

A 3D graphic featuring three arrows in blue, yellow, and red. The blue arrow is on the left, curving over a wall made of orange bricks. The yellow arrow is in the center, passing through a hole in the wall. The red arrow is on the right, curving under the wall. The background is a light gray surface.

Perspectives on Partnering and Planning in LBS

WEBINAR HIGHLIGHTS



March 2021



Perspectives on Partnering and Planning in LBS Webinar

On February 23, 2021, Community Literacy of Ontario (CLO) hosted a webinar to explore service coordination activities and how they interconnect with learner plan development in Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) agencies. For those who were unable to attend, the webinar is freely available on CLO's website at <https://vimeo.com/521961800> and this summary will provide you with an overview of webinar highlights.

CLO would like to acknowledge the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development for funding the development of this webinar. We also express our gratitude to our facilitator: Joyce Bigelow, long time literacy practitioner and Executive Director of Connections Adult Learning. Most importantly, we would like to thank the Community-based Literacy and Basic Skills agencies and their practitioners for their dedication to adult literacy in Ontario and for their participation in the research and in the webinar.

Background

CLO has often heard from its member agencies about the amount of service coordination and referrals required to support learners in LBS agencies. Typically, these efforts are not formally acknowledged for the significant role they play in successful learner transitions. Accordingly, the focus of the webinar is the importance of service coordination/partnering and planning throughout Learner Plan development.

During 2020, CLO consulted with community-based LBS programs throughout the Province, to determine how and why service coordination is such an integral part of Learner Plan Development. CLO conducted an environmental scan and held a focus group, receiving feedback from literacy agencies from across Ontario. Agencies, large and small, rural and urban, responded to the request for information. The results of the research, Joyce's long-time program experiences and individual practitioners' comments, were shared as the webinar worked through an analysis of relationship between service coordination and learner plan development.



Perspective

It is all about the perspective. It is about who wants what. With both Service Coordination and Learner Plans, it is important to understand that every stakeholder has a different viewpoint, need or expectation. This is the case, whether they are the learner, the partnering organization or caseworker, Employment Ontario, the literacy practitioner, the community, and the list goes on. Service coordination and developing a learner plan involves more than the learner or the LBS service provider. It is critical to ensure that service coordination efforts are a win for ALL involved stakeholders. If service coordination arrangements and the development of the learning plan only consider one perspective, everyone's needs might not be met, and ultimately the efforts may not work out satisfactorily.

What is service coordination?

In one definition of Service Coordination:

- Service coordination is interdependent. It is not just one agency's or person's need that should be fulfilled.
- The agencies exchange marketing, human resources, information, referrals, etc.
- The agencies may have to make adjustments.

Overall, Service Coordination can be "Defined as a process of managing interdependencies; where agencies engage in a process of exchanging needed resources, and adjust in response to one another to accomplish shared tasks or goals" ([Crowston & Malone, 1993](#); [Whetten, 1981](#))

These mutual understandings will ensure that shared or common tasks or goals can be successfully accomplished.

In LBS, the learner plan is the central piece of a puzzle with every service partner holding a piece that matters to them. The partners are dependent on each other and must share their resource or piece, to complete the puzzle.



Types of coordination common in LBS

The webinar shares examples of how LBS agencies or practitioners take part in each of three types of service coordination interdependencies: pooled, sequential and reciprocal.

More than 30 types of organizations that community-based LBS agencies reported they regularly coordinated with, in order to help develop their learners' plans are shared.

Integrating service coordination with LP Development

The webinar explores the importance of collaboration in learner plan development and integrating service coordination in case management.

A detailed model of Service Coordination steps and links relating to learner plan development is shared which starts from the client's needs to the desired outcomes.

Case management is encouraged where possible, with joint meetings to establish goal, training plan and transition.

LBS Practitioner

The webinar discusses how many of the community-based LBS practitioners surveyed perceived learner plan development as a continuous process. The development and adaptation occurs from the time an LBS agency first talks to a learner or their referring organization, through all the stages, until the learner exits and possibly beyond that. It is a continuous process of review and adjustment that takes place with the LBS staff, the learner and other service providers, as necessary. The feedback received by the community-based LBS Environmental Scan and Focus Group completed by CLO in 2020 was presented relative to five stages of learner plan development: Initial, Commencement, Participation, Management and Closure.

We consult with the learner about their needs from intake and all the way through.

LBS Practitioner

Covid 19's effect on service coordination

The webinar was developed during the COVID 19 pandemic. Accordingly, challenges to service coordination were discussed from practitioners' viewpoints and the webinar also considers the additional challenges that learners are facing, which in many instances require even more service coordination. Some examples being:

Learners find it harder to:

- Get information
- Deal with new challenges
- Find supports
- Connect
- Feel involved
- Deal with isolation (mental health)

Building new and better connections

It is not only the information standardly gathered at the initial stages of learner plan development such as a learners' past and current status, that should inform a learner plan. Possibly, an even more important consideration is working on how LBS practitioners and other key stakeholders can improve and build better bridges in partnering throughout learner plan development as learners' needs do not stop at intake.

The webinar shares some good practices currently being used by LBS organizations, for example:

- Sharing resources, equipment
- Making use of training supports and special covid-19 assistance funding
- Digital skills development
- Employment Services workshops and job fairs
- Doing a public awareness campaign for employers



The webinar ends by considering new ways to work with current or new partners, for the benefit of potential shared clientele. These are strategies that come back to the “Win Win” of Service Coordination in Learner Plan Development. A few examples are:

- Community Living Virtual Volunteers (<https://www.clmiss.ca/virtual-volunteer/>)
- Clear writing assistance (https://covid19.communityinclusion.org/pdf/TO43_individuals_tech_COVID.pdf)
- Working with a local United Way which has organized a community task force to determine the social needs emerging in the community

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