Suitability Questions—online (recorded)

Thanhh-Thanhh Tieu/Sue Dawe: Conestoga College, Cambridge

Jake Martel: Nokeekwe, London (native/cb)

Tracey McIntyre: Fanshaw College, Simcoe

Lisa Wells: Fanshawe College, Woodstock

Trish Daubs: Lambton Kent District School Board, Sarnia (also submitted written response included at end)

Helen McLeod: The Hamilton and District Literacy Council (cb)

Robyn Cook-Ritchie (written response only included at end)

1. **How many other literacy organizations are in your region? Do you find that the number of other literacy organizations in your local area affects your suitability numbers? If so, in what way(s)?**

   Thanhh/Sue: 4. No, because we are working with different levels…support each other so students get to the right spot. Thanhh-Geographical differences

   Jake – Several but we are the only native org. Some aren't beholden to Ministry targets, have additional funders.

   Tracey- One other literacy provider, and it doesn't affect our suitability numbers. We perhaps target different people. Conestoga very supportive.

   Lisa Wells – 3 or 4 depending on different literacy orgs in our region. No doesn't affect our suitability #. We get referrals from other orgs. Small area—Woodstock.

   Helen – Same. # doesn't have much of an effect. We serve a specific niche. Other orgs are big help to help low level learners to help us so it is wonderful.

2. **In what ways does niche development help or hinder your agency's ability to reach suitability requirements?**

   Jake – Only native stream in London. 65% of our learners have self-identified as first-nations aboriginal. 60(b). Our referral partners know we are a good fit for these learners.

   Tracey – Assist us so we can target them…OW, ODSP, can do niche targeting. Lisa (target to that area?)

Trish – secondary credit – only sb in area offering adult ed. Large area (size of PEI). Higher # of individuals with less Thanh grade 12. We have no teacher-led courses. Work with OW and credit programs. Helps with our suitability. Older laid-off workers who need to upgrade skills or get high school diploma. Computer training. High # of lay-offs, so high demand for that program.

Helen – Helps us since we serve learners with ES levels 1 to mid-2. Multiple barriers to learning and employment. Hinder though when showing progress.

Thanhh/Sue: Niche helps in working cooperatively because we aren't competing, so we can develop a clear pathway. Waterloo Region quite diverse, Cambridge lower economic scale which means we are servicing people who really need it. OW, laid-off—several. Hindering because we are a college we get students who don't fit our suitability.

3. **How do you ask the hard questions? How do you get learners to self-identify (e.g. disability)**
Tracey – Hard question. Review completed form with learner. This section can get missed. The review allows open up discussion. Explain positive side…access other programs/services. Confidentiality policy to ensure there is a comfort level. Circle back when we review the form, and try to open up a dialogue.

Lisa – Cover off the supports that are available for disability and resources avail. In college. Spend a lot of time in orientation before we really deal with the form. Lots of times where that part of the form is left blank, but we do review that again, we also circle back once courses start, once they get to know you a little more, more apt to self-identify. Lots of talk about types of resources avail. When they understand why we are asking.

Trish – similar to what Tracey explained. Follow up once the form is completed and review anything that isn't complete. Tell them completely up to them whether they self-identify, as they build trust. Explain purpose. Statistical only. Confidentiality.

Helen – similar to what's been mentioned. Timing is actually the most critical point. We don't ask the hard questions until after the assessment—greater comfort level. Most of our students are unable to complete on their own, so we do it for them together so we don't miss any. Understand ourselves so we ask the questions in a very matter-of-fact fashion.

Thanh/Sue: Same as above. After assessment, build trust. Forms reviewed individually…talk as a group as we go through it. Orientation. Build rapport first. Statiscal info – respond well…some aren't sure of phrasing of terms, so need to be explained.

Jake: Letting them know these questions are so Ministry can monitor us, not monitoring them. Lot of people think the stats are for. "We just have to make sure we are serving people who need our services…we could serve anybody, but if we take a bunch of people who are just sort of privileged people so we can grind out the success stories we aren't helping the community. Agree about establishing trust being very important.

Jane asked if somebody identified that ODSP is the $ they receive, do you question when they haven't checked off disability? Helen/Jake – yes. Thanhh has question. So I brought this up with ETCs before because we were looking for direction re ODSP, may fit some suitability criteria, but unless they agree to disclose, we can't do it for them. Some people won't want to disclose.
Jane - That disability criteria is quite long.

4. Do you do targeted marketing to reach these groups?

Trish – relationship and partnership building with these groups. Work closely with ? laid off workers. Work on site. Mobile lab. Nearby first nations, we will offer onsite programs. Women's directorate. Once a month in Chatham, we do "Opening Doors" with Ontario works. That ofen results in many referrals. Piloted pre-English credit with OW? Don't have teacher-led classes. OW like the start and end date programming. Marketing expensive.

Send flyers to ES. Usually have people waiting. Case workers already familiar. Speaking engagements with OW and ES. That seems to get a # of people through the door.

Helen – Yes definitely we do target marketing.

5. What kinds of marketing do you do?

Helen – personal contact with agencies that serve potential clients. Direct marketing re posters. Students are wonderful marketing – word of mouth. Word of mouth doesn't really count as a nice little ticky for referral.

Thanh/Sue: College wide events. Community events. Open House. Guest speaking engagements. Online – social media presence. Materials that go out as well.

Sue – relationship building. Staff who sit on committees, local employment network committees, to talk to others in the field. Word of Mouth huge. Agree
OW good relationship and ES upgrading literacy group. Local LBS agencies, we promote/market each others programs.

Jake – Participate in a lot of partnership projects. Purchase of Service agreement with OW which allows us to when a client speaks to their caseworker, and they can refer to get an educational goals written. So all lbs in our area, LSP – everyone always knows what is happening. These reports designed to give a learner recommendations for best fit (# of days/hours/levels/goals. Make sure that the recs we make are the best fit for the learner. In my case, native stream…ancestry, be culturally sensitive. P of S agreement/educational goals—are they done in other communities? Real factor in our success story. Our regional is awesome at getting our people together.

Tracey/Lisa
Agree that relationship building, working on your good reputation, partnership projects key. We do OW presentations, how we can best partner. Local addiction centre, based on what their needs are, discuss approaches that best suit their needs. The new ? program. Community events, fair. Staff member on homelessness task force. Getting to community events, potential learners other providers is critical.
Targeted youth this year. Perhaps they may be added on as a suitability measure so want to be ready.

Student word of mouth issue—take a lot of pride in that, but we don't get a "ticky". We also do the social media/radio. Face-
Flyers in 200 washroom frames, (captive audience) rotate them. Participate in Chamber of Commerce newsletters.''

Lisa: Biggest is word of mouth. Workforce committees. United Way. Relationships key in this area to get the word out. We do traditional marketing..course guides, flyers, pamphlets, social media.

Jane to Jake's question– we have centralized assessment with OW, so highest OW referral rates here.

6. **How often do you check and compare your percentages? How frequently would you recommend that programs analyze these results or is it even necessary?**

Lisa: I think it is necessary to analyze results but also don't think it dictates the type of program you are running. I look at them all the time, but don't necessarily if it drops significantly that's a huge issue, but if we are looking at the 30%, I wouldn't say I spend a lot of time on analyzing percentages. I would go back to the marketing/partnerships. It is really on who is completing your programs too. That's a hard question to be honest.

Helen: I agree with Lisa, tough question. We look at it monthly certainly but don't react monthly. Looking for shifting of trends. If we notice a large difference we analyze why, what's different. Looking at it quarterly/analyze is quite adequate.

Thanh/Sue: Monthly. We have 4 sites so we can compare. Similar to Lisa and Helen—you don't react right away. It might reflect what is happening in a community….low unemployment. Labour market.

Jake: Anomaly because I'm a # nerd, I count the minutes until the DSQ comes out each month> I try to predict where I should be before I get the DSQ. Did I make my prediction, hit my target? Take it into account monthly—if I see a blip, I will spend a lot of time trying to figure out why and try to bring other people into that discussion as well. People at the support orgs, contacts at OW…what's going on here? Comes through some of the training I participated in being new to the literacy field—had training from Delicate and Robyn. When September hits, my #'s are going to be off the charts because they were last year—come back to school, Moms have been away for the summer. I have to prepare for that spike to accommodate need.

Tracey: Our manager analyzes monthly, brings quarterly unless there are glaring issues. Look for variations/trends over time. Can't react immediately. Consider trends.

Trish: Depends on the size of your program and how your program is doing generally. I check DSQ every month. Delicate training – traffic patterns—record all of ouro percentages, compare that to the Ontairo percentages as well as those of my region. I send a spreadsheet out to all staff, because I have 4 locations. Not always in complete contact with all of my instructors—important they understand big picture. Ask staff for suggestions/comments/strategies. It is an agenda itema t every staff mtg. Report 61 quite useful in helping you figure out what your numbers are going to be like if you can't wait for your DSQ to come out.

7. **What training do you or your network give staff on suitability requirements?**

Thanh: Participated in Minsitry training, Our network provides training opps. Last year on mental health. Within our college there are training opps that can be tied to suitability. How to support people who need accommodations.

Sue: At individual site levels we talk regularly. Training someone new. Make sure we have a clear understanding. Support each other.

Project READ sent out a list of things that would include disability which was helpful. Could show this to clients.

Jake: I know some people who have had mental health issues, so glad to see that is something you are looking into. We are getting referrals from the hospital on thiese issues. We are looking to expand. Intake people are trained in common assessment through the Employment Sector Council..very valuable. They emphasize you include the environmental factors before goal setting. When you are trained to look for those factors and have those conversations, it can give you some ideas there might be a question you can ask.

Tracey/Lisa: Agree with Thanh had said. We give internal training…staff meetings with college sector committee. Spend a lot of time when new staff member comes on to work with us on what is important—filling out the form, how it relates to the DSQ .

We also have a look at analyzing results which increases understanding—what is entered, what is counted. Toolkit? Network training, college sector, western region, conferences, etc.

Trish: Early on I partnered with the local Lambton college and we had Angela Hoyt come in and do a 2 day training with our staff to make sure they understand that these outcomes are paramount. Events that network has provided, other staff development.

Helen: Colleagues have covered…we take advantage of all training offered. Most useful is the case-by-case discussion when staff have re suitability requirements to maintain consistency in our region. EG, grade finished in school…sometimes that doesn't line up with the assessment and other things that happen during the interview, so what do we do about that, and how do we ensure that data is consistent.

8. **What supports does your network/LSP or support organization give you in meeting suitability requirements?**

Jake – Our org has set up the Sarah Delicate training (LCSS) really helpful. Those partnerships as well. Not training specifically but partnerships LCSS tries to foster for us. Allow us to get the msg out who we serve, who we are good fit for, which leads to the referrals which leads to suitability factors. They have also done some employment-specific training, so we networked with employment organizations, which helps with referrals. Give and take…if you get the referrals, the suitability data is going to be there.

Tracey/Lisa: The network is critical. Literacy service training, outreach, staff training webinars face-to-face. We provide info to our network to discuss changing suitability factors. Sharing best practices, brainstorming. ES group in College Sector – partners.

Lisa: In our LSP spend a lot of time discussion in suitability with all the different orgs. Allowed us a lot of training of what was affecting that early on, when Cams came in. Crucial, because you wouldn't know why something happened. This criteria was one that for a lot of us we weren't sure why we weren't getting those amounts. We would look at our class, and it wasn't the data collection. Overtime lot of support with LSP. Diving down into the data. What affects it. Training through Sarah Delicate, things organized by LLSC

Trish: Useful that TCLN developed a common referral form to get the right people into our program. Providing pd opportunities. Invited some of our referral partners to many of these events as well. WE've had a good turnout from OW, ES. OW sits at our LSP meetings—always invited. The more info they have what we do lead to suitable referals to our program.

Helen: THE ABEA is our network: provide great opps for training/networking/bridging with employment providers. Frontline worker meetings – staff from all different literacy providers get together—common referral protocol. These relationships with frontline workers make it possible to make warm referrals.

Sue/Thanh: more of the same ofWhat others say. Relationships. Space at LSP meetings. Strategize. Sue: Common referral form. Arranging tours/opps for our people to go visit other programs. School Bus tours to the ES agencies, and each other's agencies.

9. **What would you say are the best practices for meeting suitability requirements?**

Tracey/Lisa:
The best practice is to create partnerships, build on our reputation in the community, ensure we are entering /updating data on ongoing basis to ensure nothing is missing.

Lisa – Agree partnerships, word of mouth (how important that is for your learners to have a good experience and tell their friends, because that is where we get a lot of referrals. Clients that may have some barriers are hesitant so W of M important. Data management-double-checking data. If you see a drop in stats you really need to find why that is. Could be it was missed. Form not filled out correctly. Key when seeing trends you can figure out why.

Trish: All staff should understand Perf. Mngmt. Get pd and other opps to further understanding. Better outcomes. Restrict the # of people who enter the data into our cams system. We have 4 locations, but only have 2 who entere the data to ensure the accuracy. Staff uptodate on referrals..

Co-located with credit at 2 locations, and with ES at the other 2 locations: Instrumental in suitable referrals take place. Conversations, meet regularly, helps with suitability clients.

Helen: Most important is awareness of the suitability requirements and understanding of what's involvemd in the requirements. Partnerships/Marketing that have already been mentioned. The referral sources – we have a binder and online we have a red book (no wrong door philosophy) we may refer to our regional network if not suitable. Orientation to make sure the program is a good fit for the student and we have an initial screening which allows us to find out that we are the best service for that client.

Thanh/Sue: Relationships and co-location very important. Orientation, one-on-one with learners to get their assessment results back, goals..really helpful.

Sue: Co-location goes a long way – nice working flow with other services. Partnerships, relationships, word of mouth. Students do best marketing.

Jake: Warm referral, great phrase. Goes back to trust so really helps. If we get the warm referral from the case worker, that trust is transferable to a certain degree.

10. **What final comments or advice would you give other agencies planning to improve their Suitability numbers?**

Lisa: Check your numbers. Make sure it is accurate. Limit the # of people who are doing the data entry—key. Also to make sure you are reviewing the stats, and when you see a trend overtime, make sure you know why that is and you have an answer to it. When talking to staff, hashing out, key. Lot of double checking, auditing the fields. Truly have seen the difference in results when spending time on that.

Trish: Agree with Lisa. Look at ALL of your reports—referral sources-who is referring and who is not. Establish ones: WSIB, ask your partners. OW maybe has a core # of individuals who need Gr. 12 to graduate and are struggling. Called ES re programing for first nations.

Helen: Recognizing the importance of suitability –not as a statistic but as a tool – motivating yourself and staff, helping the right person, the most in need. Goes a long way to everyone feeling good, and not just being a stat.

Thanh/Sue: Agree with everyone. Encourage relationship building to develop app. Referrals. Look at where connections are weaker. Talk to ES. Possibility re coordination there.

Relationship building, partners, etc. City Hall. Also with our students. The better we know our students the better we will meet our suitability numbers.

Jake: All been said…great panel. Like a lot of the points about relationships are also with the students.

Tracey/Lisa:

Tracey – agree with everyone…we are in synch. Love what Helen said about who we are helping…not just stats. Suitability factors are here to stay. Recognize importance for many reasons. Analyze to ensure we have allthe right data, and continue to build partnerships.

Jane – the recording will be available 5 minutes after we sign off. If you sign back in you will see your listing of meetings, go to those tabs, and you can download recordings. We will send it through Provincial networks to let them know how they can do that.

Participants, any questions?

None

Participants: Deb Flynn (QUILL), Pedobnoque Shawbedees (Saugeen – Native), Sue Damon (The Literacy Group Waterloo Region—cb), Lisa Niley, Heather Robinet (Literacy/Numeracy Project, Clinton.)

WRITTEN RESPONSES RECEIVED TO DATE (August 31, 2015)

Suitability Questions

A. Trish Daubs, Lambton Kent District School Board, Sarnia

B. Robyn Cook-Ritchie, Grand Erie Learning Alternatives, Brantford (School Board)

11. *How many other literacy organizations are in your region? Do you find that the number of other literacy organizations in your local area affects your suitability numbers? If so, in what way(s)?*

A. There are currently 5 LBS providers in my local area as the school board covers a large mostly rural area. (2 others in Chatham Kent) (3 others in Sarnia Lambton). In 2 rural locations, LKDSB is the only LBS provider.

B. Funded EO LBS agencies in our community:

In Brantford: There is one Anglophone Community Based agency and one Deaf agency (satellite office of Hamilton) in our community of Brantford.

On Six Nations there is one Native Stream Community Based Agency.

Community Living also runs a literacy program that is funded by MCSS.

To date we have not really found that the number of agencies in our community has had an impact on the number of learners accessing our program that meet the suitability criteria.

12. *In what ways does niche development help or hinder your agency's ability to reach suitability requirements?*

A. LKDSB's primary niche is secondary credit and is the only school board in the area offering adult education.

Serve Sarnia-Lambton and Chatham Kent – areas have experienced high unemployment over the past several years.

This area has a higher Thanh the Ontario average number of individuals with less Thanh Grade 12.

Small board – no teacher led classes, resulting in high need for LBS intervention

Many older laid off workers needing skills upgrading/OSSD. LKDSB offers a boutique program- Computer Job Readiness – specifically designed for those seeking employment who have no or little computer knowledge

B. Niche development can be beneficial to helping an agency reach suitability requirements.

We offer programming that targets specific groups of learners (e.g. those on OW or those who are looking for employment and the hardest to employ- they have often been out of work for more Thanh 6 years).

13. *How do you ask the hard questions? How do you get learners to self-identify (e.g. disability)*

A. Learners complete the PRF to the best of their ability. When reviewing the PRF with the learner, if it is not already checked by the learner, the instructor will ask if they wish to self-identify as a member of any of the designated groups, adding that it is strictly voluntary. If the learner asks why, the instructor explains that it is for statistical purposes to help the ministry know who we are serving.

B. The intake process is always a conversation with the potential learner.
The self-identification section is reviewed (as is the rest of the PRF) with the client. It is made clear that it is a self-identification and they are free to disclose or not. If a client does not disclose at intake, but later self-discloses, the PRF and CaMS are updated to reflect this new information. We find with disability, this happens frequently as learners become more comfortable to share this type of information once they are more comfortable with the program.

14. Do you do targeted marketing to reach these groups?

A. It is more relationship/partnership building with these groups. Work very closely with E/S who send many older laid off workers – have the flexibility to deliver onsite there (mobile lab), or at a First Nation community etc.

Have partnered with the Women's Interval Home in Sarnia to do skills upgrading as part of the Women on the Move program (partnered with Women's Directorate)

In C/K once a month, we conduct "Opening Doors" sessions with OW – those who do not have an OSSD are scheduled by OW to attend.

Piloted a pre-English credit class with OW last fall – 6 weeks to prepare for teacher led class to follow – OW and clients seem to like start and end date programming.

B. We offer programming to meet the needs of clients on the OW caseload. We conduct targeted marketing via email directly to OW as well as email to ES programs. We post flyers in the OW office, the ES office and our own office.

15. What kinds of marketing do you do?

A. Marketing that costs money is too expensive with stagnant funding. The Computer Job Readiness is marketed to E/S (at staff meetings etc) which provides most of the referrals – flyers are sent a few weeks prior to the upcoming class – caseworkers are very familiar with the program and send many referrals.

Speaking engagements to OW /E/S and other community agencies are done regularly and all are encouraged to use the common referral form

B. Primarily email to partner organizations and through various networking opportunities (e.g at LSP meetings, workforce planning events). We also post program information on the local ES resource area television. We have a Facebook page and a webpage we use for marketing.

16. *How often do you check and compare your percentages? How frequently would you recommend that programs analyze these results or is it even necessary?*

A. Monthly DSQ reports are examined and data is entered into a spreadsheet indicating LKDSB's percentages, along with those of Ontario and the Western Region. This spreadsheet is sent monthly to all staff. When a measure is not where it should be, staff are encouraged to make suggestions, comment and work on strategies to improve the measure. PFM is a staff meeting agenda item at every staff meeting.

B. Whether we are meeting suitability is checked on a monthly basis at the very least. If our suitability percentage is lower Thanh we would like, we discuss this with the intake staff to ensure they are aware of the trend. Of course it is necessary to analyse the results. You can use the reports provided to pinpoint specifically which criteria are particularly low. Report 60B is particularly useful for summary data and Report 61 is great for raw data and data comparison. Report 64 is reviewed on a monthly basis as well.

Random file verification (to ensure all information is being entered into CaMS) is also something agencies (especially larger ones) should do on a regular basis. We also do a file review checklist prior to closing a service plan to ensure all necessary and relevant information has been entered into CaMS.

17. *What training do you or your network give staff on suitability requirements?*

A. Any and all training related to PFM, some of which is provided by the network is highly encouraged for all staff to attend. When PFM and OALCF was first introduced to LBS, LKDSB partnered with Lambton College to bring Angela Hoyt to do a 2 day training to all staff on PFM.

B. We have 1 ½ instructors. They received formal training initially when CaMs rolled out. We used materials provided by TCU (print and online). Suitability, like all performance measures, is reviewed on a regular and ongoing basis through discussion. All instructors are given the opportunity to review the DSQR on a regular/monthly basis so they understand how suitability is connected to our SQS score and funding.

18. *What supports does your network/LSP or support organization give you in meeting suitability requirements?*

A. TCLN developed a common referral form which has been used as a tool to get the right people into our programs. The network has also provided several PFM PD opportunities to staff. Events such as Getting Connected, bring referring partners such as OW and E/S together and provides an opportunity to network with these partners and to foster relationships and an understanding of appropriate referrals to LBS.

B.   This is a regular topic of discussion at our service planning meetings.

19. What would you say are the best practices for meeting suitability requirements?

A. All staff need to understand PMF and supplying as much PD and other opportunities to promote an understanding of all measures is important. As a result, staff have a pretty clear understanding of PM. Only have 2 staff enter data and do file checks regularly to ensure the accuracy of the data.

Make sure staff are up to date on referral sources for clients who are not suitable, so that at intake, if not suitable, a more appropriate program referral can take place

Co-location with credit at 2 locations and with E/S at 2 other locations has been instrumental in ensuring that suitable referrals take place.
Having regular meetings with OW, E/S and other referring partners is very important as it allows for communications about suitability and other measures to take place.

B:

a. Know what they suitability requirements are. Make sure you understand how the information collected relates to what is input into CaMS and subsequently is reflected on your DSQR. This sounds obvious, but many practitioners are still not clear about this.
b. Read your reports on a monthly basis and see where you are at. Don't wait until it is time to submit your quarterly report. At that point it is too late.
c. Discuss your suitability requirements with your referral partners. We do this frequently and it helps them decide who to refer to us. This is even true of ES. They have some suitability criteria in common but not all. Create a comparison chart and share it when you meet with them.
d. Review PRFs before you enter and client and make them a learner, especially if you have a waiting list. Does each client have approximately 3? You need to have an average of three per learner (some could have 2, some might have 5). If not, you might consider not putting them in the system.   There could be someone more suitable to take that spot.

20. What final comments or advice would you give other agencies planning to improve their Suitability numbers?

A. Look at all your reports. Examine your referral sources (Report 60B) See who is referring and who is not. If you don't have a relationship with some agencies, try to establish one – ie WSIB – ask to speak at a staff meeting etc. Talk to your partners about the kinds of needs they are seeing and see if you can build programming around it. (ie maybe OW has a core group of individuals who need English to graduate?) Work together to meet your needs and theirs.