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As part of its 2022-2023 business plan, QUILL Learning Network and its partners; Community Literacy of Ontario, Literacy Link South Central, Project Read Learning Network, and the Tri-County Literacy Network, held three meetings of community-based LBS programs in Southwestern Ontario. These meetings are designed to support programs and build capacity. After each meeting, a Resource Bulletin is shared.

The third meeting was held February 22, 2023, and QUILL is pleased to present **Resource Bulletin #3**.

For **Resource Bulletin #3**, QUILL and its partners hosted a presentation and discussion of three topics: Transitioning back to in-person service delivery; Skills for Success current and future projects; and Strategic Planning for Marketing Purposes. This bulletin aims to share information and resources concerning these three topics, as well as links, tips, and recordings that support them.

We are grateful to all the presenters who shared their resources with us, and we hope that they are helpful to you.

Thank you!

~ Heather Robinet, Executive Director, QUILL

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## Topic 1: Getting Back to In-Person Learning

Melody Nowack of UHC shared her LBS program's strategies for getting learners back to in-person service delivery. As the world went into lockdown in early 2020 due to COVID-19, Melody's program quickly pivoted to remote service delivery while Melody went on maternity leave. The program used Google Classroom and other online platforms to facilitate remote learning, but almost immediately found they had poor attendance. Upon returning from maternity leave, Melody found that learner progress has slowed significantly, many learners had lost contact with the program, and instructors were frustrated and burnt out. Melody jumped into action to address these issues and shared the following tips and strategies.

### Tip: Re-Establish Contact with Learners

First, Melody realized that any learners who had lost contact with the program needed to be contacted personally. Instructors scheduled mandatory one-on-one meetings with each learner to re-establish a connection and commitment to the program. These were honest conversations that addressed the key question: "is online working or do you need to be in-person to make progress?" By self-identifying that remote learning was not producing ideal results, learners were able to commit to the program again. Some learners who were making progress with remote learning were given a referral to E-Channel. Then, instructors made a participation agreement with learners which included an attendance schedule, attending Google Meets, handing in completed work, and completing milestones. Any learner who missed 2 weeks of attendance would then have another mandatory one-on-one meeting.

### Tip: Prepare for the Transition to In-Person Learning

Melody knew that they couldn't just switch back to in-person learning immediately. They would need to make a transition plan with phases for this transition. First, the program notified learners that they would be returning to in-person learning and addressed any concerns. Next, the program sent out a survey regarding availability and comfort level of returning to in-person learning. Finally, any learner who did not respond to the survey was exited from the program and sent an email stating that they would be warmly welcomed back when they were comfortable and ready to return to in-person learning.

### Tip: Gradually Return to In-Person

Understanding that both learners and instructors could be cautious about being in person after experiencing the COVID-19 pandemic, Melody knew that the new in-person learning would have to be different. First, the program ensured that all necessary safety barriers were in place and all safety guidelines were implemented. Then, the program brought back instructors for one month before bringing back learners, so the staff and tutors felt comfortable and confident with in-person delivery. The program also offered increased flexibility with scheduling, as many learner schedules had changed, and many people weren't comfortable wearing



masks for prolonged lessons. The program had limited hours for in-person learning, so staff also had set hours that were not open to the public. The program scheduled each learner for 1 or 2 days per week with a maximum of 6 learners at any one time. The program gradually brought back more learners each week.

### Tip: Re-Establish In-Person as the Norm

Melody reported that most of their learners quickly increased their attendance at in-person learning to 4 days per week. Strategically, Melody temporarily closed online learning platforms to encourage learners to return to in-person learning. Without the option of remote, many learners chose to return to the classroom instead of stopping. For learners who were close to completing a goal online, they were allowed to continue remote learning. The program also ensured open communication with learners so they could provide a leave of absence or remote support if a learner or learner's family member was experiencing illness.

### Tip: Increased Flexibility

Because many learner schedules changed significantly due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Melody knew they would need to provide increased flexibility. First, they shortened the hours of programs to accommodate the smaller amounts of time that many learners were able to commit to the program. They scheduled parents for mid-day so they had time to drop off and pick up their children from school. And, the program learned that targeted training works best at the start of the day or the end of the day for their learners.

### Tip: Selling In-Person to Learners

Melody knew it was also important for current and potential learners to know the benefits of in-person learning. Instructors had discussions with the learners to explain these benefits, which resulted in more learners choosing in-person learning. Some of the benefits include: instructors are available to assist on the spot, rather than responding to an email or waiting for a Google Meet call. Lessons can be easily adjusted to accommodate learning disabilities or physical support needs. Schedules are flexible and most times can be accommodated. All learners were encouraged to try in-person learning first with the option to switch to remote learning once they had established themselves in the program.



## Topic 2: Skills for Success MLITSD Projects, 22-23 and 23-24

Catherine Toovey shared details of CLO's experience with the new MLITSD Skills for Success project. In the December of 2021, CLO organizations learned that the MLITSD had applied for the federal Skills for Success funding. In Fall 2022, CLO received an amended contract agreement with the new project details. In the remainder of the 2022-2023 fiscal year, CLO as well as other support organizations developed, piloted, and evaluated curricula resources in four topic areas: Workplace, Apprenticeship, Under-represented Groups, and Digital. Across all support organizations, there were approximately 100 curricula resources developed. These resources will be available in an online repository once completed.

### Resource: CLO's Essential Skills & Skills for Success Webinar

CLO hosted a webinar on March 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023 with guest presenter Jane Tuer. This webinar covered the history of Essential Skills, OALCF, and Skills for Success in Ontario, along with other adult literacy benchmarks. This webinar answers the question "What are the Skills for Success?" and explains how they align with the OALCF. This informative webinar, slide deck, and associated handouts are available on CLO's website: <https://www.communityliteracyofontario.ca/wp/wp-content/uploads/Recording-Promotion-NEWS-Skills-for-S.pdf>

### Resource: Pop Up PD Webinar

The Pop-Up PD group held a webinar on February 16, 2023, that covered the Skills for Success. This webinar is available on the E-Channel website: <https://e-channel.ca/practitioners/pop-pd-resources>

## MLITSD Skills for Success Funding in 2023-2024

Skills for Success funding is available through MLITSD for the 2023-2024 year. This round of funding is available to support organizations as well as service delivery programs.

The following are examples of pilot programs that some community-based programs in Western Region applied for under the Skills for Success funding:

- Soft skills and customer service for youth, 16- to 18-year-olds
- Women as an Under-represented group – upgrading digital skills, number sense, writing, independence (court appearances), and work (partnering with program for victims of domestic violence)
- Women as an Under-represented group – based on the previous Decoda Literacy project and working on digital and soft skills



- Vulnerable youth with mental health issues as an Under-represented group - a focus on entry level employment
- Apprenticeship - for women in skilled trades (carpentry), creating level 1 and level 2 classes to lead to pre-apprenticeship
- Digital literacy for seniors and transient populations in a more JIT needs
- Workplace - supporting employers in the region by providing targeted training in soft skills or employability skills
- Underrepresented groups – partnering with local housing cooperatives and supporting them with targeted training directed at improving digital and financial skills

### Topic 3: Strategic Planning for Marketing Purposes

Jane Tuer led meeting participants in an interactive, step-by-step process that resulted in some collaborative strategic planning for the purpose of marketing LBS to a specific community/referral partner.

#### Resource: Webinar JamBoard

Looking at a need expressed by most agencies to build a stronger working connection with Ontario Works, participants of the webinar used the JamBoard linked below to uncover multiple possible steps to developing that connection. That involved identifying all key stakeholders in that working relationship, including: who the program's target learners are (target market), other key community partners, volunteers, and donors. The participants added their own responses to these questions to build their own strategy.

[https://jamboard.google.com/d/1rkba2GOnviRj3IKUpEndT1Bo\\_0b39-X\\_spLW\\_mdj\\_Eg/edit?usp=sharing](https://jamboard.google.com/d/1rkba2GOnviRj3IKUpEndT1Bo_0b39-X_spLW_mdj_Eg/edit?usp=sharing)

#### Tip: Make an Actionable Plan

On the second slide of the JamBoard, participants mapped out the Who, What, Where, When, Why and How of working with partner agencies. With Ontario Works identified as the *Who*, participants then answered the question *What*, which was unique to each of them. For example:

- To inform OW of programs and ease of use
- To gain suitable referrals from OW
- To gain warm referrals by meeting staff
- To educate OW of the signs and indicators of poor skills
- To get suggestions from OW on what kind of training their clients want



Participants then answered the question *Where* to understand what steps need to be taken to be able to achieve their goal from the previous step. For example:

- On-site at LBS locations so they can see where instruction is provided (give tour of site)
- Caseworker team virtual presentations
- On social media platforms (how get them to check our social media posts?)
- In printed information packages specific to OW
- In weekly newsletters OW does for its caseworker teams (contribute LBS updates and promotions)
- In weekly notification emails

LBS programs and referral partners may need to come to an agreement on the best method of communication between them, and the topics they would be most interested in hearing about.

Once all the questions have been answered, the participants will have identified a clear goal and be able to create a step-by-step plan to achieve that goal. With the clearly defined goals and plan, these marketing strategies can be easily added to a strategic plan.

