

Strategy #10: Tools for Transitions

Literacy Link Niagara (LLN)

Literacy Link Niagara (LLN) received funding to review the role of frontline practitioners in assisting lower-skilled clients in moving towards employment, including the identification of tools and supports that frontline practitioners need. To complete this project, LLN took a community action-research approach. LLN staff connected with both practitioners and learners to identify the types of tools and processes that will best support these transitions.

This project is one strategy of several that was researched by adult regional literacy networks in Ontario. The collection of these projects is called the “Coordinating to Bring Low Literacy and Marginalized Clients Employment” project and is coordinated by Literacy Link South Central (LLSC).

In recent years, LLN has completed a number of projects that have tried to connect literacy and employment practitioners to create seamless transitions between services.

We wanted to complete this strategy to

- focus on the relationships between literacy practitioners and learners with employment goals - the lines between the role of literacy practitioner and employment counsellor are often blurry
- explore the current and potential impact of the literacy practitioners role in relation to learner employment goals.

Partners

A chart of partners and their roles in the project is below.

Partner	Role(s)
Niagara Literacy and Basic Skill programs	<p>Participated in</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• focus groups about practitioner role in relation to learners with employment goals• survey to determine tools/processes that would assist practitioners to serve learners with employment goals• one goal facilitated discussion with Employment Ontario Employment Services (ES) about roles in relation to learners with employment goals <p>Provided feedback on job profile tool.</p> <p>Hosted focus groups for learners with employment goals to understand learner experience (3 programs).</p>
Niagara Employment Ontario Employment Services programs	<p>Participated in One Goal facilitated discussion about roles in relation to learners with employment goals.</p>
Adult Basic Education Association (ABEA)	<p>Provided some questions for May focus group with programs.</p>
Niagara Workforce Planning Board	<p>Provided data for job profiles.</p>

Activities

As part of this strategy, Literacy Link Niagara (LLN)

- a. conducted a literature review of tools that could be used in the classroom to assist practitioners or to train practitioners to serve learners with employment goals
- b. held a focus group with literacy practitioners to discuss the role of the literacy practitioner in relation to learners with employment goals as well as tools that would help a literacy practitioner support these learners
- c. created local job profiles using labour market data for emerging jobs that learners might be interested in- requested at May focus group and through survey to programs
- d. held a facilitated discussion with Employment Ontario Employment Services and Literacy programs to discuss roles in relation to learners with employment goals
- e. held 3 learner focus groups to understand the experience of the learner

Lessons Learned

Lessons learned through this project include

- a. programs have different approaches to learners with employment goals
- b. some practitioners have different levels of comfort and knowledge of job market when working with clients with employment goals
- c. many literacy and employment staff are confused about where one job stops and the other one stops

- d. literacy programs are concerned about different expectations and targets between literacy and employment programs specifically when a learner is expected to be employed
- e. many learners with employment goals have not completed labour market research to determine if jobs are available

Challenges

Job Ready

Practitioners in the May focus group and through a follow-up survey stated that they want to know what “job-ready” means to Employment Services.

Literacy Link Niagara (LLN) hosted a facilitated discussion for literacy and employment service staff to discuss the definition of “job-ready” as well as the roles of literacy and employment service staff in relation to learners with employment goals.

At the end of the session, it was determined that “job-ready” means different things for different clients. The focus was shifted to referral protocol to help determine when and where each client should transition to another program. LLN has committed to enhancing current literacy referral protocol by the end of the 2013-14 and to developing new literacy-employment referral protocol with programs in early 2014-15.

Different Expectations

It was identified by literacy practitioners that they are concerned about the different targets and timelines for learners to reach employment by Employment Services. Many programs feel that these timelines do not allow learners to reach sustainable employment and push many into low-income, low-skilled jobs. This issue was discussed at the One Goal facilitated discussion day, but Employment Services cannot

change their targets. Literacy Link Niagara will continue to facilitate dialogue if concerns continue to be voiced.

Knowledge Transfer

Literacy Link Niagara has shared information and tools with local literacy programs throughout the project. Because the project relied heavily on program input and was often at the direction of the programs, they were involved every step of the way.

Literacy Link Niagara

- has shared information that is relevant to Employment Services including notes and next steps from the One Goal facilitated discussion day with Employment Services via email
- was part of a webinar series about the Labour Market Strategies on December 17, 2013
- will be compiling a local mini-project report to share with all partners involved in the project

Achieving the Employment Ontario Mission and Vision

This strategy ties to the Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities' - EO's Mission and Vision by

- providing LBS practitioners with research and tools to help learners transition to employment and/or Employment Services
- facilitating dialogue to support seamless transitions between LBS and ES providers

MTCU Vision: "Ontario will have the most educated people and highly skilled workforce in the world to build the province's competitive advantage and quality of life."

Conclusion

Literacy Link Niagara (LLN) will continue to support and explore the relationship between literacy practitioners and learners with employment goals. It is important that Employment Services be included in the discussion to ensure that roles are clearly defined and that learners transition at key points in their pathway.

Appendix

Additional documents for this project include

- Literature Review
- Notes from May 24 focus group
- Notes from One Goal facilitated discussion
- Job Profiles
- Notes from learner focus groups