportunities to test and gather results at different points throughout the development of your topic so you can determine how successful your efforts are and can address any issues.

For instance, you could conduct emergency drills, perform a mini health and safety audit or pilot new screening measures for workplace hazards. Review your policies and procedures and determine if they are being used correctly.

Don't rush your evaluation – allow time between when you implement a new process or initiative and formally assess it. Wait until all evaluation activities are finished before determining if the new topic provides the results you expected. The overall purpose of this step is to answer the question: did you do what you set out to do and is it working to address the issue?

Step 4: Act or acknowledge success and make improvements

This step involves looking at the results of the "check" or "evaluation" you performed in the last step. This can be achieved by creating a continuous improvement plan to fill gaps you identified and act on any lessons you've learned. You'll want to routinely evaluate and improve based on observations, feedback and analysis.

This step also includes recognizing all employees who participated in implementing the topic and acknowledging their input. Employees need to know that their contributions are valued to ensure the continued success of your health and safety program.

Tip: it's important to maintain the topics you've already completed to ensure your health and safety program remains current and effective. Although not required, we recommend that you continually re-assess previously completed topics using the implementation model you selected.

Collecting evidence

As part of your work to develop and implement your topic, you'll need to provide an evidence package. An evidence package is made up of two things:

- an evidence story, which is a description of the activities and work that you did to implement a topic and meet program requirements
- materials like photos, videos and documents support and help explain your evidence story

We recommend that you start writing your evidence story and collecting your supporting materials when you start implementing your topic. This approach gives you a chance to capture the details as you go, so you don't have to worry about trying to remember everything months after the work was done. This process will also help your provider when it comes time to submit evidence in the Demonstrate step.

You'll find more information on evidence packages and the validation process in the **Step 3: Demonstrate guide** linked at the end of this guide. Please work with your provider on how to prepare your evidence package and use the resources in the digital tool.

Is your topic ready for the demonstrate step?

To check whether you're ready to demonstrate your topic to the WSIB, answer the following questions:

- Have you developed your topic according to the specific requirements?
- Have you used an implementation model (WSIB's five steps to managing health and safety, PDCA or another provider-approved model) to develop your topic(s)?
- Have you created documented information (e.g., procedure, policy, standard, work instructions, process flow, etc.) outlining who does what, when, where and how?
- Do you know if you meet legal requirements, standards and codes relevant to the topic(s)?
- Did you clearly document how you communicated, trained and evaluated your topic(s)?
- How are you measuring results and determining if the intended outcomes were achieved?
- Does your program provider agree that you're ready for the demonstration step?

Step 3: Demonstrate

Introduction

You've implemented your topic(s) and are now at step three: Demonstrate. It's time to show us how you did – otherwise known as the WSIB's validation process.

We've designed the WSIB's validation process to be a positive experience. It's an opportunity for you to receive feedback on the work you've done, insights on best practices and recommendations for ongoing improvement from the WSIB's validator.

Tip: our validation process focuses on the topics you've implemented to make sure they're complete and are living and breathing in your workplace. It's your business's responsibility to make sure you meet the terms of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*, regulations or other applicable legislation.

If you need a reminder of some of the more technical terms, please see the **Glossary of Terms** available for download on the digital tool and linked at the end of this document.

Support for smaller businesses

Additional support with the validation process is available to smaller businesses. We recommend you connect with your program provider before continuing with this guide if your business has 1-99 full-time employees.

The validation process

There are two steps in the validation process:

1. create and upload an evidence package
2. WSIB validation

The purpose of the validation process is to:

- Check that your topics are complete based on the topic requirements.
- Confirm that the workplace activities you outline in your evidence package are happening the way you've described.

- Confirm that the topic is living and breathing at your workplace, meaning the topic has become a part of your day-to-day business activities, resulting in a healthier and safer workplace.
- Ensure you have used an approved implementation model.
- Provide you with information on any gaps, health and safety best practices and recommendations for improvement.

Tip: you don't not need to submit all of your action plan topics for validation at the same time. You can submit topics as you implement your action plan.

Is your business Certificate of Recognition (COR®) certified?

We've developed a streamlined validation process for the Health and Safety Excellence program members who are COR® certified. Check out our guide for Health and Safety Excellence program members registered in COR® for more information if this applies to your business. The guide is linked at the end of this document.

Step 1: Create and upload your evidence package

You need to create an evidence package for each topic in your action plan. Your program provider will work with you to ensure your evidence package best represents your work and they will then submit it to the WSIB on your behalf.

Each evidence package you submit will include:

- An **evidence story** that describes how you developed the topic in your workplace.
    - Your evidence story must reflect all locations if your action plan covers multiple locations, accounts or sites.
    - **Supporting materials** you've collected while implementing your topic, like audio or video recordings, policy documents, meeting minutes, etc.
    - Your supporting materials must reflect at least 20 per cent of your locations if your action plan covers multiple sites, locations, accounts or sites.

If you have more than one account under one organizational ID, your evidence package must represent all of the accounts under that organizational ID. See our frequently asked questions linked at the end of this guide for the specific validation requirements for accounts under one organizational ID.

Writing an evidence story

We recommend you organize your story using the steps of the implementation model you used (e.g., the Plan-Do-Check-Act cycle or the WSIB's five steps to manage health and safety) as described in the **Step 2: Develop guide**. Your evidence story overall explains:

- why, when, how and where (e.g., locations, lines of business) you implemented your topic
- whether the topic was scoped
- who was involved and how you determined it was effective, including specific details, such as dates, locations and names of people involved

Tip: you can find sample evidence stories on the digital tool that show how other members have written their evidence stories. This document is also linked at the end of this guide.

Begin your story by providing general background information on your company, such as what your business does or produces, the organizational structure, the number of work sites or locations, the number of employees, etc. Then, think about the steps you took to plan and develop your topic.

Plan or set a standard

- What was included in your plan for implementing the topic? Describe your goals.
- Did you create a policy or procedure, and what criteria did you include?

Do or communicate and train

- How did you communicate with and train employees?
- How did you ensure full implementation in your workplace?
- Where in the business was the topic implemented?
- What was the timeframe?
- Who was involved?

Check or evaluate

- How did you monitor and measure your activities related to the topic?
- Is the topic doing what you thought it would do?
- How do you know?

Act or acknowledge success and make improvements

- How did you make changes based on your evaluation?
- How did you address any gaps in implementation?
- How did you acknowledge success?

Supporting materials

You'll need to submit supporting materials to complement each topic's evidence story. This will help us confirm that a topic has been fully implemented at your workplace.

Your supporting materials should match your evidence story and demonstrate how the topic is living and breathing in your workplace. For example, if you told us you created a lockout procedure, consider including a video of someone performing a lockout or submitting the procedure. You can include up to five files (50 MB each) of supporting materials for each topic.

You might want to consider different formats, including documented information and records, images, videos and interviews, when selecting or creating your supporting materials. It's best to provide clear and direct materials (avoid long, detailed materials like your company's health and safety manual or extensive records). Your program provider will help you to figure out the best materials to support your evidence story. At a minimum, the validators want to see any related policies or procedures.

Examples of supporting materials

Documentation

- standards, policies, procedures, safe work instructions, process flowcharts
- records like completed forms, checklists, schedules, reports, training records, emails, memos and meeting minutes
- signs, posters, newsletters

Photographs

- use to demonstrate the location of items (e.g., first aid kits, health and safety board)
- images of before and after implementation

Video/audio recordings

- document interviews with managers, supervisors and employees
- use to explain processes and complex information such as evaluation findings

The validator can't make assumptions about what your supporting materials demonstrate. If possible, within each supporting material file, include:

- name and title of the person who created the evidence and those that appear in the evidence (e.g., video recording)

- date the evidence was created
- how the supporting material relates to the evidence story

Some businesses have named their evidence files within their evidence story under each step/section.

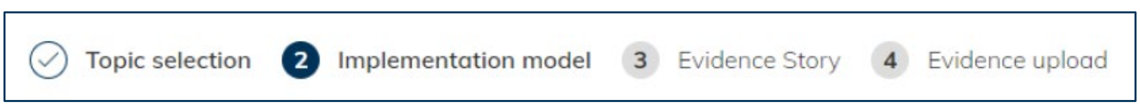
The digital tool accepts files in the following formats: .doc, .docx, .flv, .gif, .jpg, .jpeg, .mov, .mp3, .mp4, .pdf, .png, .ppt, .pptx, .txt, .xls and .xlsx.

Save your evidence package in the digital tool

Tip: you don’t need to upload all of your evidence packages at the same time. You can upload your evidence story and supporting material files as you develop topics. However, the WSIB needs to receive evidence for all topics before your action plan expiry date to qualify for a rebate and a level badge, if applicable.

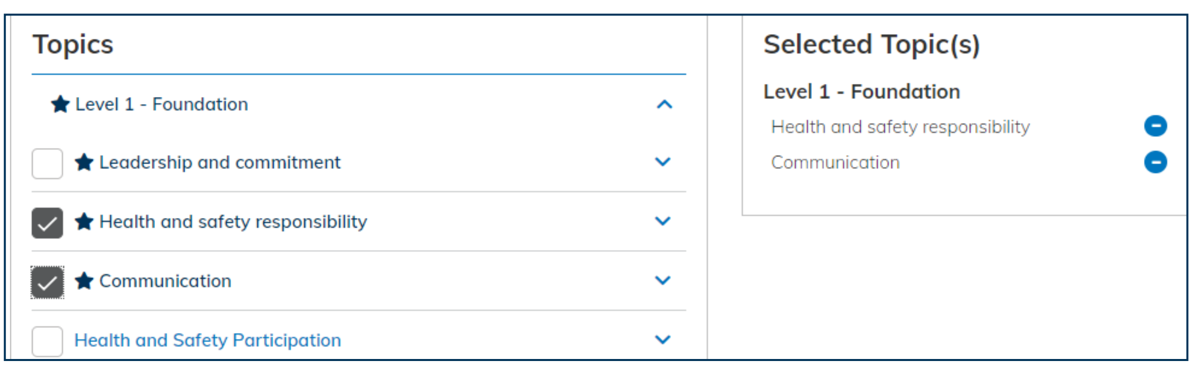
As of September 1st, 2022, the evidence package has been updated on new action plans to streamline the upload process into two steps. A process bar will appear along the top of the screen with the following sections:

If you began your topic selection before September 1, 2022, you will see the image below of the four step evidence story. Please follow the instructions in the **frequently asked questions** in the digital tool and linked at the end of this guide.

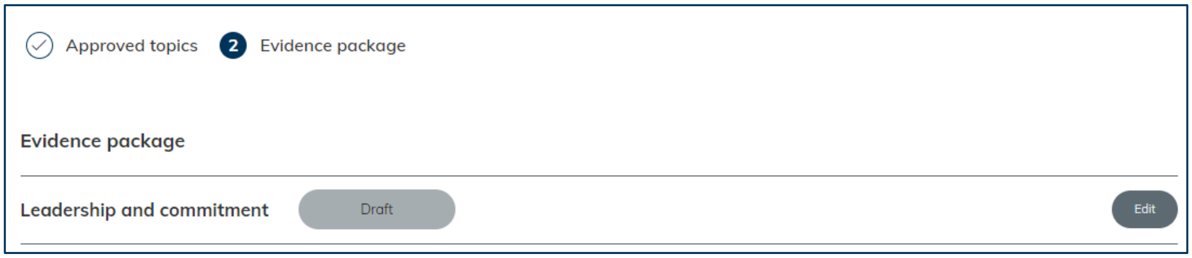


Uploading your evidence story and evidence files

1. Click the **Approved Topics** button in the process bar at the top of the screen. A table on the right side of your screen will display your “Selected Topic(s).”

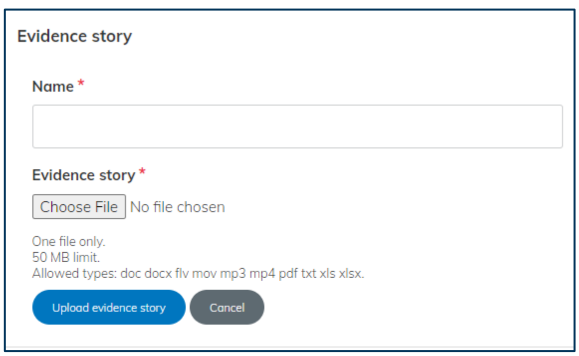


2. Click the **Edit** button to open the topic you have evidence for. This will open the section where you will upload one evidence story document and up to five evidence supporting materials.

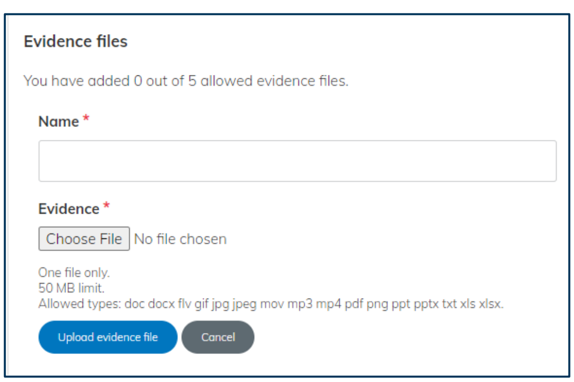


3. To add your evidence story document (max one file at 50 MB), click the **Upload evidence story** button (top blue button).

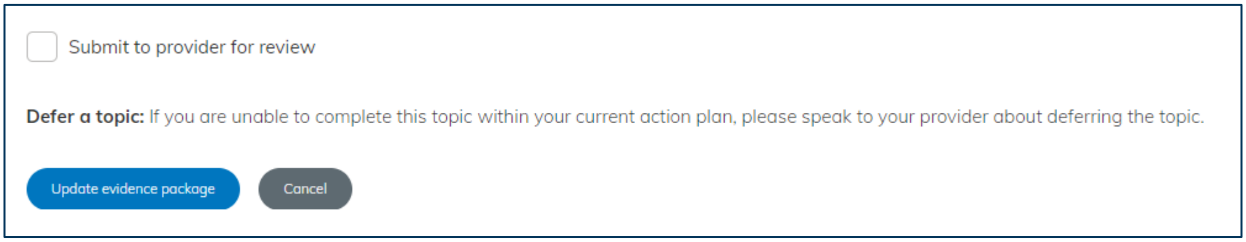
4. Click on the **Choose file** button to select your evidence story file from your computer or drag and drop the file from your desktop over that button. Once the file has uploaded, click the **Upload evidence story** button.



5. To add your evidence supporting material files (max five files per topic at 50 MB per file), click the **Upload evidence file** button (second blue button from the top) and follow the same process in the step above to select and upload each file.



6. When you've finished uploading your evidence files, click the **Update evidence package** button and then the **Save** button at the bottom of the page to save your work.



Tip: changes to contact information for the action plan can be made by clicking the Approved **Topics button** in the process bar and scrolling down to the **Employer contact information** box, where you can **Edit** or **Add new contact information** for your business. Remember to click the **Save** button at the bottom of the page to save your changes.

Submit your evidence package for provider review

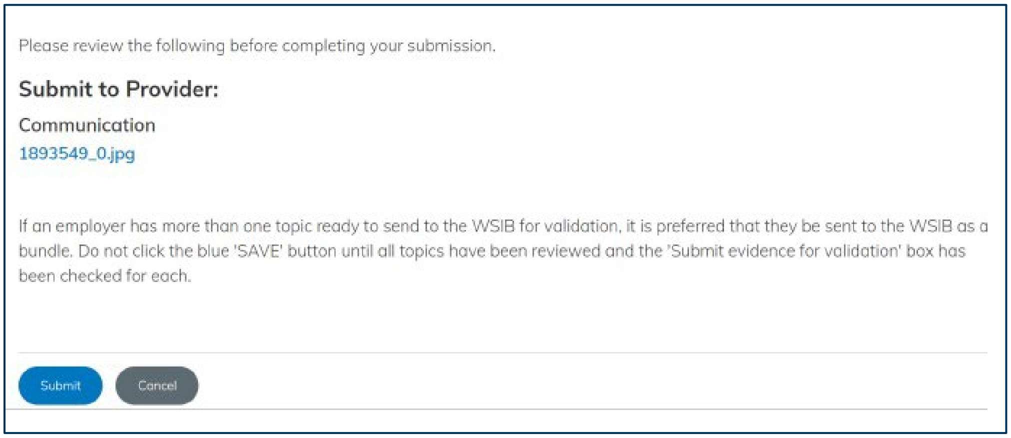
You'll submit your evidence package to your program provider once you save it in the digital tool and it is ready for submission. Your provider will send the package to us once they have reviewed and approved it.

Tip: each time you submit a topic, please ensure your contact information is correct and include your phone number and email address in case the WSIB validator has questions about your evidence package.

1. On the **Evidence package** page, click the **Edit** button beside the topic you want to submit.

2. Check the box beside Submit to provider for review.
3. Click the **Update** evidence button. Continue for each topic you want to submit to your provider.
4. Scroll to the bottom of the screen and select the **Save** button.

5. Review the topics and evidence files on the Evidence Confirmation screen to make sure all the details are correct. Click the **Submit** button to send it to your provider.



6. The topic's status will change from Draft to Ready for provider review.

Your program provider will change the topic status back to Draft and contact you to discuss what is needed if they think your evidence package isn’t ready for WSIB validation.

7. You’ll receive a notification that the topic was submitted to the WSIB once your provider confirms your evidence package is ready. The topic's status will also change from Ready for provider review to In progress.

Step 2: WSIB validation

- ensure your contact information in the digital tool is kept up-to-date for the WSIB to contact you
- you will receive validation for every action plan
- you and your provider will be able to see the results of the desk validation in the digital tool

Desk validation

A WSIB validator will review your evidence package and they may contact you with questions or provide you with an opportunity to explain your evidence package further.

Tip: it's likely that one or more of your topics will be selected for an onsite validation. We recommend that you plan as though your topic will be selected for onsite validation.

You'll receive a notification when the WSIB has validated a topic if you subscribe to notifications through the digital tool.

The WSIB validators will determine which which topics they'll validate in your action plan. You must submit evidence for every topic in your action plan.

Results status

You and your program provider will be able to view the results of the desk validation in the digital tool.

From your dashboard, scroll to the **Action Plan Status** table. Click **Edit** beside the action plan you want to review.

Click **Edit** beside the topic name to see your validation outcome and any validator comments. Take the time to read the validator's feedback as it will have helpful information about how you can make further improvements in your workplace. You can discus the feedback with the validator.

Here's validator feedback you may see and what it means:

Complete

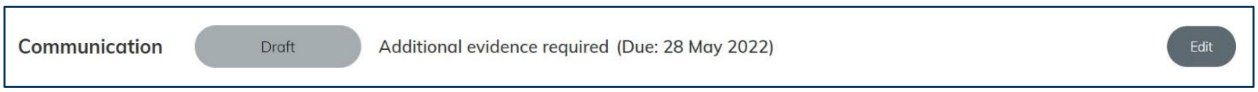
- The evidence package supports the topic requirements and demonstrates it's living and breathing in your workplace.
    - Please note: the topic may still be selected for onsite validation. If you're selected for an onsite validation, you'll be contacted within 60 calendar days of the date of the validation of your last topic. Your validation results will be considered final once your action plan status changes to **Closed**.
- All your topics with a **Complete** status are eligible for a rebate when your action plan is closed.

Eligible for a rebate without WSIB validation

- The topic has been marked complete without a WSIB validation.
- When a topic is not validated, it will be marked as **Complete** on your digital tool dashboard. The validator will leave confirmation in the comments that your topic was not validated. **Topics that aren't desk validated may still be selected for onsite validation.**

Additional evidence required (AER)

- The topic requirements have not been met and it's unclear whether the topic is living and breathing in your workplace based on your evidence package. The validator will provide feedback on the gaps they've identified, so you can revise your evidence package by uploading one additional supporting document on the digital tool.
- **Your program provider must submit additional evidence within 60 calendar days of the notice.** The deadline for your provider to upload your additional evidence will be displayed beside the topic name. You need to ensure that your provider has enough time to review and submit your new evidence before this date.
- The topic's status will change from **In progress** back to **Draft**.



Incomplete

- The additional evidence you provide was either not submitted within 60 calendar days or did not fully address the gap(s) identified by the validator. In this case, the topic does not qualify for a rebate. You can select the topic again on a future action plan if it meets topic selection criteria.
- A topic may also be validated as **Incomplete** if we did not receive an evidence package before the action plan expiry date.

Action plan status changes

Your action plan status will change from **In progress** to **Pending closure** when either of the following happens:

- all of the topics in your action plan have been through the desk validation process

Or

- your action plan expiry date has passed and one or more topics are still in progress of being validated

The action plan status will stay in **Pending closure** while you wait to be notified about whether or not any of your topics will be selected for an onsite validation. The action plan status will change to **Closed** if your topics are not selected for onsite validation.

Please see the glossary of terms for a complete list of action plan statuses and their description.

Onsite validation

Some members will receive onsite validation at their workplace, in addition to desk validation.

Onsite validation gives you free access to a health and safety expert who shares their expertise and best practices for improving your health and safety program. It's also an opportunity to ask questions, discuss any additional feedback and help plan for the future. Members who have experienced an onsite validation have told us that it was a positive and beneficial experience that helped them strengthen their health and safety program.

Onsite validation builds on the results of the desk validation by helping to confirm that a topic is living and breathing in your workplace. Onsite validation is not an audit of your entire health and safety program – it's a more detailed review of completed topics in your current action plan.

If you're selected for onsite validation:

- you'll receive notice within 60 calendar days of the desk validation of your last topic
- we'll work with you to arrange an appropriate time for the visit
- you need to participate to remain eligible for rebates and level badges

Your topic(s) will be **incomplete** if you decide not to participate. However, you may reselect these topics in a future action plan if they meet the selection criteria.

The validator determines the topics and work sites they will review and you'll need to provide access to all of these work sites. Typically, onsite validation of a single location will require two to four hours. The validator may gather and record evidence in many ways, including:

- touring your workplace
- reviewing documents and records
- interviewing employees
- observing job tasks

We recommend that you prepare in advance by gathering your supporting materials and ensuring your employees know the validator may want to talk with them. We also recommend connecting with your program provider, who may offer additional support in preparing for the onsite validation.

You'll be eligible for a rebate when the onsite validation is finished and your topics are deemed complete.

When a validator determines topics have not been fully implemented

If the validator determines that one or more of your topics has not been fully implemented during an onsite validation, either of the following will happen:

- If the topic was previously deemed complete during the desk validation, you would be given 60 calendar days from the date of the onsite validation to provide additional evidence through the digital tool. The 60 days includes the time it takes your provider to review your evidence before submitting it to the WSIB. The topic status will change from **Complete** to **Draft**.
- If you were given 60 calendar days to address gaps for the topic at desk validation, the topic would now be deemed incomplete. The topic status in the digital tool will change

from **Complete** to **Incomplete**, and it will not qualify for a rebate or digital badge. You may select it again on a future action plan if it meets the topic selection criteria.

Action plan expiry and deferring a topic

Your action plan expires up to 12 months from the day your provider approves your action plan. Your topics will be considered **Incomplete** if you don't submit evidence packages for your topics in your action plan. You can select a topic again and may be eligible for a rebate if the topic meets the selection criteria for a future action plan.

You may choose to defer a topic when:

- You have not started or finished a topic on your action plan and you don't have time to implement and submit your evidence before your action plan expires.
- The WSIB validator has returned a topic as additional evidence required, but you can't address the gap(s) within 60 calendar days.

You can defer a topic if you can't implement it before your action plan expires or can't address gaps identified by the validator within 60 calendar days. You're not eligible for a rebate for topics you choose to defer. On a future action plan, you may select the topic again and be eligible for a rebate for completing it at that time. Please discuss deferring topics with your provider.

Finalizing your validation results

Your validation results are considered final once your action plan status changes from **Pending closure** to **Closed**. You'll receive an achievement report on the digital tool shortly after your action plan is closed. See our **Step 4: Achieve guide** for more information on using your achievement report.

Reconsideration of validation results

You can submit a request to have your validation results reconsidered within 30 days of receiving your achievement report. You'll receive a notification in the digital tool once your achievement report is available.

To request a reconsideration, click the link at the bottom of the achievement report. The deadline for completing your reconsideration request will also be displayed on the achievement report.

You'll find an update in the comment section on the action plan page in the digital tool once we've taken another look at your submission.

Step 4: Achieve

Introduction

Congratulations! You're on the way to building a more sustainable health and safety program. Be proud of your work to prevent injuries and illnesses – it's time to celebrate and reflect on the positive change within your workplace. Consider sharing your success in a company newsletter or hosting an all-staff meeting to discuss your accomplishments and goals for moving forward.

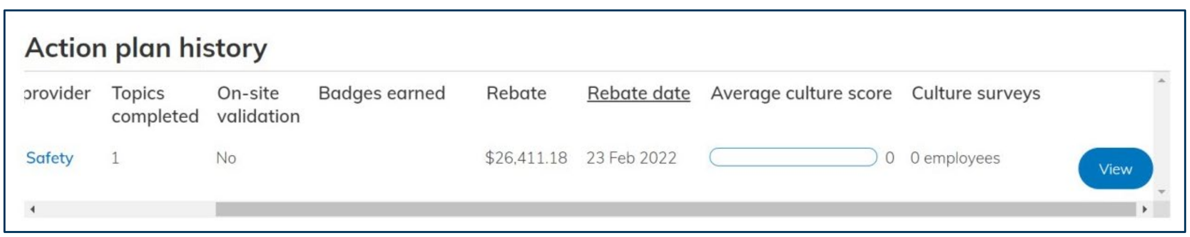
This guide will help you showcase your efforts and make the most of the rebates and badges available through the Health and Safety Excellence program

Achievement reports

Once all your topics have final validation status and the WSIB has completed an eligibility review, you'll receive an account-specific achievement report. This achievement report will outline your accomplishments, including validation results, the rebates and badges you've earned and your progress in completing program levels. Consider sharing your achievement report with your employees to acknowledge success and their participation in the program.

To access your achievement report:

1. Go to the digital tool dashboard and scroll to the **Action plan history** table
2. Click the **View** button



Action plan history

provider	Topics completed	On-site validation	Badges earned	Rebate	Rebate date	Average culture score	Culture surveys	
Safety	1	No		$26,411.18	23 Feb 2022	0	0 employees	View

Badges

The positive changes you make in your workplace through the Health and Safety Excellence program can help strengthen your reputation. That's why we've created program badges that you can use to showcase your health and safety commitment to your customers, employees and community. As you progress through the program, your achievements will be rewarded with level badges when you successfully complete all topics within a program level.

Member

You will have received your member badge when your first action plan was approved.

Foundation

Meeting the foundation level demonstrates a clear commitment to physical and psychological health and safety and lays the foundation for an effective workplace health and safety system.

Intermediate

At the intermediate level, the business has developed a working occupational health and safety management system and an effective return-to-work program. There is a clear commitment to health and safety from all levels of business where activities are taking place to prevent workplace injuries and illnesses before they occur.

Advanced

Achieving the advanced level is the highest recognition within the Health and Safety Excellence program. It confirms the business has a sustainable occupational health and safety management system aligned with industry best practice standards and continuous improvement activities are in place to ensure a current and effective system.

You can download your badges from the **Badges Earned** table on the digital tool dashboard.

Rebates

Rebates are issued on a quarterly cycle. The date you receive your rebate will depend on when you finish the validation process for all of the topics in your action plan. Speak to your program provider for rebate payment dates.

Rebates are issued by cheque unless you have a balance owing to the WSIB, in which case your rebate will be applied to your WSIB account first. You'll be able to see any issued rebates on your WSIB account statement.

To be eligible for a rebate, your business will need to meet the following eligibility criteria:

- Be a Schedule 1 business
- Have one or more action plan topics validated as "complete"
- Have had no violations of the *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act* (WSIA). A member charged under WSIA must wait two years (Limitations Act of Ontario) from the date of the charge to the date of the compliance check before they are eligible for a rebate
- Have no allowed traumatic fatality claims from the date your action plan was approved to the date the rebate is issued

Calculating your rebate

Understanding your predictability

Your predictability is a measure of how much we can rely on your past claims experience and insurable earnings to predict future outcomes.

- If your predictability is 20 per cent or less:
  - For each completed topic you'll receive a rebate of 2 per cent of your prior year's reported WSIB premiums
- If your predictability is 20.1 per cent or more:

For each completed topic you'll receive a rebate of 1.4 per cent of your prior year's reported WSIB premiums

You can find your predictability percentage on your annual WSIB statement or visit your online account at wsib.ca.

Rebates for a typical action plan

To calculate your rebate, multiply the following three factors:

- The total reported premiums the prior year
- 1.4 or 2 per cent, depending on your predictability
- The number of topics you completed

For example, if your reported premiums the prior year were $50,000, your predictability is less than 20 per cent and you've completed five topics, your calculation would look like this:

($50,000 x 2%) x 5 = $5,000

You can find more information on rebates in our frequently asked questions document that is linked at the end of this guide.

Support for smaller businesses

Smaller businesses (1-99 full time employees) can earn double the rebates for completing topics in their health and safety action plan before December 31, 2024. Speak to your program provider to learn more.

Rebates for a scoped action plan

If you scoped your action plan, you'd calculate your rebate as follows: **Total rebate** = (Payroll impacted by scoping / Total account payroll) X WSIB account premiums X 1.4 or 2 per cent based on predictability X number of topics.

Reinvesting in health and safety

Continually investing in health and safety makes good business sense. A study by the Institute for Work and Health in 2021[2] revealed that the average business spends approximately $1,300 per year per person on health and safety-related expenditures.

That study also showed that businesses who have a strong health and safety program benefit financially from:

- Avoiding direct and indirect costs related to injury and illness claims
- Employee morale and satisfaction
- A strong reputation
- Improved production quality

In other words, employees who feel supported in a safe environment can focus better on their work and customers. These are referred to as intangible benefits.

When benefits were compared to spending in these high-performing businesses, the study found that 68 per cent of participants had a return of $1 or more for every dollar they invested in health and safety.

[2] Estimating the financial benefits of OHS prevention expenditures: a study of Ontario employers. Institute for Work and Health. 2021.

Networking and sharing best practices

Connecting with like-minded companies through events like networking meetings can be a significant advantage in helping you grow your health and safety program. Learning from others' good practices, incidents, near misses and failures will help you take a proactive approach to safety that saves money and lives. Government legislation, regulation, and guidelines are a good starting point, but they don't include all possible safety issues in every working environment.

If you'd like to meet with people from businesses like yours to talk about health and safety, speak with your provider to find out if they offer optional networking and knowledge-sharing events.

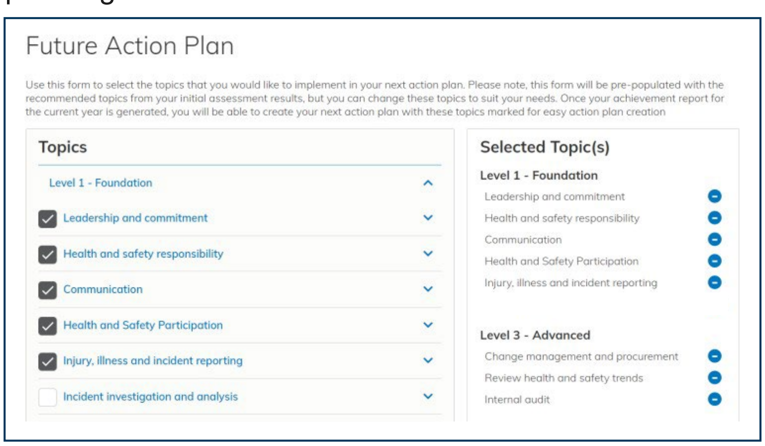
Preparing your next action plan

The digital tool allows you to track topics you might want to select for future action plans through the **Future action plan** page. You can use this feature while your current action plan status is **In progress** and is available until the action plan is closed.

To access this planning tool:

1. Click the **Future action plan** button at the far right of your dashboard, and a Future Action Plan page will appear.

2. The page will highlight topics that were recommended on your initial health and safety assessment results. You don't have to select these suggested topics.
3. To add a topic, select the checkbox on the left. If you'd like to remove a topic from your list, click the blue circle on the right. There's no limit to the number of topics you include in this planning tool.



4. When you're happy with your selections, use the **Save** button.

Tip: After your current action plan closes, you can start working on new topics by creating a new action plan.

Continuing your journey: the path to the Supporting Ontario's Safe Employers program

Members who have completed all 39 topics are in an excellent position to apply for provincial accreditation and recognition through the Supporting Ontario's Safe Employers (SOSE) program.

Together, the Health and Safety Excellence program and SOSE provide businesses with an integrated roadmap to excellence based on health and safety best practices. If you think of SOSE as your health and safety destination, the WSIB's Health and Safety Excellence program can help to get you there.

The SOSE program is comprised of two parts:

- **Accreditation** of an occupational health and safety management system (OHSMS)
- **Recognition** of businesses who have successfully implemented an accredited OHSMS and meet other criteria set by Ontario's Chief Prevention Officer (CPO)

Please note: you can't participate in the Health and Safety Excellence program if your business has applied for or has been previously recognized by the CPO under the SOSE program.

Ontario Safe Employers Rebate Program

Through the WSIB's Ontario Safe Employer Rebate program, your health and safety investments are recognized with financial rebates on your WSIB premiums. Rebates are based on a calculation of your prior year's premium rates and predictability. The minimum rebate is

$3,000 per year, and the maximum rebates available are $300,000, $200,000 and $100,000 for years one, two and three, respectively. Rebates cannot exceed 100 per cent of prior year premiums.

Year 1

- Per cent of premium (less than or equal to 20 per cent predictability): 15 per cent
- Per cent of premium (greater than 20 per cent predictability): 10 per cent
- Maximum rebate: $300,000

Year 2

- Per cent of premium (less than or equal to 20 per cent predictability): 10 per cent
- Per cent of premium (greater than 20 per cent predictability): 7 per cent
- Maximum rebate: $200,000

Year 3

- Per cent of premium (less than or equal to 20 per cent predictability): 5 per cent
- Per cent of premium (greater than 20 per cent predictability): 5 per cent
- Maximum rebate: $100,000

Awards programs

It pays to be a safe business. Along with the rebates and badges offered through the Health and Safety Excellence program, members are often seen as leaders in health and safety. Several of our members are health and safety award-winners.

Small Business Health and Safety Leadership Awards

Each year we recognize the health and safety achievements of independently owned and operated businesses with fewer than 50 employees. The Small Business Health and Safety Leadership Awards include cash prizes for first, second, and third-place winners and media attention.

Canada's Safest Employers Awards

The annual Canada's Safest Employers Awards (CSEAs) has been recognized as the leading independent awards program in occupational health and safety. The awards recognize outstanding health and safety professionals and companies for their achievements, leadership, and innovation. Visit the Safest Employers website for more information on how to apply.

Additional information

For attitional support or information, please speak to your program provider. You can also log into our digital tool to access the following program resources:

- Health and Safety Excellence program - Frequently asked questions
- Health and Safety Excellence program - Glossary of terms
- All Health and Safety Excellence program - Mini guides
- Health and Safety Excellence program - Consolidated guide
- Badges terms of use
- Health and safety culture survey guide
- Health and safety topic guide
- Sample topic evidence stories