LearnLocal: Frequently Asked Questions

We are changing the structure — not eliminating local member engagement.

TESL Ontario LearnLocal builds on more than 50 years of Chapter contributions. It will preserve what members value most, including affordable regional professional development, networking and community connection, through a more flexible and sustainable approach across Ontario.

About the change

What is TESL Ontario LearnLocal?

LearnLocal is TESL Ontario's new approach to regional professional development, networking and member connection. Instead of operating through 12 separate Chapters, TESL Ontario will manage administration and finances centrally, while members and volunteers help shape local programming.

Why is TESL Ontario ending the Chapter structure?

Chapters have played an important role in building regional professional communities for more than 50 years, and their contributions are deeply valued. However, our review identified growing challenges with the long-term sustainability of the Chapter model.

Volunteer engagement has declined across all regions, leadership turnover has increased, and recruiting and retaining volunteers for key executive positions has become more difficult. Combined with the administrative and financial responsibilities of maintaining 12 separate Chapter structures, these challenges have made it increasingly difficult for some Chapters to sustain regular programming and activities.

The review also identified significant differences in regional programming, participation and the level of subsidies available to members across Ontario.

The Board concluded that these were broader challenges with the Chapter structure itself, rather than a reflection of the commitment of individual volunteers. Moving to LearnLocal will allow TESL Ontario to address these challenges while continuing to provide affordable, consistent and sustainable regional professional development and community connection.

Will all Chapters close, and when?

Yes. All 12 Chapters will conclude their programming and operations by June 30, 2027. Planning for LearnLocal is already underway, with a pilot program targeted for late 2027 and a full program rollout planned for early 2028.

Is this change mainly about saving money?

No. Responsible use of membership resources is important, but it is only one consideration. LearnLocal also responds to uneven access to regional programming, the administrative burden on volunteers, and the need for a more flexible model that can serve members across Ontario.

Why weren't members asked to vote on the decision?

TESL Ontario's bylaws give the Board responsibility for creating and dissolving Chapters, so a membership vote was not required. This was a complex decision that required careful consideration of several factors, including the long-term sustainability of the Chapter structure, the responsible use of membership resources, and equitable access to regional programming. While the Board has made the decision to change the structure, members will have meaningful opportunities to help shape LearnLocal's programming and regional priorities.

Programming and access

Will there still be local and regional professional development?

Yes. Local professional learning, networking and community connection remain central to LearnLocal. The change is in how regional programming is organized and supported, not in the commitment to offering it.

Will LearnLocal events be free or subsidized?

Like existing Chapter events, some events may be offered free of charge, while others will have a subsidized registration fee, depending on the format and cost. The goal is to keep regional opportunities affordable and cost-effective, similar to the Chapter model.

How will LearnLocal support members in different regions?

Programming will be planned around member needs, participation and geographic reach, rather than being limited by historical Chapter boundaries. LearnLocal events will rotate across the province, with smaller, rural and northern communities included in the planning. TESL Ontario will also explore flexible event formats, partnerships and subsidies to help ensure members in communities of all sizes have access to affordable regional professional development and networking opportunities.

Can I attend LearnLocal events outside my region?

Yes. Members will be able to participate in LearnLocal events beyond the area where they live.

Does LearnLocal replace TESL Ontario's webinars or annual conference?

No. LearnLocal will complement TESL Ontario's conference, webinars and other province-wide professional development opportunities. The existing free webinar programming will continue separately.

Member input and involvement

How will members have a say in what LearnLocal offers?

A permanent LearnLocal Planning Committee will recommend regional programming priorities and locations. Its work will be informed by member consultation, Regional Engagement Leads, participation data and regional feedback. TESL Ontario staff will manage budgets, registration and event logistics.

How can members and Chapter volunteers get involved?

Members will be invited to share ideas, provide feedback and volunteer. Current and former Chapter volunteers will be prioritized for opportunities on the LearnLocal Planning Committee and as Regional Engagement Leads, recognizing their experience and regional knowledge.

Will the contributions and history of Chapters be recognized?

Yes. TESL Ontario intends to preserve important Chapter records, materials and milestones and recognize the volunteers who built local professional communities. LearnLocal is designed to build on this history, not erase it.

Funding and accountability

What will happen to money currently held by Chapters?

The funds currently held in Chapter accounts are TESL Ontario funds that have been administered at the Chapter level to support regional activities. As Chapters close, the remaining funds will be consolidated into a dedicated TESL Ontario Member Engagement Fund. These membership resources will continue to benefit members by supporting LearnLocal and other regional member engagement activities, rather than unrelated operations.

Will funds from each Chapter stay in the same region?

Not necessarily on a dollar-for-dollar basis. Resources will be directed according to regional needs, member participation and programming opportunities so members across Ontario can benefit, including areas that have had fewer local opportunities.

How will TESL Ontario know if LearnLocal is working?

We will track participation, geographic reach, member satisfaction, volunteer involvement, event costs and subsidies, and gather feedback from members. LearnLocal will be adjusted as we learn what is working well and where improvements are needed.