

**Strategy # 8: Consider and report on how to effectively use Labour Market Information (LMI) to bridge Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) with Employment Services (ES), and ultimately employment.**

### **Adult Basic Education Association (ABEA)**

The most important starting point for the ABEA was to consider the knowledge base of LMI within LBS programs. In our discussions with LBS frontline staff we found very little understanding of LMI or awareness as to where best to locate LMI information.

Through this project, working with Workforce Planning Hamilton (WPH), we were able to create a tool (see Appendix A and B), webinar, and face-to-face training around LMI to support LBS frontline staff to integrate LMI as they develop learner plans and support learners along their paths (see Appendix C and D).

With the increasing need to bridge clients from upgrading to employment, LMI has become more important for program planning and delivery. However, LMI can be complex to use and not all frontline staff are comfortable exploring LMI.

This project relied on feedback and input from frontline staff of Hamilton ES and LBS managers; LBS frontline staff from both Hamilton and Niagara; WPH and ABEA.

## **Activities**

### **January - April 2013**

- a. Developed pre-survey questions for Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) frontline staff.
- b. Developed focus group questions for managers' meeting and LBS frontline staff meetings.
- c. Held focus groups with Employment Services (ES) and LBS managers.
- d. Held focus group LBS frontline staff.
- e. Sent questions to Literacy Link Niagara (LLN) to be used with their frontline staff.

### **May - June 2013**

- a. Completed first draft of the training tool.
- b. Met with Workforce Planning Hamilton (WPH) to go over suggested changes/additions.

### **July - October 2013**

- a. Revisions were completed on the training tool based on feedback from the June meetings. This was done to ensure the training and resources were relevant to practitioners in their day-to-day work with learners and for ease of use.
- b. WPH and ABEA met again to review changes and to discuss how best to implement the training both face to face and using Centra (webinar).
- c. One face-to-face session and one webinar session were completed and evaluated.

### **November- December 2013**

- i. Workforce Planning Hamilton (WPH) and Adult Basic Education Association (ABEA) met to determine any recommended changes to the training and the tool.
- ii. Follow-up discussions were held with the Literacy Community Planning (LCP) table.
- iii. Follow-up discussions were held with the Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework (OALCF) frontline worker group – response was very supportive and positive.
- iv. The tool was disseminated to LCP managers.

## **Lessons Learned**

A. The pre-survey of LBS frontline staff gave us the focus for the project development. From the survey we learned that

- 77% aren't familiar with using and interpreting NAICS
- 35% aren't familiar with using and interpreting NOCs
- 88% aren't comfortable with interpreting common economic indicators or how they relate to one another
- 58% aren't comfortable with interpreting labour market trends through graphs
- 70% aren't familiar with labour market trends in Hamilton over the past 5 – 10 years

**Conclusion** – training needs to be provided to help frontline staff use Labour Market Information (LMI) in their classrooms.

B. The Employment Services (ES)/Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) Manager meeting suggested that clients want/need information about

- identifying transferable skills
- learning about career navigation
- learning how to complete credits
- finding relevant information for their goals
- dealing with both current and long-term career needs

The format for information needs to be short, clear, to the point, both online and in hardcopy.

Labour Market Information (LMI) has a long-term role with clients but in the short term, LBS clients are more concerned about getting credits than getting jobs and ES clients are more concerned about getting jobs rather than upgrading.

**Conclusion:** It is difficult to get clients to see beyond immediate need and consider long-term outcomes. Materials and training need to be developed that encourages long-term thinking.

C. Any resources or training developed needs to react specifically to practitioners' day-to-day work with learners and include quick reference tools.

## Challenges

The only challenge we faced was in speaking to a Literacy Community Planning (LCP) member after the training. The evaluation results of the frontline staff were very positive. However, one LCP member stated that neither she nor her staff found the information applicable to LBS and that it wasn't necessary for them to understand LMI since ES are available to support their staff with LMI.

We found it difficult to help this manager understand the relevance of their staff knowing more about Labour Market Information (LMI) and using it with learners. There was a discrepancy in what the manager stated and what the frontline staff stated. Frontline staff, not only through the evaluation but also in a follow-up OALCF frontline worker meeting, stated they understood the purpose of the tool and training and saw it as a support to their work.

We requested a follow-up meeting with the manager and staff as we move into Phase II – so that before we move forward with providing information to others in the western region we could see what gaps might exist in the information or how to better explain the purpose of LBS using LMI with learners. To date, the manager has not been receptive to a meeting. We are attempting further discussions with this manager.

## **Knowledge Transfer**

In October, we held one face-to-face training session and one webinar. The purpose of the training was to give

- a better understanding of Labour Markets and what affects them
- a greater knowledge of how to use LMI in the classroom to better assist learners
- an enhanced ability to bridge learners to employment

The sessions included

- a review of the tool components
- tours of common websites for LMI (Working in Canada, Ontario Job Futures, HRSDC)
- activities that considered
  - labour market information mismatches – a discussion about learners experiences
  - interrelated labour markets – a small group discussion based on an article
  - case studies

In November, we continued the training discussion at our Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum (OALCF) Frontline Worker Group meeting. The feedback was very positive. They saw a lot of benefit to this training because it helped them become more familiar with Labour Marketing Information (LMI) resources and how to use it in the classroom. They had some suggestions for Phase II, including

- adding more website navigation tools to the poster
- having a career exploration task developed to use with learners to help get learners using the tool and to consider their options

In the follow-up survey, 83% stated they had used the tool when working with learners and 100% intend to use the tool within the next 6 months.

In December, we offered an information session about the tool to English as a Second Language (ESL) and Employment Services (ES) providers in Hamilton and Waterloo region. They reported that they were either not using LMI resources available to them or using them very little. For one who had used them a little, she reported that the information session explained some components of the resources that she hadn't used before. Participants also commented that this type of training would be helpful for practitioners outside of Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) as well.

A language practitioner commented that schools are now organizing programs more toward employment. This tool and training will help instructors shape their classes to client's employment needs and give them the skills they need to help their clients find work.

In December, we participated in a joint webinar presentation with Literacy Link Niagara (LLN) to a province-wide audience as part of the series of webinars presented by project partners.

## **Achieving Employment Ontario (EO) Mission and Vision**

This strategy meets Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities' - EO's expectations by supporting Literacy and

Basic Skills (LBS) frontline staff knowledge base of Labour Marketing Information (LMI). As frontline staff become more comfortable with incorporating LMI in their classrooms and/or training plans, we will be

- ensuring LBS clients are moving towards employment
- supporting seamless transition to employment by bridging LBS to Employment Services (ES)

**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."**

This strategy also reinforces the vision of MTCU-EO in the value and importance of collaboration. Projects like this allow more intense facilitated discussion, information sharing, best practice development and partnering.

## **Conclusion**

Through this project, we learned that while LMI is recognized by most as a valued and important part of program delivery, not all LBS frontline staff are comfortable using it. One program suggested that since ES has expertise in LMI it wasn't necessary for LBS programs to understand or use LMI. This suggests to us that more awareness of how to use LMI in the classroom is essential to not only program delivery but also to learner success. By moving this project into phase II, we will be able to increase that awareness to a greater number of programs.

We also learned that this tool has value for English as a Second Language (ESL) and ES providers. This gives us reason to open the training in Phase II to a larger audience outside of LBS.

Appendix A	LMI Tool - Part A
Appendix B	LMI Tool - Part B
Appendix C	LMI Training - Presentation
Appendix D	LMI Training - Case Studies