

COMMUNITY LITERACY OF ONTARIO
MEMBERS' E-COMMUNIQUE
RAPID RE-EMPLOYMENT AND SECOND CAREER
FEBRUARY 2011

In this E-Communiqué, Community Literacy of Ontario looks at two Employment Ontario programs that are helping some laid-off workers gain the upgrading and skills training they need to re-enter the workforce: Rapid Re-employment and Training Service and Second Career. We include a description of the program and then share some examples of how literacy agencies across the province are involved in these initiatives. CLO has also provided some links where you can find more information about these initiatives.

You can read about these and other employment and training options in the Employment Ontario guide at www.tcu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/brochure/ProgrameGuide2010.pdf.

We have also included a few examples of other initiatives that agencies have undertaken to help laid-off or underemployed workers gain the skills they need to re-enter or remain competitive in the workforce.

CLO would also love to hear from you! If you are currently involved in a program or project that focuses on helping laid-off workers return to work, or if you were in the past, please drop us a line and let us know about your successes and challenges. You can reach us at clo@bellnet.ca.

RAPID RE-EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING SERVICE¹

The Rapid Re-employment and Training Service (RRTS) was launched in January 2007 through Employment Ontario and the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities to help job-threatened and laid-off workers across Ontario. At that time, funding was allocated to provide support for an estimated 15,000 workers in 90 communities to access the skills and training needed to quickly re-enter the workforce.

After a company announces a major downsize or closure, a Rapid Response Team is deployed to the community within days. The team is made up of representatives from relevant government ministries who then partner with community organizations, municipal government officials, employers and employees to develop a Service Action Plan.

¹ Based in part on a Rapid Re-Employment backgrounder prepared by Cindy Davidson for the QUILL Network. Used with permission.

The Service Action Plan is designed to:

- Identify and clarify provincial ministry responsibilities and actions in an affected labour adjustment situation
- Present and communicate a coordinated provincial response within an identified community
- Enhance the level of awareness of affected employees, employers, and the community of the services available to them during an adjustment situation
- Implement an integrated provincial plan, with defined timelines and stated objectives, that will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of services and the monitoring of labour adjustment achievements

The Service Action Plan outlines which potential agencies in the community will be delivering re-employment services, including training and upgrading. The action plan must be put in place within 30 days and is meant to identify programs and services available to workers including:

- Access to training, skills upgrading, job placement, income support, and relocation services
- Workplace literacy programs to support workers in learning new processes and technologies

As part of the Service Action Plan a list of Ministry specific programs and services are included that are potentially available to the community. This list will include a description of each service, eligibility requirements, supports available, and agency capacity. Due to the rapid nature of the process, it's important that potential service providers are clear about what they can provide and what their capacity is.

HOW DOES LBS FIT?

Literacy and Basic Skills and Academic Upgrading are important potential service providers in any labour adjustment situation. LBS agencies, along with Regional Networks, may be invited to participate at the local level and to provide input and information into the Service Action Plan. The range of services available through LBS and Academic Upgrading are often the most needed by laid-off workers.

There is a good chance that a number of the laid-off workers will require training before getting another job. This will be especially true if the worker has accessed little training during his or her working career. Employees may require one or more of the following forms of training:

- Basic skills training including literacy, numeracy, and computer literacy
- Skills training or re-training - focusing on specific skills required for employment in particular occupations and including apprenticeships
- Language training - including English (or French)-as-a Second-Language

In a labour adjustment situation LBS agencies may need to think differently from the type of traditional programming offered. The training needs to be workplace-centred as the employee's goal is going to be to find work as quickly as possible. In fact, many laid-off workers may never seek out training as they may need to find work immediately or they may be struggling with other issues as a result of the layoff and the closure.

LBS agencies need to consider creative supports and services that can be offered to this target group. These supports can be offered on-site or off-site. Some ideas include:

- Stand-alone employment-focused workshops designed to provide information and referral services and orient the employee to the skills needed to be successful at re-entering the workforce
- Time-limited, employment-related 'courses' that provide instruction in key workforce areas such as essential skills, basic computers, and goal setting
- Academic assessments for laid-off workers to determine the best course of training

While it may be possible to integrate laid-off workers immediately into an existing LBS program, the type of program offered still needs to be worker-centred, allow for the learner to progress quickly, and to acquire or upgrade essential skills needed in the workplace.

LBS agencies participating in a Rapid Re-employment and Training initiative need to be able to speak knowledgeably about their programs and to have a clear understanding of their capacity to serve potential incoming learners.

While additional funding *may* sometimes be available for new programming in a labour adjustment situation, it is more likely that an agency may be asked to respond to a situation without any additional funding and therefore it is important to know and understand the agency's capacity within its existing financial position. Agencies may also be requested to track the number of affected workers that they serve.

A Local Adjustment Committee is also established as part of the process. Part of the committee's role is to facilitate the implementation of the action plan. Members of the local committee may be drawn from among the affected workers, the employer and the local community. A local action centre may be set up as a central one-stop place for affected employees to receive services. As part of the services provided, an individual plan for workers are developed based on the individual's skills, abilities and goals.

The plan identifies any gaps between those skills and the jobs available in the marketplace. Laid-off workers will have an action plan within 15 days of their initial assessment and will have access to training, skills upgrading, job placement, and possibly relocation services.

You can learn more about Rapid Re-Employment and Training Service here:

- www.tcu.gov.on.ca/eng/eopg/publications/20110128_rrts_memo.pdf
- [Rapid Re-employment and Training Service presentation](#)

HOW HAVE LBS AGENCIES BEEN INVOLVED RAPID RE-EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING SERVICE?

LBS agencies have been involved in Rapid Re-employment initiatives in a number of ways since it was first introduced in January 2007.

Below we feature two agencies that have successfully used *Employment Track Express* to help laid-off workers, under-employed workers and workers facing potential plant closures. *Employment Track Express* is designed as a short course (four weeks) to help workers understand the Essential Skills, discover how their skills are transferrable, and develop the computer skills that they need for job search or for further education and training. It has proven to be an effective starting point to help workers move on to the next steps in the Rapid Re-Employment process.

Employment Track Express is best suited for learners from Levels 2 through 5. It can be used with Level 1 learners in a modified form and with one-on-one support. The program help workers learn about the Essential Skills and about computer skills. It provides training in using the most current version of Windows as well as Microsoft Word. It also helps learners gain the skills they need to effectively navigate labour market sites and conduct internet searches.

The curriculum can be changed based on the group. For example, it can be made more challenging for higher-level learners, it can be adapted to the version of Windows available on the computers being used, or other modifications can be made as needed.

Employment Track Express was prepared for The College Sector Committee for Adult Upgrading (www.collegeupgradingon.ca) by Stephanie Balsdon and Sandra Hennessey.

The student manual was recently made available for download at: www.nald.ca/library/learning/csc/etestudent/etestudent.pdf.

A project evaluation report can also be found online at: www.nald.ca/library/research/csc/etefinalreport/etefinalreport.pdf.

ST. MARY'S ADULT LEARNING PROGRAM

A good example of how a small community-based LBS agency was involved in Rapid Re-Employment and Training Service comes from St. Mary's Adult Learning Program (www.stmarysadultlearning.com), located in Southwestern Ontario.

This innovative community-based agency has used the *Employment Track Express* program to assist a number of laid-off workers in the region. This comprehensive program is offered three hours a day, five days a week, for a period of four weeks. It is a starting point that can help workers move on to the next step; whether that is a college course, other upgrading or a direct return to the workforce.

St. Mary's Adult Learning Program has successfully sought funding from a number of sources to deliver *Employment Track Express* over the years. For example, they have received funding from MTCU, the United Way and the Workplace Literacy and Essential Skills (WLES) program. They have also been funded by some of the action centres to set-up as part of the Rapid Re-employment response in some communities.

Since 2008, St. Mary's has delivered 16 *Employment Track Express* sessions to a total of 125 learners. These sessions have been delivered both on-site at workplaces and Action Centres, and at the agency's own learning centre. When they go on-site, they have a mobile lab that they can use if there aren't enough computers available to them. Generally, they deliver *Employment Track Express* to a small group of approximately ten workers.

Employment Track Express has received very positive feedback from participants. Yvonne Thompson from St. Mary's Adult Program reports that she has seen how people can change over the course of the four weeks. Confidence levels increase as workers gain new skills and learn how to navigate the Internet, assess their skills levels through testing such as the TOWES and PDQ and decide on their next steps.

Employment Track Express also integrates well for workers moving on to participate in the Second Career Strategy. The computer skills learned are particularly useful because Second Career requires a high degree of computer use. Learning about the Essential Skills is also helpful when workers are identifying the transferrable skills they already have and skills areas they need to develop.

For more information about *Employment Track Express*, contact Yvonne or Carol at St. Mary's Adult Learning program at allearning@town.stmarys.on.ca.

LITERACY COUNCIL OF BRANTFORD

The Literacy Council of Brantford is about to wrap-up an MTCU-funded project that enabled them to deliver *Employment Track Express* sessions to a total of 110 learners, significantly more than the 75 they had originally targeted. Like St. Mary's, the council (www.brantlitteracycouncil.com) reports that the learners who complete the small group sessions have provided very positive feedback and have demonstrated increased confidence along with improved computer skills.

The *Employment Track Express* sessions are delivered in small groups of ten or less. Some learners stay on after the four weeks is completed for further upgrading in Microsoft Word or Excel. Most of the learners who have enrolled in the program are 45 years of age or older and have at least Level 2 literacy skills. Learners with lower skills are referred for LBS training.

The Literacy Council of Brantford has partnered with three local Action Centres, the local library and Community Resource Services to deliver these sessions. The partner agencies are disappointed that the sessions will be coming to an end, but at the time of writing, the Council had not been able to secure funding to continue the training.

QUILL LEARNING NETWORK

The QUILL Learning Network (www.quillnet.org) has produced a number of excellent resources that can help agencies get involved in Rapid Re-employment and Training initiatives in their area. For example, you can access a video about skills upgrading for laid-off workers on their website: www.youtube.com/user/QUILL104#p/a/u/0/TkpV_pT26yw

QUILL has also created a PowerPoint presentation that can be used for marketing to the Rapid Response Team or employers who are preparing for a lay-off situation. They also have a Skills and Upgrading Fact Sheet, a template for identifying agency capacity and a template for agencies to track their involvement in Rapid Re-employment and Training.

The Learning Networks of Southern Ontario have also developed a set of fact sheets including one about Rapid Re-employment and Training. You can access this helpful resource here: www.quillnet.org/public_education/facts_about/rapid_reemployment.pdf

For more information about these resources and other, please contact QUILL at debera.quill@bmts.com or at 519-881-4655.

SECOND CAREER

The 2008 Ontario Budget included a new labour force investment initiative, called Second Career. Under Second Career, the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities invested \$355 million to help 20,000 recently laid-off workers get long-term training. This goal was met within 16 months, and Second Career has been made a permanent program.

For the latest updates, be sure to check MTCU's Question and Answers page at www.tcu.gov.on.ca/eng/secondcareer/qna.html#newguidlines.

Second Career supports workers who want to gain skills and employment in new, high-skill, high-demand occupations. Employment Ontario counsellors help laid-off workers determine the best path to a new job or career. Some laid-off workers who have received rapid re-employment services may also qualify for Second Career services.

Eligible workers meet with a counsellor to discuss their training options. Once the worker's plans are approved by MTCU, Second Career provides financial assistance based on the individual's need to help cover tuition, books, living expenses, disability support, dependent care and transportation.

The level of financial supports available to individual clients will be determined by MTCU using current guidelines. The maximum amount of total support (tuition, living allowance, transportation, etc.) that can be approved under Second Career is \$28,000 per eligible client. Recently laid-off unemployed workers can be supported for academic upgrading when the upgrading consists of courses specifically designed to raise the academic achievement level of the worker so that they can subsequently enter skills training related to their occupational goal.

The length of time in the academic upgrading program cannot exceed 12 months. Training for a second career can take anywhere from six months to two years. Training is available for a third year if academic upgrading is needed.

Here is what one Second Career participant from Southwestern Ontario had to say:

"Things are going great, I am attending Georgian College, I am in a two year Office Administration course, I just love it. I really appreciate your offer of help, I would not be where I am today if not for the help I received from the Learning Centre. Georgian College offers free tutoring for those that need it, so I should be fine.

One of my teachers was doing a research project on the GED and was thrilled to know that I had just graduated in July, she asked if she could do an interview with me, she was very pleased with the results. I was asked to write a paragraph on how the Action Centre had helped me since my job had been downsized. I was also asked by the YMCA to write a paragraph on the help that I have received from them on the Second Career program. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for all your help as well, it was so nice meeting you. Our little group enjoyed working with Steve at the Adult Learning Centre, he has a great way of presenting an easier way of learning."

To hear from other Second Career participants, be sure to watch the YouTube videos featured on MTCU's website. You can find them at www.tcu.gov.on.ca/eng/secondcareer/successStories.html.

The Ford auto workers' union local adjustment centre made their own Second Career video which you can view at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=fFGOh6JU_QY

For more information on Second Career, please visit: www.tcu.gov.on.ca/eng/secondcareer or call the Employment Ontario hotline at 1-800-387-5656 for information and referral.

There is also a downloadable brochure available at: www.tcu.gov.on.ca/eng/secondcareer/SecondCareerBrochureEn.pdf

The Employment Ontario Partners Gateway website at: www.tcu.gov.on.ca/eng/eopg/programs/secondcareer.html is also an excellent source of information on Second Career.

Resources include:

- Question and Answer pages
- Operational Guidelines
- Eligibility templates
- Estimate of financial support
- And much more

OTHER WORKFORCE TRAINING

Across the province, communities have responded to lay-offs, closures and downsizing in a number of ways. Literacy agencies have worked within their communities to initiate innovative solutions. CLO would like to hear from your agency and learn about any interesting workforce training your agency may be involved in. Please forward your agency's information to clo@bellnet.ca

ADULT BASIC EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

The Adult Basic Education Association (ABEA) of Hamilton has been involved in both workforce and workplace training for a number of years. ABEA provides a number of assessment services and works in partnership with local organizations. They are currently part of a city-wide Innovation and Learning Committee that aims to move the City of Hamilton towards being a true learning community.

For more information about ABEA's activities, be sure to visit their website at www.abea.on.ca

HALDIMAND-NORFOLK LITERACY COUNCIL

Lorraine Bergstrand, Executive Director at the Haldimand-Norfolk Literacy Council reports that their agency offers a module called Employment Skills Development that incorporates life skills, budgeting, WHMIS, resume building and other skills over a period of six to eight weeks. They also work with the Salvation Army to help learners gain the skills they require in order to be effective volunteers and to gain food preparation skills.

For more information about the Haldimand-Norfolk Literacy Council, see their website at www.hnliteracy.com

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