

# INTRODUCTION

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## i How this Document is Organized

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*The Specialist High Skills Major: Policy and Implementation* outlines the policy and includes a guide for planning and implementing a Specialist High Skills Major (SHSM) program.

In schools across Ontario, students are building brighter futures through SHSM programs in many varied and exciting high-demand professions. These innovative programs are an important part of Ontario's commitment to providing all students with learning choices and opportunities that genuinely meet their needs, interests, and aspirations, and ensuring that Ontario's education system helps every student achieve his or her highest potential.

This document has been designed to provide the information boards and schools need to develop and implement an SHSM program based on Ministry policy and the experience of educators across the province.

### How this Document is Organized

The document consists of three parts:

1. Section A details SHSM policy, including information on each of the sectors
2. Section B outlines SHSM implementation, organization and planning considerations
3. Section C includes tools and resources required for both policy and implementation

There is also a collection of resources on the Ministry of Education website with supplementary tools and information on each of the SHSM programs.

#### FIND IT!

##### SHSM: Policy and Implementation

[www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/teachers/studentssuccess/specialist.html](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/teachers/studentssuccess/specialist.html)

##### OERB:

<http://resources.elearningontario.ca>

##### SHSM e-Community:

<http://community.elearningontario.ca>



### Useful Tools and Resources

You will also find useful resources on the Web to support the planning and implementation process, including:

- the Ministry's SHSM website, which provides an electronic version of this document and the templates found in this guide
- Ontario Educational Resource Bank (OERB), which provides Contextualized Learning Activities (CLAs)

- the SHSM e-Community website, a password-protected site that provides educators with opportunities to share resources, including those specifically developed to support SHSM programs.

For your convenience, all these tools and resources, and their locations, are summarized in **Section C: Resources**. Throughout the document, look for the “Tools and Resources” icon. It identifies the tools and resources most relevant to each section of the guide.



### We’d Like to Hear from You!

We hope you find this document useful and informative, and we welcome your comments and suggestions. As the SHSM programs continue to evolve and grow, we will be providing updates so that you always have the most current information. Please send your suggestions to the ministry SHSM team by contacting the Student Success/Learning to 18 Strategic Policy Branch at [SSL18.StrategicPolicy@ontario.ca](mailto:SSL18.StrategicPolicy@ontario.ca)

## ii About the Specialist High Skills Major (SHSM)

The SHSM is a specialized, ministry-approved program that allows students to focus their learning on a specific economic sector while meeting the requirements of the Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD).

SHSMs assist students in their transition from secondary school to apprenticeship training, college, university, or the workplace.

These programs enable students to gain sector-specific skills and knowledge in engaging, career-related learning environments, and prepare in a focused way for graduation and postsecondary education, training, or employment.



### FIND IT!

**A.1: Policy** describes the five required components common to all SHSM programs.

**A.3: Sectors** provides detailed information specific to each SHSM program, including information about careers, required credits, certifications and training programs, 'reach ahead' opportunities and experiential learning.

### Seven Key Benefits for Students

Pursuing an SHSM enables students to:

1. customize their secondary school education to suit their interests and talents
2. develop specialized knowledge and skills that are valued by the sector and postsecondary education institutions
3. earn credits that are recognized by the sector and postsecondary education institutions
4. gain sector-specific and career-relevant certification and training
5. develop Essential Skills and work habits that are valued by the sector, recorded using the tools in the Ontario Skills Passport (OSP)
6. identify, explore, and refine their career goals and make informed decisions about their postsecondary destination
7. remain flexible, with the option to shift between pathways should their goals and plans change.

## iii Overview: The Planning and Implementation Process Step by Step

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A number of important steps are involved in planning, developing, and launching an SHSM. This series of guiding questions is designed to give you a snapshot of the process that will aid your understanding of the more detailed sections later in this guide.

### Step 1: Familiarization

#### REVIEW SHSM POLICY

What are the key components of all SHSM programs? How are credits structured? What forms of classroom and experiential learning can be offered in an SHSM? What certification delivery models can be considered?

#### FIND IT!

See Section A1:  
**Policy.**

#### EXPLORE SHSM SECTORS

What specific ministry-approved SHSMs can be offered? What sector opportunities do they offer students? What postsecondary opportunities might they lead to? What specific components and credits are required in each SHSM?

#### FIND IT!

See Section A3:  
**Sectors.**

### Step 2: Organization

#### ESTABLISH AN SHSM PLAN

What key factors must you consider in planning an SHSM? How will you go about identifying the specific program content, delivery model, and pathways that will provide a high-quality learning experience for students that is valued in the sector? Who should be involved in the process?

#### FIND IT!

See Section B1:  
**Organization.**

#### ESTABLISH SHSM ADVISORY COMMITTEES

How can you ensure that stakeholders value your SHSM? How can you best align students' experiences with workplace expectations? How will you identify reliable service providers for certification and training? How can you bring all stakeholders together to ensure that your SHSM will provide students with a high-quality learning experience that will support their success in postsecondary education, training, or employment?

#### ESTABLISH A SCHOOL SHSM TEAM

Who will champion the implementation of the SHSM? Which specific school or board staff members will be critical to your success?

## Step 3: Program Planning

### FIND IT!



See Section B2:  
Planning.

#### **SELECT WHICH SHSMS TO OFFER**

Which SHSMs will be of interest to students in your school and region? What are the economic prospects in the region? Will you be able to secure the supports you need in the economic sector and community? Which SHSM(s) does your school and board support and have the capacity to offer?

#### **CHOOSE A DELIVERY MODEL**

Will the SHSM be best delivered to students in a single school? Could a program be delivered at one school for students from many schools? Could a program be offered entirely or in part at a learning site other than a secondary school? What resources are required and available?

#### **BUILD SUPPORTIVE PARTNERSHIPS**

How can you build partnerships to ensure that your SHSM will be effective and sustainable? Could you partner with other schools or boards to share resources? What opportunities exist to partner with local colleges, training centres, and universities? What provincial and local sector organizations might support your SHSM and provide opportunities for certification and training, and cooperative education placements?

#### **DEVELOP SHSM PATHWAYS**

How can you ensure that students and parents understand the pathways to successful completion of your SHSM, and the choices available to them? Will students and parents clearly understand how to navigate to apprenticeship training, college, university, or the workplace?

#### **OBTAIN MINISTRY APPROVAL**

Does your SHSM meet ministry guidelines? If your program is approved, what next steps should you take?

## Step 4: Program Implementation

### DEVELOP AN SHSM ACTION PLAN

What should a detailed implementation plan include? What are the best approaches to timetabling and enrolment? How can you accommodate students with special needs?

### BUILD AWARENESS OF YOUR SHSM

How will you build awareness of and enrolment in the SHSM? How will you ensure that students and parents are aware of the benefits of your program? How will you keep postsecondary partners and sector partners aware and informed?

### SUSTAIN AND GROW YOUR SHSM

How will you encourage among staff a sense of shared responsibility for the success of the SHSM? How will you build knowledge and skills, and work as a team, to provide a high-quality SHSM for students? Who should be involved in your SHSM professional learning community (PLC)?

#### FIND IT!



See Section B:  
Implementation.

## Step 5: Measurement

### MEASURE STUDENT PROGRESS AND PROGRAM SUCCESS

What student tracking and reporting processes need to be in place? How will you measure program success? What indicators should be used to measure success? How can data be used to continuously improve the SHSM, and to respond to changes in the needs of students and the economic sector? Who should be consulted in this ongoing evaluation?

#### FIND IT!



See Section B4:  
Measurement.