



Top Questions Community Partners Ask About SmartSAVER

Part 1: SmartSAVER

1. What is SmartSAVER and who funds it?

SmartSAVER is a project of the Omega Foundation focused on one thing: helping lower-income families save for their children's post-secondary education using Registered Education Savings Plans (RESPs) and the Canada Learning Bond (CLB).

SmartSAVER is supported by its participating financial institutions: BMO, Meridian Credit Union, RBC Royal Bank, Scotiabank, TD Canada Trust and Vancity, as well as by the Haynes Connell Foundation, the Lucie and André Chagnon Foundation, the J.W. McConnell Family Foundation and the George Cedric Metcalf Charitable Foundation.

2. Who is the Omega Foundation?

The Omega Foundation, SmartSAVER's parent, is a Canadian registered charity established in 1992 BN # 136402948RR0001. The Directors of the Foundation are Martin P. Connell (founder and chair), Linda D. L. Haynes, Tim Brodhead and Edward J. Waitzer.

3. Why does SmartSAVER do this work?

The Omega Foundation's mandate is to assist low-income Canadians to access financial services that meet their needs and can help them to become more self-sufficient. The Foundation created SmartSAVER to assist low-income families to: better access an under-utilized Federal benefit (the Canada Learning Bond), encourage saving and use of a beneficial savings vehicle (the Registered Education Savings Plan), and through education savings, foster a mindset among low-income children oriented toward pursuing higher education.

Research shows that a kick-start from the Canada Learning Bond can be an enormous boost for both children and their families.

- Virtually all Canadian parents expect their children to attain higher educationⁱ and want to help them pay for itⁱⁱ. However, almost half worry about how they'll pay for it.ⁱⁱⁱ

- When parents earmark money for post-secondary education, higher education becomes more of an expectation.
- Having savings improves a child's outlook on school^{iv} and counteracts low income's discouraging influence on educational pursuit.^v Savings help to reduce high school dropout,^{vi} to increase post-secondary pursuit^{vii} and to improve post-secondary completion.^{viii}
 - i. For children as young as 11, their perception of whether higher education is financially possible can influence their school-focused goals and the effort they put into their school work^{ix}.
 - ii. Low-income children with as little as \$3,000 in savings are more likely to graduate from high school.^x
 - iii. Youth who have some savings earmarked for their education are 50% more likely to participate in post-secondary education than those who have none.^{xi}
- Higher education contributes to improved employability, earnings and financial stability^{xii}

Part II: Start My RESP: SmartSAVER's Online Canada Learning Bond Application

4. What is SmartSAVER's relationship with the financial institutions available through the online application?

SmartSAVER's online CLB application was developed in partnership with six leading financial institutions: BMO, Meridian Credit Union, RBC Royal Bank, Scotiabank, TD Canada Trust and Vancity. The online application makes it easier for families to apply for the CLB and connects them directly to an RESP provider of their choice to start an account that has no fees and requires no contribution. SmartSAVER facilitates this connection to RESP providers committed to offering accounts with no-fees and no contribution required and acts as an advocate for families to access the CLB.

5. Why aren't all RESP providers available on SmartSAVER's online application?

RESP providers' participation in SmartSAVER's online application is voluntary. Any RESP provider willing to offer an RESP with no-fees and no contribution required can participate. RESP provider partners are also asked to contribute to the ongoing community promotion and maintenance of the online application through a financial contribution.



Part III: Working with SmartSAVER

6. Is there a cost to partner with SmartSAVER?

No, there is no cost to community partners to work with SmartSAVER or to use any of our materials or resources.

7. What kind of support does SmartSAVER provide to its partners?

SmartSAVER provides training, access to customizable, multilingual materials for web and print, brainstorming and webinars to make it easier for partners to promote the CLB in their community.

SmartSAVER also offers some funding for promotion of the CLB through our Community Incentive program. This program is open to any organization considered by CRA to be a "qualified donee," including registered charities, schools and post-secondary institutions, with the exception of any level of government. SmartSAVER will provide a \$25 incentive for each CLB application that a partner assists an eligible family to complete as a thank you and to help to offset a partner's time. To learn more about the Community Incentive Program, contact Joe March at jmarch@smartsaver.org

8. If I have a personal relationship with a local financial institution, can I encourage parents to visit this location?

We recognize the role that a personal connection with a financial institution can have towards fostering a positive experience for families accessing RESP accounts and the CLB. Talking to your local contacts in financial institutions about your work to promote the CLB is a great place to get started. However, SmartSAVER believes it's important that CLB-eligible families have choice in their financial institution. We work with several RESP providers and we and our partners are committed to providing only unbiased information with no preference or recommendations regarding financial institutions.

9. How I can help parents learn about RESPs and the CLB with SmartSAVER?

Check out the many tools and resources available throughout our website. Most can be easily customized to meet the needs of your organization or community. Our partnership managers are also ready to brainstorm and to offer training to develop an approach to promotion customized for you.

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- ⁱ http://www.cmec.ca/Publications/Lists/Publications/Attachments/316/AMatters_No4_EN.pdf
- ⁱⁱ <http://newsroom.bmo.com/press-releases/bmo-study-canadian-parents-expect-to-pay-for-almo-tsx-bmo-2014082509642060>
- ⁱⁱⁱ <http://newsroom.bmo.com/press-releases/bmo-resp-study-canadian-parents-concerned-about-c-tsx-bmo-201211220836374001>
- ^{iv} http://sitemaker.umich.edu/daphna.oyserman/files/destin_oyserman_2009_psychological_science.pdf
- ^v Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario, “*Third Annual Review and Research Plan*”, 2010
- ^{vi} Social Service Review, “*Assets, expectations, and children's educational achievement in female-headed households*”, 2003
- ^{vii} Statistics Canada and HRDC, “Access, persistence and financing: First results from the Postsecondary Education Participation Survey (PEPS)”, 2003
- ^{viii} <http://csd.wustl.edu/Publications/Documents/WP13-06.pdf>
- ^{ix} Mesmin Destin and Daphna Oyserman, —From Assets to School Outcomes: How Finances Shape Children’s Perceived Possibilities and Intentions, *Psychological Science*, Vol.20 No.4, 2009: 417. http://sitemaker.umich.edu/daphna.oyserman/files/destin_oyserman_2009_psychological_science.pdf
- ^x Social Service Review, “*Assets, expectations, and children's educational achievement in female-headed households*”, 2003
- ^{xi} Statistics Canada and HRDC, “Access, persistence and financing: First results from the Postsecondary Education Participation Survey (PEPS)”, 2003
- ^{xii} ESDC: Special Reports - What Difference Does Learning Make to Financial Security? <http://www4.hrsdc.gc.ca/.3ndic.1t.4r@-eng.jsp?iid=54>