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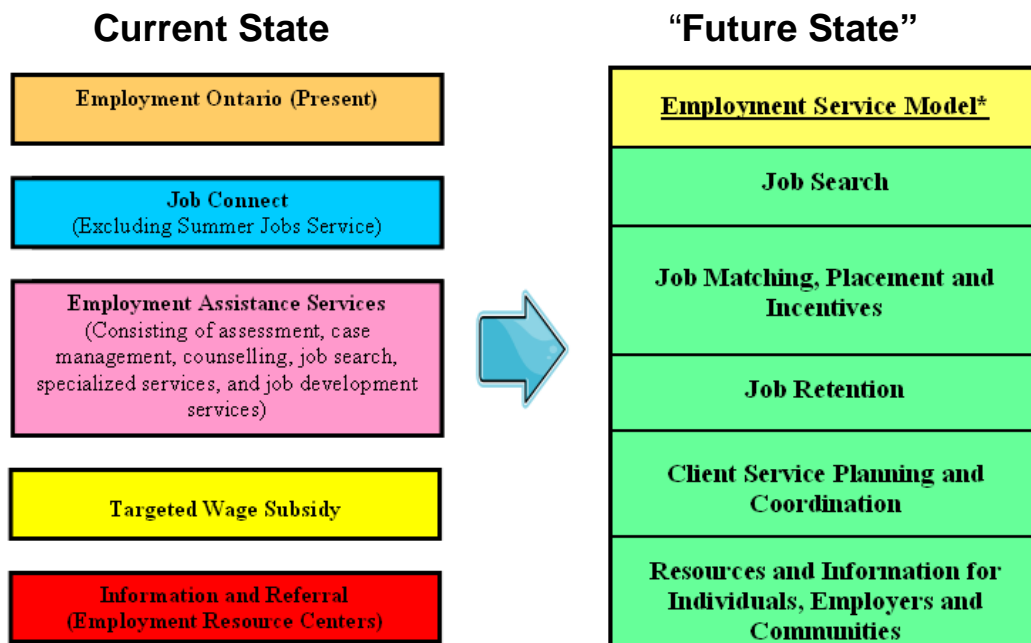
COMMUNITY LITERACY OF ONTARIO CIPMS E-COMMUNIQUE -- NOVEMBER 2008

EMPLOYMENT SERVICES CAPACITY SURVEY

As you know, Ontario's employment and training services will be changing over the next four years. You can find current information, updated regularly, on the Employment Ontario Partner's Gateway site at www.eopg.ca. Be sure to check it out; it is a treasure trove of information! You can also find a good synopsis of the latest information from Community Literacy of Ontario's October newsletter, available online at www.nald.ca/clo/newslet/oct08/1.htm.

The first major step in this transformation is the redesign of Employment Ontario's Employment Services. The present employment services, which have been delivered by various service providers in our communities, will be revamped. This will ensure clients have easier, less confusing access to employment services. The following diagram shows how currently fragmented employment services will be integrated in the new Employment Ontario. (Source: Employment Ontario Service Provider Capacity Survey, October 2008.

www.eopg.ca/eng/publications/ServiceProviderCapacitySurvey_EN.pdf)



To identify duplication, MTCU developed a Service Provider Capacity Survey (www.eopg.ca/eng/publications/ServiceProviderCapacitySurvey_EN.pdf). The survey was circulated to all service providers with an active agreement for any of the following programs: Ontario Employment Assistance Services, Ontario Employment Resource Centres, Ontario Targeted Wage Subsidy - Community Coordinators and Job Connect. Service providers were required to return the survey to MTCU by the end of October.

WHAT'S IN IT FOR US?

So why is this survey of interest to the literacy community? First of all, literacy and other parts of the training side of Employment Ontario will be undergoing their own transformation down the line, with potentially similar reporting tools required by the Ministry. Therefore, while LBS programs are not currently required to complete this capacity survey, we may be required to complete something similar in the coming months. By reviewing any and all Employment Ontario directives and requirements that come out, we can be informed and be prepared when it is our turn.

Second, the survey includes information "required by the Government of Ontario's new Transfer Payment Accountability Directive", which came into effect on August 31, 2007. It requires all new transfer payment programs to establish a risk management framework to ensure that transfer payment recipients have the required governance and accountability capacities to ensure that service delivery objectives are achieved," (From Employment Ontario, Service Provider Capacity Survey, October 8, 2008.

www.eopg.ca/eng/publications/ServiceProviderCapacitySurvey_EN.pdf)

Thirdly, some literacy agencies also deliver Employment Services and as such had to fill out this survey already. It will be valuable to learn from their experiences.

THE CIPMS LINK TO ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

The capacity survey is quite lengthy and includes several areas that must be reported. Some of the information that is required is similar to the type of reporting that LBS agencies have been doing through the Program Monitoring Report in previous years, and in fact the layout of the Capacity Survey is quite similar. Employment Services agencies that completed the Survey report that it is quite detailed and indepth, requiring significant thought and care when completing it.

Feedback from agencies that offer both Employment Services and literacy programming also noted that having participated in the CIPMS process this current fiscal year was definitely helpful when it came to completing the Capacity Survey!

The first few sections have an introduction, instructions, an organizational update to the Business Profile, information about other funders, and a section on the organization's Employment Service Capacity with five or six questions about delivery of specific services from the five new components of the Employment Service Model (see diagram above). Each of these questions requires supporting evidence of experience in this area and funding source, currently or within the last two years.

DO YOU KNOW YOUR AGENCY'S CAPACITY?

Next is a section on Organizational Capacity, which LBS agencies should particularly note. It covers Customer Service Management, Service Delivery, Governance, Human Resources, Information Technology, Finance and Privacy policies and procedures, and Evaluation and Planning. There are about six questions in each of the five sections, which require comments and listing of supporting documentation. These questions can easily be seen as applicable to literacy service providers, as well.

Each of the questions is answered as "yes", "no", or "partial". There is also a comments section where the agency must list supporting documentation for their response that can be validated at a site visit. It is not enough to claim that your agency does or doesn't do something; you have to substantiate your answers.

Some of the questions that are asked in this section include:

- ✓ Does your organization have a process to identify, measure and evaluate its key customers and determine their needs?
- ✓ Does your organization have the capacity to forecast and quickly respond to changing economic conditions, changes in demand for services and relationships with its customers?
- ✓ Does your organization have Board members with a diverse range of skills and experiences and are they actively engaged in providing oversight, leadership and strategic direction?
- ✓ Does your organization have an experienced person responsible for ensuring compliance with the privacy policies, including providing individuals with access to their own personal information?

- ✓ Does your organization have indicators to measure and evaluate employment/training service, monitor results and take appropriate action to incorporate modifications to services and when appropriate, planning processes?

There is a statistical performance section relating to the MTCU contract. It asks agencies to report on their deliverables or activities, to state their targets (numerical or by percentage) and actual achievements and then explain any variances.

OUR CHANCE TO SHINE!

The last section allows the service provider to show the “Added Community Value” they can bring to the table. This covers Relevance, Responsiveness and Strengths/Capabilities in Serving Particular Client Groups. This is an area where we, as community-based literacy providers, can really shine. Our active role in community partnerships, community marketing and attending community event makes community-based literacy providers a shining star in this area.

Please remember that it is very difficult to gather all this information and evidence in a short timeframe so it would be a good idea to pay particular attention to these requirements and start preparing now.

Some of the questions posed in this section include:

- ✓ List and describe the number of strategic alliances, partnerships, collaboration, cooperation or coordination your organization has and the purpose they serve to maximize the services available within your community.
- ✓ How does your organization support clients’ employment and training needs through partnerships, networks, collaboration and consultation?
- ✓ What steps has your organization taken to build its own capacity in order to be effective and vital to your community?
- ✓ How are your organization’s mission and activities aligned with the needs of the customers, including employers and the local community?
- ✓ Is your organization’s mandate directed towards a particular client population or community of interest? Please describe. If yes, explain how this benefits that client group(s).

At the end of the survey, there is a section that explains the requirements for each area of the survey along with sources of evidence. Each section of the survey is weighted as follows: MTCU Agreement Performance 25%, Organizational Capacity

30%, Added Community Value 25% and Community Service Plan 20%. For the first two sections (Agreement Performance and Organizational Capacity), agencies are expected to achieve at least 75%. For the final two sections, however (Added Community Value and Community Service Plan), there is no minimum pass level.

CIPMS IN ACTION ACROSS THE PROVINCE

When LBS agencies completed their 2008-09 Business Plans, they identified two areas for improvement to be achieved during the year. Recently, Community Literacy of Ontario checked in with a number of agencies to find out what areas they had chosen and if they are meeting their stated targets. Our informal survey revealed that there are some common areas of concern, but there are also some very creative programming areas that are being developed!

Here are just a few of the areas of improvement that your fellow community literacy agencies are currently working on:

- ✓ Increasing the number of students moving on to employment and/or education/training
- ✓ Increasing capacity to address waiting lists for programs
- ✓ Improving learner attendance
- ✓ Conducting a full board evaluation
- ✓ Increasing the number of learners who attain their goals
- ✓ Increasing the number of learners who progress across LBS levels
- ✓ Reducing the number of lost contacts
- ✓ Increasing the rate of return of Learner Satisfaction Surveys
- ✓ Improving learner follow-up
- ✓ Offering relevant professional development opportunities
- ✓ Making more effective use of the telephone system
- ✓ Increasing the number of referrals from other LBS agencies
- ✓ Strengthening relationships with other Employment Ontario agencies
- ✓ Increasing the awareness of Essential Skills by learners

- ✓ Revising staff job descriptions to better reflect current realities and changing responsibilities

The majority of agencies that Community Literacy of Ontario spoke with have been actively working on achieving the targets associated with the above areas. They have been taking steps to improve their internal processes, reach out to the community and document the information they need. Many agencies report that they are pleased with the results that they have achieved to date and are confident of meeting their stated targets by year-end.

When asked why they chose the areas for improvement that they did, some agencies told CLO that they based their choice on the results of their most recent site visit. Others noted that they had identified these areas earlier but the CIPMS and business planning process required them to finally put something in writing and act on it! Some agencies reported that they used the MTCU Agency Assessment Tool and Guide (available through CLO's *ABC's of CIPMS* manual at www.nald.ca/clo/resource/cipms/cipms.pdf and on our Literacy Basics website at www.nald.ca/literacybasics/cipms/agency/01.htm).

We also asked agencies what resources they have found helpful when implementing CIPMS in their agencies. Aside from the Agency Assessment process noted above, agencies reported that they have used information from CIPMS training offered by CLO and others, previous evaluation experience, surveys of other stakeholders, reviewing previous years' statistics, embracing a culture of continuous improvement and program evaluation, and a commitment to offering the best program possible for the agency's learners.

WE'D LIKE TO HEAR FROM YOU!

If you would like to share your experience with deciding on areas for program improvement and the steps you have taken to achieve your stated targets, Community Literacy of Ontario would love to hear about it! Drop Vicki Trottier (project staff with CLO) an e-mail at vicki.trottier@gmail.com or call 705-672-5471.

THIS E-COMMUNIQUE WAS WRITTEN BY VICKI TROTTIER WITH CONTRIBUTIONS FROM JOYCE BIGELOW.