COMMUNITY COLLABORATIVE APPROACHES TO JOB DEVELOPMENT

REPORT SUMMARY

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EMPLOYMENT ONTARIO

ABOUT EMPLOYMENT SECTOR COUNCIL LONDON—MIDDLESEX (ESCLM)

In 1992, ESCLM emerged as London-Middlesex's response to the need for a more coordinated approach to labour market planning. Our members represent more than 40 public and nonprofit employment and training service providers, labour market partners, and representatives from all three levels of government.

ESCLM is our region's voice of the employment and training service sector. For two decades, our coordinated and collaborative approach to employment and training sector planning has resulted in a seamless, 'no wrong door' service delivery system and a sector-wide commitment to consistent, high quality service across the London-Middlesex region.

I. INTRODUCTION

Collaboration between employment service providers in Ontario is a common but highly underreported phenomenon. Collaboration ranges from the sharing of best practices to jointly hosting events and initiatives, from service coordination to agency co-location. While collaboration has occurred at the managerial and workforce planning levels for decades, collaboration between frontline workers from diverse agencies has been a more recent response to a complex service provision landscape—today, organizations simply cannot afford *not* to collaborate. The process through which collaboration has emerged varies greatly across communities and stakeholder groups based on local client and agency needs.

Employers in Ontario often cite a lack of skilled candidates as a key recruitment challenge.[1] Employment services providers are well-positioned to address the mismatch between workers' skills and employers' needs; however, there is a widespread lack of awareness about these services for employers. When employment service providers collaborate, not only do they increase outcomes for job seekers and employers, they jointly raise the profile of community service agencies. Learning how to best coordinate employer engagement strategies across agencies is essential to optimizing job development but is seldom recognized by agencies or funders. This document summarizes key findings from our white paper on collaboration found at esclm.ca.

For the nearly 400,000 Ontario small and medium enterprises,[2] increased access to Job Developer Networks* and their collective investment in client experience can have significant positive impacts.

***Job Developer Networks** are composed of frontline service providers (typically Job Developers—human resources and marketing professionals that connect job seekers and employers via community employment service agencies) that regularly exchange information and best practices, and engage in other forms of collaboration. They are often connected to broader networks of service providers.

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[1] "Career Development in the Canadian Workplace: National Business Survey—Regional Comparison: Ontario," *Canadian Education and Research Institute for Counselling (CERIC*), March 2014.

[2] Government of Canada, Key Small Business Statistics—August 2013," *Industry Canada*, 2013.

II. OUR FINDINGS

Collaboration is habitually difficult to measure in quantifiable terms. This is because of the requisite investment in time and resources to determine standards and metrics for collaborative initiatives. Our research draws on survey data from 65 participants and interviews with 70 key informants, to develop 31 case studies on collaboration, 28 of which are Ontario-based. This provides a more complete picture of both the narratives surrounding collaboration and the empirical success of these initiatives.

Our research explores how service provider networks leverage funding to contribute to the strength of the employment services sector.

They play a key role in ensuring seamless service provision and are an integral element in local economic development and labour force planning.

Our White Paper found that collaboration between Job Developers contributes to more efficient employment outcomes (e.g. job matching) and to a larger and more diverse pool of job-ready individuals, and enhances the profile of community employment service agencies. However, these initiatives are often under-funded and there is a lack of awareness among employers of community employment services more generally. The report concludes with recommendations to support Job Developer networks and other collaborative initiatives.

Service provider networks are diverse in governance, vision and scope.
Common features of successful SPNs include:

» Clearly defined purposes	» Clearly defined roles & responsibilities	» Flexibility
» Protocols & standards	» Consistent communication	» Good governance
» Realistic outcomes	» Dedicated human & financial resources	» Trust

COLLABORATIVE JOB DEVELOPMENT MODELS

BENEFITS

1. Contribute to more efficient employment outcomes
2. Contribute to a larger and more diverse pool of job-ready individuals
3. Enhance the legitimacy of community employment service agencies
4. Increase the ease and frequency of referrals
5. Increase in-house knowledge of employment service provider staff
6. Increase the organizational capacity of employment service providers
7. Provide a unified voice for employment service providers

BARRIERS

1. Competitive environment for funding
2. Lack of awareness among employers of community employment services
3. Lack of metrics for collaboration
4. Lack of recognition by funders of the significance of collaborative initiatives and their role in integrated labour force planning
5. Segmentation of service provision which makes inter-agency referrals difficult

🔍 6. WHAT DOES INCREASED ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY LOOK LIKE?

Developing organizational capacity based on community needs improves service quality and standards for delivery. One way this is done is by sharing job postings across the network of agencies. When Job Developers share job postings they increase the talent pool that the employer has access to. Job Developers are then able to more effectively select candidates that are the best fit for a position. At the same time, the employer works through a single Job Developer, allowing them to save time and resources. Increasing the size and diversity of the available talent pool increases the competitive advantage of nonprofit employment service providers over fee-for-service employment staffing agencies.

INNOVATIVE PRACTICES SPOTLIGHT

This list is not exhaustive but provides a snapshot of some of the best practices developed by community service provider networks in the White Paper's case studies.

Practices	Examples
1. A centralized job board that brings awareness to service providers	» Simcoe Muskoka Workforce Planning Board
2. Conferences for frontline workers on common issues	» NewComer Organizations Network (NCON), or Bruce Grey Community Partners
3. Co-location of service providers	» YMCA of Niagara Employment & Newcomer Services
4. Coordinated job fair protocols	» Prince Edward County Employment Network
5. Coordinated marketing for employer engagement	» Don Valley Employment Solutions
6. Electronic platform for sharing job postings	» CASIP's Employer Services Network (ESN)
7. Integrated service planning	» ESCLM and Literacy Link South Central
8. Inter-agency referral resources for Job Developers	» Employment and Literacy Partners Sault Ste. Marie, Literacy Link Niagara, and the Timmins Area Network Group (TANG)
9. Job matching technologies	» Magnet Today, London-Middlesex Immigrant Employment Council (LMIEC) Job Match Network, or Ottawa Job Match Network
10. Joint employer events	» Mississauga Employment Services Network (MESN)
11. Funded network coordinator	» ESCLM's Job Developers Network (JDN), ESN, or the City of Toronto's Youth Employment Partnerships (YEP)
12. Rotating meeting locations to showcase agencies	» Niagara Job Developers Network Committee, or NCON
13. Scenario planning	» Job Developers Resource Network, British Columbia

UNIQUE CASES OF COLLABORATION [THESE CASES, AND THE TYPOLOGY THAT CONTEXTUALIZES THEM, ARE DETAILED IN THE WHITE PAPER]

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Type I. Membership-based networks

Job Developers' Networks:

1. Job Developers Network—London, Ontario
2. Employer Services Network—Toronto
3. The Employment Alliance—London, Ontario
4. Employment Connections Toronto
5. Grand Erie Job Developer Network
6. Job Developers Network—Waterloo, Wellington and Dufferin
7. Job Developer's Resource Network (JDRN)—Victoria, BC
8. Mississauga Employment Services Network (MESN)
9. Youth Employment Partnerships (YEP)—Toronto

Provincial Networks:

10. Ontario Disabilities Employment Network
11. Collaborative Partnership Network (CPN)—Nova Scotia

National Network:

12. Assisting Local Leaders with Immigrant Employment Strategies (ALLIES)

Type II. Decentralized, issue-based networks

Frontline Staff Networks:

13. Employment Plus Network—Thunder Bay
14. Niagara Job Developers Network Committee
15. Niagara Employment Network (NEN)
16. Quinte Employment Network (QEN)

Management Networks:

17. Don Valley Employment Solutions (DVES)
18. Employment and Literacy Partners Sault Ste. Marie
19. Coordination in the Four County Region
    19a. Bruce Grey Community Partners
    19b. Network Huron
    19c. Partners for Resources in Employment Perth (PREP)

Managers and frontline staff:

20. Timmins Area Network Group (TANG)
21. NewComer Organizations Network (NCON)—Peel Halton

Type III. Online tools and communities of practice

Job Matching:

22. Magnet Today—Toronto
23. Job Match Network—London, Ontario

Online Community of Practice:

24. BC Centre for Employment Excellence (CfEE)—Vancouver

Type IV. Cross-sector Partnerships

25. Professional Immigrant Networks (PINs)—Toronto
26. Charlotte Works—North Carolina

Regional Network:

27. Regional Literacy Networks

Co-location of service providers:

28. YMCA of Niagara Employment & Newcomer Services

CASE SPOTLIGHT: ESCLM'S JOB DEVELOPERS NETWORK

A project of ESCLM, the Job Developers Network (JDN) is a forum for Job Developers from 17 community organizations to meet, discuss and share information, and strategize solutions that promote collaborative service delivery to job seekers and employers. The network formed in 2011 with the recognition that employment services could be delivered more effectively through collaboration, rather than competition.

The JDN is governed by ESCLM and has two Co-Chairs and a Project Manager. The network is supported by its community partners and is partially funded by the City of London to provide additional coordinated service delivery across employment agencies. This is a unique partnership and one that has been highly beneficial to the growth of City of London's economic prosperity.

A recent survey of the JDN found that the network has significantly contributed to improved coordination between job developers and to individual member agencies' strategic interests. The survey also identified the JDN as an effective forum to present a unified message to employers and funders about the state of employment services in London-Middlesex.

What we learned: The JDN's success is driven by trust and goodwill among Job Developers, and support from member organization's staff. ESCLM has over 20 years of experience building networks. The relationships and common processes developed through ESLCM helped form the foundation for Job Developers to connect, share information, develop relationships and to advocate on behalf of the sector. The network has successfully brought together diverse agencies, which was only possible with trust, organizational support and dedicated resources.

The JDN:
- » Collectively reports results;
- » Coordinates job fairs with other community partners;
- » Provides integrated planning with employer partners with large and small hiring needs;
- » Provides professional development and networking opportunities for its members;
- » Develops training workshops and resources
- » Provides consistent marketing and communications
- » Sets standards for optimal and consistent service delivery; and
- » Shares hundreds of job postings annually.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS TO FUNDERS

1. SUSTAINABLE FUNDING:

Service provider networks deliver significant return on investment for funders of employment service agencies because they increase the efficiency and effectiveness of job development services, ensure consistent and high standards of job development, and the capacity of community employment organizations.

Service provider networks are seldom funded, and yet they still require staff support for administrative and logistical roles which have typically been absorbed by member organizations. With a sustainable source of funding, networks can reach their potential. Providing core funding for existing service provider networks and or funding for pilot initiatives for new networks will have a significant impact in the community. There is shared responsibility between the funder and the recipient agency to develop a sustainable funding model.

2. SHARED METRICS FOR SUCCESS:

Funders, in consultation with stakeholders, should develop metrics that adequately reflect the state of service provision when it occurs collaboratively. This could capture collaboration including inter-agency referrals, as well as other forms of collaboration such as joint funding proposals, joint event coordination, or joint employer engagement. Agreed upon requirements or metrics should be clearly communicated to all local employment and training service providers. The inclusion of metrics by funders in projects and service planning will provide more systemic incentives to collaborate.

3. SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT FOR COLLABORATION:

Leveraging partnerships with workforce planning and development organizations is central to supporting collaborative initiatives. Partnerships with other nonprofit organizations, municipalities and economic development agencies can support service provider networks in a number of ways: providing administrative or logistical support, facilitating connections to employers, tailoring Labour Market Information for service providers, facilitating opportunities for professional development, or providing research on specific issues. Existing community partnerships can be enhanced through mutually beneficial initiatives like service provider networks. Engaging partners to more efficiently plan and deliver employment services will also pay dividends to the entire community.