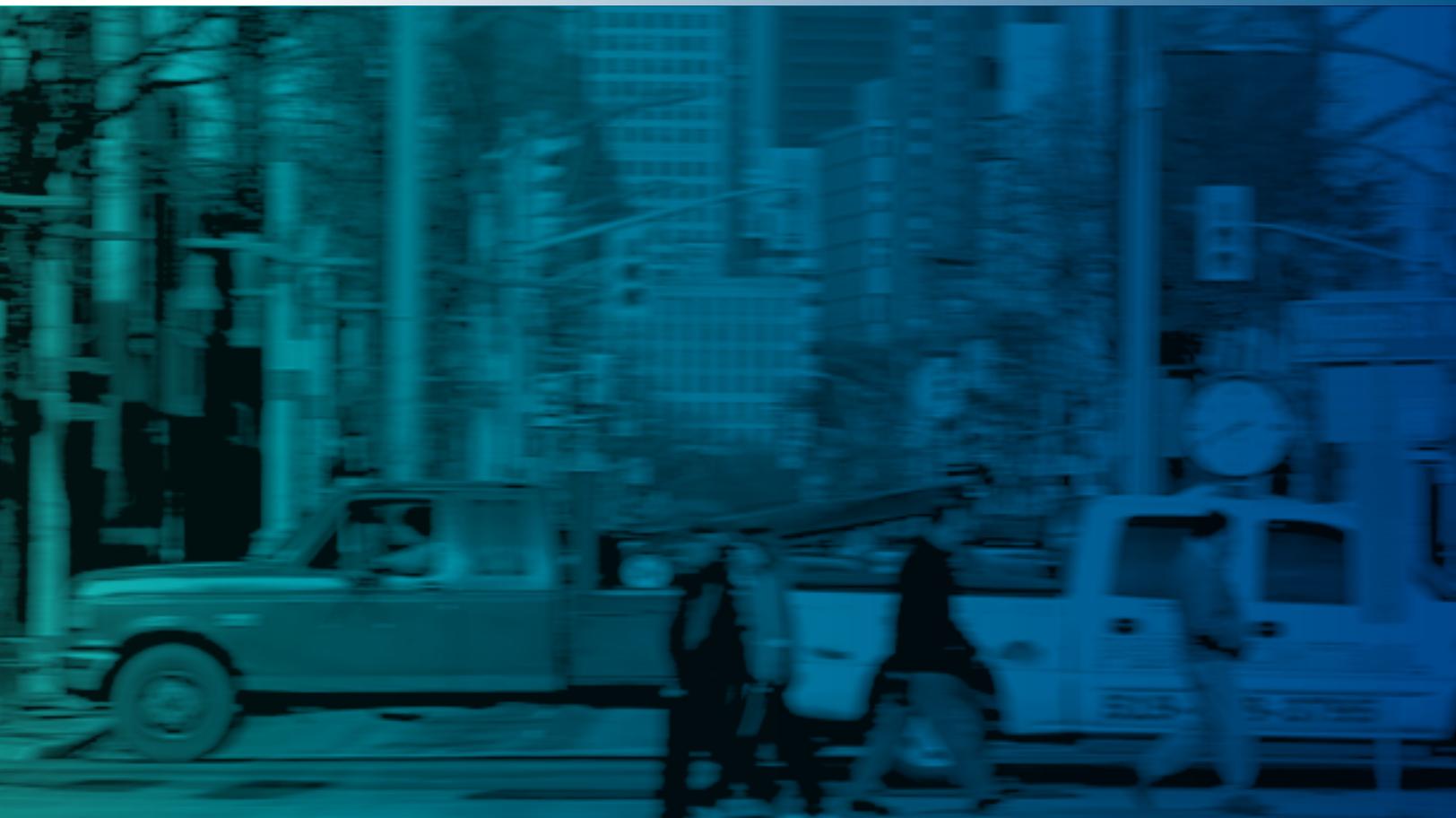


Learning About Local Employment Support Services in Windsor-Essex

workforce
WindsorEssex
YOUR LOCAL EMPLOYMENT PLANNING COUNCIL



We would like to thank everyone who contributed their time, ideas and expertise to the Learning About Local Employment Support Services in Windsor-Essex Report.

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How did we do?

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Workforce WindsorEssex is committed to ongoing research to enhance local labour market planning in the Windsor-Essex region.

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For the last several years, the Windsor Census Metropolitan Area has been known to have one of the highest unemployment rates in Canada. As of January 2017, the region is sitting at 5.4 % in comparison to the 10.6 % unemployment rate in 2012¹. The region has a diversity of employment supports available to provide assistance to individuals who are searching for work opportunities.

As a Local Employment Planning Council, Workforce WindsorEssex embarked on this initiative with the goal of learning more about local employment services from the perspective of the organizations who offer these services, clients who are seeking employment, and employers who access these services. Our hope was that by understanding these perspectives, we would be more aware of the community's perception of these services so we could find ways to support and promote the employment support service system in our region while offering recommendations for enhancements based on the feedback we received.

¹Statistics Canada, "Labour force survey estimates (LFS), by census metropolitan area based on 2011 Census boundaries, 3-month moving average, seasonally adjusted and unadjusted, monthly (persons unless otherwise noted)", CANSIM 282-0135.



METHODOLOGY

It was necessary for various methods of information gathering to be put in place in order to develop an effective understanding of:

- Local employment services, both private and publicly funded
 - Job seeker experiences with services
 - Employer experiences with services
 - Challenges service providers encounter
 - Best practices among service providers
-

THE RESEARCH PROCESS:

EMPLOYMENT SERVICE PROVISION MATRIX

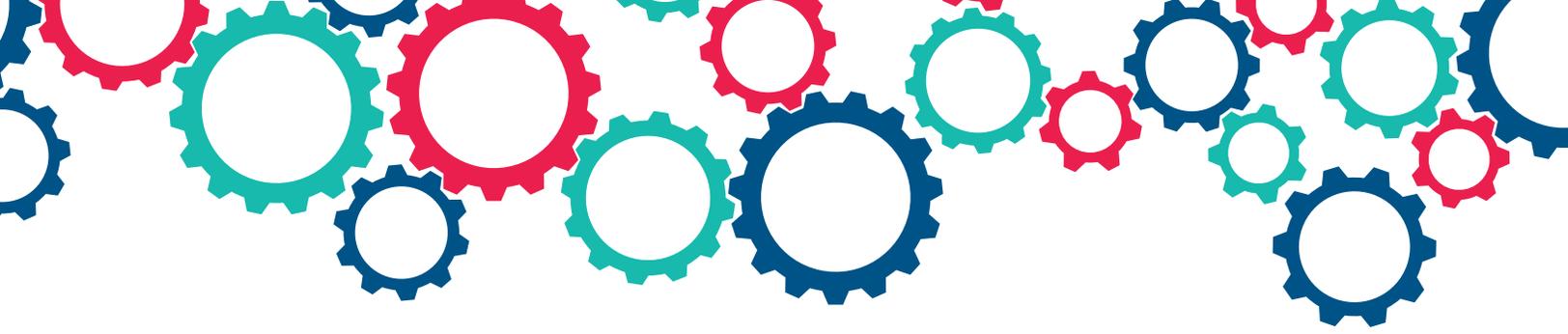
In order to best understand the local employment services that exist, a listing of services and where they are offered was developed. A number of organizations who provide employment services in the Windsor-Essex region were contacted and asked to provide a list of their current services and supports. This list was shared on a number of occasions with the Service Provision Working Group which is a division of the Local Employment Planning Council. This working group is comprised of a sampling of the employment service providers in our region, making them a knowledgeable audience for any necessary changes that were required for this list. In turn, this list was able to serve as a foundation for the job seeker branch of WEsearch, an electronic tool that assists job seekers and employers in navigating local employment resources. Information on how to access this tool is provided at the end of this report.

While we connected with several employment organizations to develop a list that was as exhaustive as possible, we are aware that our list does not include all of the employment services in the region. We look forward to continuing to expand on this list through continued development of WEsearch.

CONDUCTING FOCUS GROUPS

Being aware that one of the best ways to learn about the experiences job seekers have with employment services would be to speak directly with the job seekers who have accessed these services. We approached community partners who contributed information to the employment service provision listing to see who would be willing to have us host a focus group at their location so that we could speak directly with their clients.

In total, seven focus groups were conducted. These ranged in size from five to eighteen participants. In total, seventy-eight participants took part in focus groups at organizations such as the City of Windsor Employment and Training Services, Collège Boréal, Community Living Essex County, Insight Advantage, Windsor Women Working with Immigrant Women, Women's Enterprise Skills Training of Windsor Inc., Unemployed Help Centre and the YMCA of Windsor and Essex County.



TOURS AND CONSULTATIONS WITH LOCAL EMPLOYMENT SERVICE PROVIDERS

To further our understanding of local services, tours and consultations with both private and publicly funded organizations were conducted. While on tour, we met with staff to gain a deeper understanding of programs and supports in addition to any challenges that may be experienced. At some locations, there were opportunities to observe programs or classes. For some organizations, it was more appropriate to learn about their services through phone consultations and off-site presentations. Additionally, some organizations invited us to tour their multiple locations. A sampling of the organizations we connected with includes:

Brentwood Recovery Home	Service Canada
Canadian Mental Health Association	South Essex Community Council
Can-Am Indian Friendship Centre	St. Clair College Employment Centre
Community Living Essex County	St. Clair College Genesis Entrepreneurship & Innovation Centre
Community Living Windsor	St. Leonard's House Windsor
Greater Essex County District School Board Assessment & Resource Centre	The Windsor Youth Centre
Hub33	Unemployed Help Centre
Insight Advantage Inc.	University of Windsor Co-op, Career and Employment Services
IRIS Residential Inns and Services	Windsor Essex Therapeutic Riding Association
Learning Disabilities Association of Windsor Essex County	Windsor Women Working with Immigrant Women
New Beginnings	Women's Enterprise Skills Training Inc.
New Canadians' Centre of Excellence Inc.	YMCA of Windsor and Essex County
Personnel by Elsie	

CONDUCTING EMPLOYER CONSULTATIONS

A critical piece to this work was to engage with employers who utilize local employment services when trying to fill available positions. This was achieved by meeting with established employer connections and by engaging the Service Provision Working Group to lend support to their employer connections. Employers from the following sectors were interviewed:

- Non-profit
- Manufacturing
- Information Technology
- Consumer Packaging Goods Industry
- Tourism and Hospitality

Additionally, we were able to use responses from consultations that Workforce WindsorEssex staff has had with employers.

The companies represented by these employers ranged in size from small businesses to large businesses. During these consultations, we asked strategic questions to learn more about the employers' experiences with employment supports in the Windsor-Essex region. Some sample questions from our consultations included:

- What led you to use the employment agencies that you use?
- Have you always used the same agency or do/have you use/used others?
- What do you see as being the opportunities and/or challenges between using private and publicly funded organizations?
- What would help to improve the services you received?

USING MAXQDA

As a means of compiling and sorting responses from the above methodologies, we utilized an electronic qualitative data analysis program called MAXQDA. This program allowed us to track themes throughout the different consultations in a meaningful way. Through this, we were able to quantify our qualitative data, ensuring that the trends we identified were prevalent and our conclusions accurate.



Disclaimer:

For the purposes of this report and to respect the anonymity of our participants, references to organizations, employers, companies, and clients have all been generalized. Publicly funded services include organizations that receive their funding from government bodies. Private agencies include those that charge a fee to employers for the service. Please note that these comments are not reflective of all employment service providers, clients, or employers.



FINDINGS

EXPERIENCE OF EMPLOYMENT SERVICE PROVIDERS

Workforce WindsorEssex staff had the opportunity to interact with service providers through consultations, tours, and phone calls. As noted in the introductory list, these organizations included Employment Ontario Service Providers, organizations funded by other ministries, and private organizations. Our team was curious to see what similarities and differences existed between these types of organizations and to see what best practices are already in place or have the potential to be put in place.

In spending time with staff members at participating organizations, we realized how much of an impact front-line staff have on the clients that they serve. Staff members were passionate about the roles that they have within these organizations and are committed to the clients they serve. This observation aligns with the feedback job seekers provided regarding the impact that front-line staff have on their experiences with an organization.





Positive Impact of Front-Line Staff

“ Even if I had a deadline of one hour or two hours to submit my resume, she (employment service staff member) was always there. She would never say I’m so busy that I can’t take you in. That’s the main difference. She was always frank, open, and friendly. That was the big difference for me.” - Job Seeker

“ When you are most welcome in a place you always want to be there. I always find an opportunity to enter this place.” - Job Seeker

“ I would say the most valuable service is the active listening. (Employment Counsellor) just mentioned that generally you come with other issues or struggles and there is something different here. When you meet everyone, even coming from the elevator, everyone has such a hospitable spirit and willingness to really help.” - Job Seeker

“ While I was looking for a job I had other issues- she listened to me and consoled me. She said concerning your job you need to book an appointment upstairs. (Employment Counsellor) was so nice to me. Everyone is nice here- they are open.” - Job Seeker

“ In the past I have worked with every recruiter, had my resume professionally done. I met a career counsellor here- it has been an energizing process, I have experienced such momentum in the short two weeks that I haven’t experienced before even compared with service providers in the city that have the same funding and incentive programs. I feel invigorated.” - Job Seeker

“ They are kind and they are very helpful. They always look at different opportunities to help – you have a one-on-one relationship with the job developer – the person knows your back ground and can help you. Things that can reach you and help you, they always get across to you and make sure you settle in.” - Job Seeker

“ The staff is really friendly and kind. You can share your personal information and based on that, they will advise you on which way to go, so for me, it was very helpful.” - Job Seeker

“ This unemployment centre here is so well, I can’t speak for the rest of Windsor, but other employment centres in the country could learn from this one. I’m from BC and the staff out there wasn’t as well trained as the staff here. I’ve been more than grateful to get the help and services I’ve received from here.” - Job Seeker

“ I went through different programs, and I learned from different teachers. Here you are comfortable, you meet other people, you’re all here for personal reasons. What does the employer want from a person? They’re looking for the right person to fill that spot.” - Job Seeker

Staff Roles

Each organization has a different way of structuring job roles and duties in addition to having different names and responsibilities for these roles. The job titles we most often encountered included:

JOB DEVELOPERS

**EMPLOYMENT
CONSULTANTS**

JOB COACHES

MANAGERS

**EMPLOYMENT
COUNSELLORS**

**WORKSHOP
FACILITATORS**

**EMPLOYMENT
CASE MANAGERS**

CLIENT INTAKE



Organizations that have the same name for positions often have different responsibilities associated with those positions. While the responsibilities and job titles may have differed between organizations, the organizations we spoke with shared that the system they have in place works best for their needs.

“*Employment counsellors are coaches and developers as well, which the staff seems to enjoy. This works well because it gives them some variety and they can use their community connections.*” - Service Provider

“*Job developers go out and find jobs for people. They are able to access some incentive programs and also provide on-site support for clients once they start working.*” - Service Provider

“*We use program managers, not site managers. Program managers rotate between the different sites.*” - Service Provider

“*We have a client intake staff person so that clients can be served right away. They then work to set up an appointment with a counsellor based on their needs. They then determine next steps (for example, counselling workshops etc.).*” - Service Provider

“*Not many service providers have a job coach and a separate job developer. These are usually combined into employment counsellors. Our organization (Employment Service Provider) separates these roles.*” - Service Provider

“*Employment consultants are job developers – they know the client the best.*” - Service Provider

Many employment services have more than one location or they may offer satellite services. As reflected in some of the above remarks, some organizations have found it beneficial to rotate staff between sites to ensure consistency so that staff are familiar with day-to-day operations at each site. It was expressed that this has been helpful when most staff have had to be out of an office at a particular location. On these rare occasions, staff members from the other locations have been able to step in without causing disruption to services.

Additionally, many organizations have found it beneficial to have staff meetings that include staff from all sites. This has been helpful in sharing best practices and leads on potential employer and client matches. These meetings may be done in-person or over Skype, giving the staff members an opportunity to discuss their caseloads, share best practices, and brainstorm solutions for cases that require additional attention.

Staff Backgrounds

Employment service organizations' staff come from diverse educational backgrounds and have varied work experience. This helps organizations to have expertise in several areas.

In looking to prepare the future workforce, many organizations have been open to hosting student placements for post-secondary education programs, allowing the students to gain experience in the working world while using their skills to help the organization in a meaningful way.

Based on funding agreements, we were aware that organizations have different targets they are required to meet. Some organizations are keen to share these targets with their front-line staff so that they have an understanding of what is expected of them. Other organizations do not share these targets with staff as they do not want their staff to feel as though they are being number driven.

We very quickly learned and observed the various strategies that staff members are using to more effectively serve and meet the needs of their clients. The importance of engaging clients was stressed from initial point of contact with the client in order to properly engage and motivate clients throughout the job search process.

Accessing Services

When speaking with job seekers and clients, many accessed employment services through word of mouth, information they received from supporting organizations (for example, organizations that help newcomers with settling in Windsor-Essex), and from walking or driving by organizations. This aligns with feedback from service providers who shared that many clients come in through word of mouth. Some employment service providers find success with using outside signage with phrases such as “Free Resume Clinic Today” to encourage potential clients to walk in. Other service providers are able to provide presentations for high school students who are preparing to graduate. Following these presentations, they connect with the students for a mid-summer follow-up to see if they have established next steps for September. Some service providers share their services through online job posting websites knowing that many job seekers may be looking for jobs through online websites. Many organizations mentioned that referrals may also happen between service providers as is reflected in the following quotes:

“Everyone (Employment Service Providing Organizations) has a niche, which helps with (but does not completely eliminate) competition. They will share resources, referrals.” - Service Provider

“We will refer people to Employment Ontario who need it. It is a referral process by location: we always refer to the nearest, most convenient centre.”
- Service Provider

Additionally, it was reinforced for us that many organizations host a multitude of services. That being said, a client may have started receiving other services at an organization but then were referred to employment services at that organization as a next step. Having multiple services at one location positions the organization to serve as a community hub and allows clients to have multiple points of contact with the organization if need be. For example, an organization may offer language classes in addition to employment services. Once a client has made it to a certain level of language learning it would be a helpful and natural step for that client to pursue services that would help them in searching for a job.

Staff expressed the importance of having effective ways of contacting clients. Most commonly, we heard about staff using email, phone calls, and text messages to remind clients of upcoming appointments to check in on client progress.

One service provider suggested, “Doing more/offering more services online, over the phone, etc. may help with clients who have difficulty getting to the locations and make services more accessible.”

Due to life circumstances, clients may be unable to attend appointments during traditional hours of operation. To accommodate for this, some organizations make use of rotating days with extended hours for appointments and to access resource centers.

Many organizations provide a job posting book, board, or wall that clients can access. These are kept up-to-date and are organized differently depending on the service provider. For example, some organizations sort these by location, while others sort them by application due date or sector. Clients are able to access these postings in person in addition to postings that they may receive via email from their employment counsellor.



Relationships with Employers

Relationships with employers are important for the work that is done in this sector. As a result, staff aim to nurture long-lasting relationships with employers. In order to increase connections with employers, some staff have involvement with local Rotary Clubs and Chambers of Commerce. One service provider reflected, “We don’t sell programs, we meet employers’ needs. This keeps the relationships long-term when programs change. Follow through is important.” Employers’ experiences with these services are discussed further on in this report.

STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT JOB SEEKING CLIENTS

Individuals who are searching for employment may find that they are encountering a number of barriers. Listed below are just a handful of ways in which staff are working to help clients overcome barriers. The type of help that staff are able to provide may be dependent upon the funding that the organization receives.

Serving as a Reference for a Client

Newcomers to Canada and people who have limited employment experience may find it particularly difficult to find someone who they can list as a reference. Many employment counsellors have had enough experience with their clients to be able to attest to their work ethic and character and are therefore able to be used as a reference.

Assisting Clients with Getting a Driver's License

Transportation continues to be a barrier for many people who are seeking to access employment opportunities in our region. Employment counsellors have been able to guide clients through the process of acquiring a driver's license in order to help them start to overcome this barrier.

Addressing Gaps in Employment History

Some individuals may find that they have employment gaps on their resume. Employment counsellors have been able to encourage these job seekers to consider the skills and experience they acquired during times of unemployment. Filling in this employment gap in a meaningful way helps to make the client's resume more appealing to an employer.

Accommodations

Some job seekers may require accommodations or may have health concerns that they would

like to share with an employer. Some employment counsellors are able to provide these individuals with the disclosure training that they need in order to discuss this with a potential employer in an interview.

Additional Supports & Services

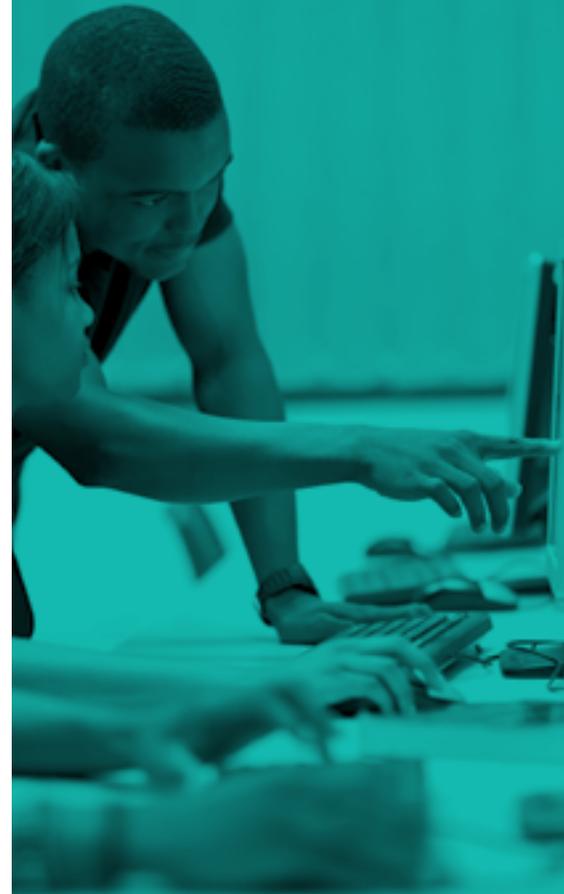
Many service providers expressed that they go beyond the call of duty in providing support to clients in areas that expand beyond employment. This assists clients in knowing that they are in a helpful and supportive environment, furthering the client's trust in the organization. For example, some clients require guidance on filling out forms and applications. Staff members are able to guide clients through these processes or direct them to individuals who can assist them with this. Staff are also able to provide additional information for necessary follow up supports such as language supports.

Due to the additional services that some organizations provide, clients may be able to access services such as child minding or having a daily warm meal.

It is important for clients to be engaged in their search for employment. Service providers shared that they have seen great success come from individual job placements and experiential learning programs and supports.

Encouragement

Searching for employment can be a discouraging and frustrating experience for some people. Staff members are able to work with clients to encourage them to consider training and employment opportunities that may align with their skills in ways they may not have considered before. This can open up new employment avenues and develop a renewed sense of hope and confidence in clients.



EXPERIENCE OF EMPLOYERS

In meeting with employers to gain their perspective on employment services, we very quickly learned that employers have very diverse experiences with the different employment services in our region.

Below are employers' thoughts regarding the employment services that they choose to use.

Some employers are indifferent in their use of private or publicly funded services:

“No difference; in all, public and private employment agencies offer good services. It is a matter of which organization can source the specific skill set we are looking for.” - Employer

Some companies appreciate publicly funded organizations and the incentives that those organizations are able to offer. Comments were also made with regards to the support that publicly funded organizations have provided for events such as job fairs.

“They've done an excellent job of connecting us with incentives and grants.” - Employer

“Good to use funding from the government- good that it can help with training costs.” - Employer

“We use (an Employment Service Provider) to find summer students to fill a variety of roles.” - Employer

“Our whole goal initially is to break even so wage subsidies are attractive.” - Employer

“We recruited by hosting our own job fair this year, which attracted many applicants and many with industry experience. The job fair was in connection with (an Employment Service Provider).” - Employer

Some of the employers we spoke with shared that that they have used publicly funded organizations in the past but have not always found the fit that they had been hoping for.

“We have worked in the past with (an Employment Service Provider), and did have some success. It's not always the best fit. We hire on a trial basis and see whether the employee will fit.” - Employer

“We have worked with (an Employment Service Provider) to fill employment gaps, but there were issues with the employees actually showing up, or when they were called to inform them that they were successful but they turned down the position based on the wage. We have also worked with (a different Employment Service Provider) and have hired on one of the participants after the program was completed.” - Employer

The quotes to the left stand in contrast to the employer below who continues to have positive experiences with publicly funded organizations:

“(Employment Service Provider) isn't as aggressive and focuses more on making sure we have the right person.” - Employer

Occasionally an employer would express some challenges that they encountered when working with publicly funded organizations:

“We are no longer in contact with an (Employment Service Provider) center since we were struggling with the caliber of candidates. They couldn't provide a skill set so we could only put them in our unskilled positions.” - Employer

Some employers expressed that they do not have a use for incentives that may be offered through publicly funded organizations. This was especially true of larger companies.

“We don't participate in these because we are not concerned about wage or financial incentives. We just want to hire someone who is ready to do the job.” - Employer

We heard that some employers prefer using private employment agencies, including the use of head hunters:

“Word of mouth and social media bring the quantity of applicants but the placement agencies often bring the quality.” - Employer

“Sometimes you post a role and you get people applying who are actively looking- how do you get the people with passive interest?” - Employer

“Agencies- because of their network, or because at one time you may have applied through them, they have a deep database.” - Employer

“We've used a recruitment agency to find some of our newest employees. It's expensive upfront but it saves money in the long run.” - Employer



Other employers expressed the challenges that they have had with private agencies:

“Headhunters have been used in the past, but they are returning the same candidates that come through from normal applications.” - Employer

“We have reached out to agencies, but the one person we hired through an agency quit after a few weeks.” - Employer

Employers have differing motivations for using employment agencies (both private and publicly funded):

“We only use a recruiter in very unique situations.” - Employer

“We use our own recruiters first, but at some point, if efforts don't provide fruit, we go to an agency.” - Employer

“They helped with accessing different candidates and pre-screening.” - Employer

“They are used after we have exhausted everything.” - Employer

“We had substantial hiring needs and wanted to do a job fair.” - Employer

“I've used an (Employment Service Provider) when I've done bigger events where we need assistance in coordination, planning, promotion.” - Employer

“Last year we had a position vacant – had several goes at hiring that position. We have had many people in the position who didn't work out. We found it difficult to find someone with the skill set and experience, so we decided to try a different method of recruitment.” - Employer

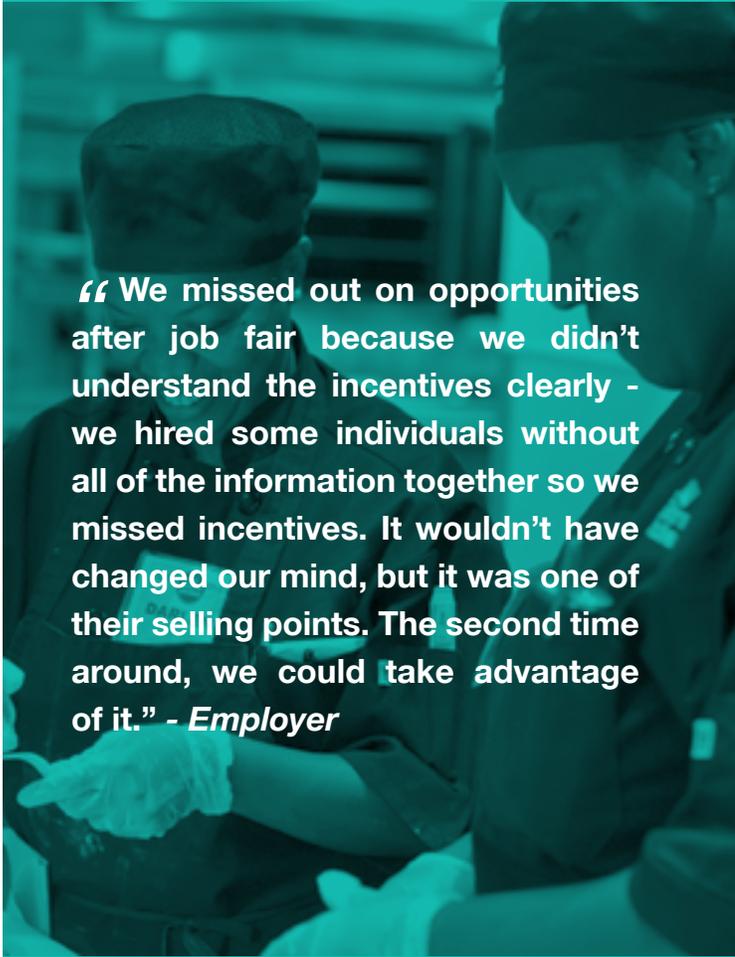
Employers also have reasons for not using agencies:

“We don't have trouble finding people so we have no use for private agencies.” - Employer

“Production shops may have more use for staffing agencies as they have general labourer positions. We don't have general labourer positions- another reason not to use staffing agencies. We have skilled trades and many people applying.” - Employer

Employers found it confusing to keep up with funding that may not remain constant. This further reinforces the importance of service providers nurturing long-term relationships with employers.

“I've used Canada Summer Jobs and the (Employment Service Provider) grants, but these do not seem to be offered anymore.” - Employer



“We missed out on opportunities after job fair because we didn't understand the incentives clearly - we hired some individuals without all of the information together so we missed incentives. It wouldn't have changed our mind, but it was one of their selling points. The second time around, we could take advantage of it.” - Employer



EXPERIENCE OF JOB SEEKERS

In meeting with job seekers, we were interested in learning about their experiences with the employment services that they have accessed.

Awareness of Services

Job seekers shared how they discovered the employment services that were available to them. Many respondents touched on how they informally came to learn about the organization they accessed services from:

“I was walking down the street and saw the sign on the doorway and I called them.” - Job Seeker

“I was in the production line and I wanted to change careers so one of my friends recommended I come here.” - Job Seeker

“I was looking for a particular agency. I went in to inquire to see if anyone could help me find a placement agency. A girl, Indian girl, working at the Subway directed me to this place.” - Job Seeker

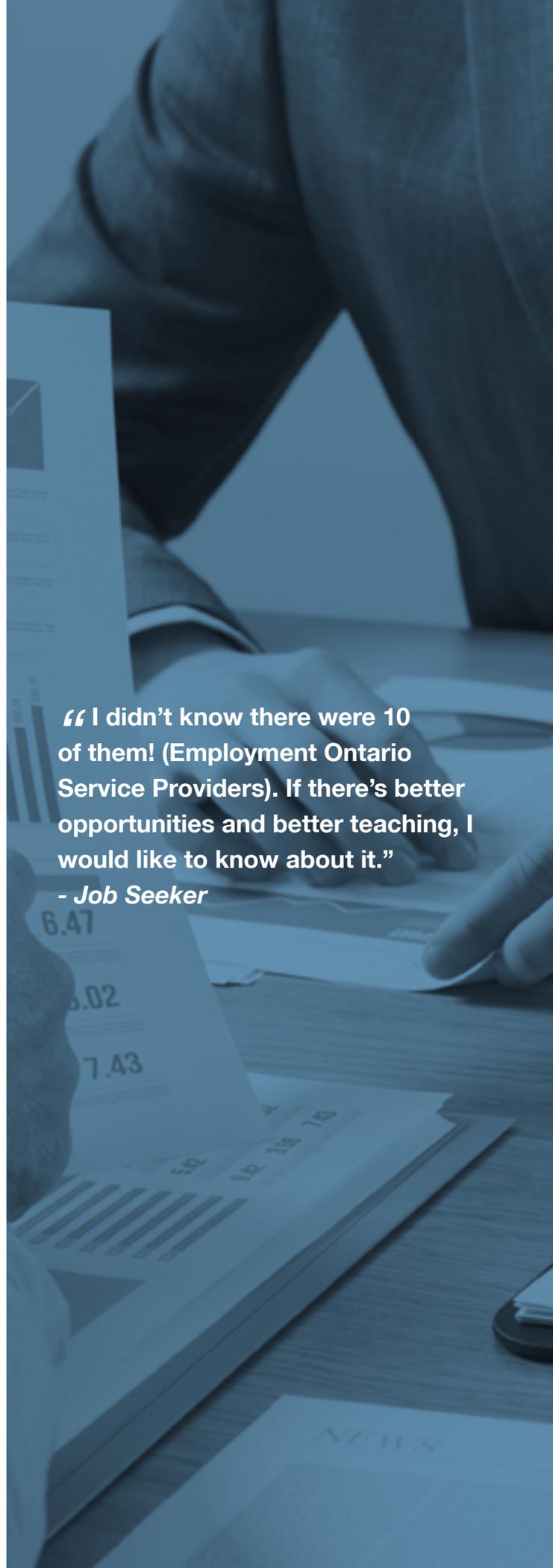
Some job seekers were unaware that there were multiple employment services in our community:

“I didn't know there were 10 of them! (Employment Ontario Service Providers). If there's better opportunities and better teaching, I would like to know about it.” - Job Seeker

“I didn't know there were places [that] offered services for free.” - Job Seeker

“I didn't know there were 10 of them! (Employment Ontario Service Providers). If there's better opportunities and better teaching, I would like to know about it.”

- Job Seeker



Motivation in Accessing Services

Job seekers shared with us what led them to access services in the first place:

“I was having a difficult time looking for a job.”
- Job Seeker

“My expectations were that they would find me a job. They found me one that was a dud, and then found another that I’m happy with.” - Job Seeker

“It was all factory jobs, I already experienced that and I didn’t want it. I wanted something in a different sector.”
- Job Seeker

“When I applied for OW (Ontario Works) I was informed that they did a GED program here (Service Provider) and I was a high school dropout so I sought that opportunity to get my grade twelve to help with employment.” - Job Seeker

“I’m trying to get my skills upgraded to go into maybe something office related.” - Job Seeker

“I’m new in Canada, and when I came, someone told me (an Employment Service Provider) could help me integrate.” - Job Seeker

“I wanted to make my resume according to Canadian standards because I was working for so long to build up my resume before coming to Canada. I had felt like something was lacking because I wasn’t getting a response after coming to Canada.” - Job Seeker

Supportive Staff

Many job seekers shared the positive experiences that they have had with local employment organizations. Job seekers felt as though employment support staff helped them develop the confidence they need for their job search. They appreciate the assistance that they received.

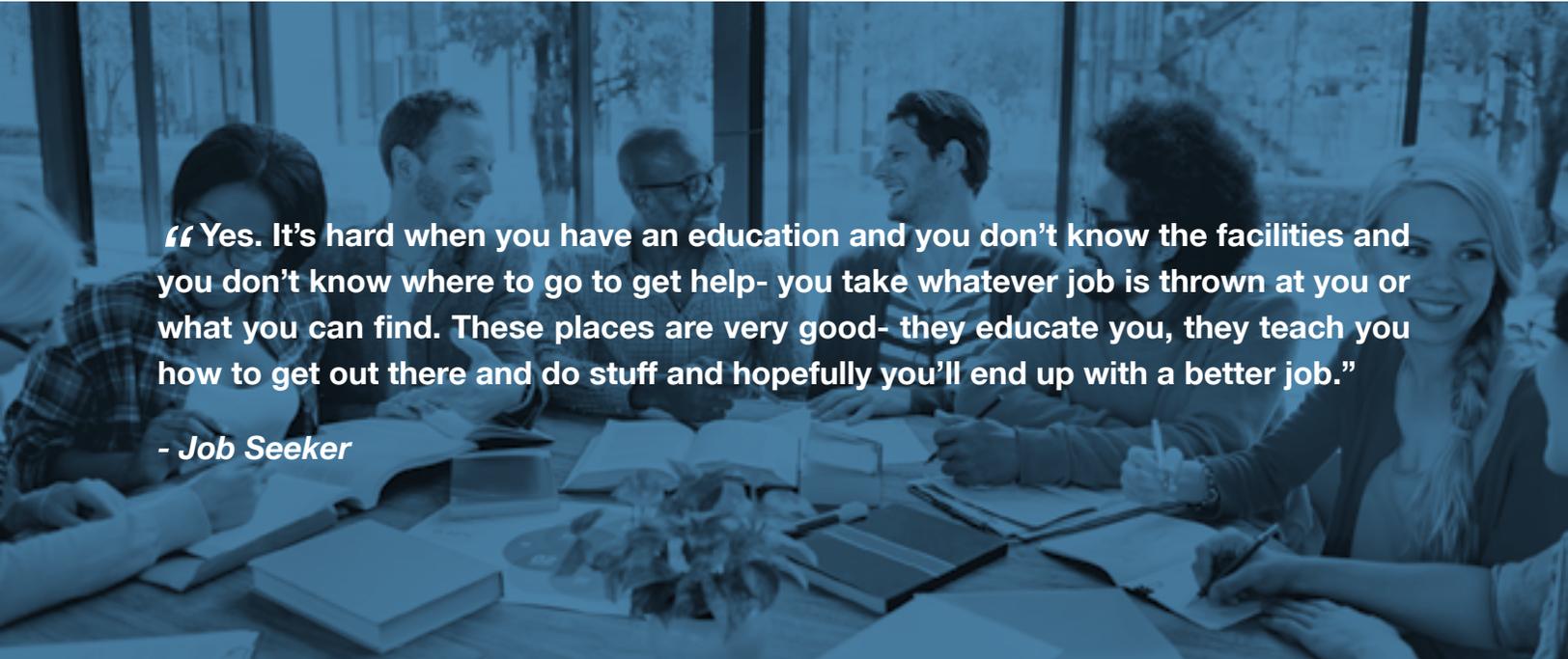
“They strive to understand an employer and client and make a perfect match. It’s like a glove, if you don’t have a good fit, neither one will be happy.” - Job Seeker

“They help to tell us what path to take.” - Job Seeker

“At (Employment Service Provider) she emails me job opportunities and when I talk with her she opens my mind to job opportunities that I hadn’t considered and things that would segue into further education that would open things up for second career.” - Job Seeker

We also heard of the emotional supports that staff provide to job seekers along the way. As it can be easy to feel burdened and distracted by problems occurring outside of job searching, this emotional support and having a listening ear helped these job seekers focus on the job search tasks at hand.

“When you are having personal problems, it helps to talk to staff about it. You feel life is easier by talking about it.” - Job Seeker



“Yes. It’s hard when you have an education and you don’t know the facilities and you don’t know where to go to get help- you take whatever job is thrown at you or what you can find. These places are very good- they educate you, they teach you how to get out there and do stuff and hopefully you’ll end up with a better job.”

- Job Seeker

Job seekers feel as though they are receiving guidance on the tools they need for searching for employment. They shared that job fair information is provided to them, they learn about the websites they should go on for job searching, options for hiring incentives are explored, and interview preparation advice is given. Through this, they were taught about resume building, proper interview attire, and interview behaviour. Many people shared that they found the interview process to be intimidating, so having these supports available is a huge benefit.

“Coming to (Employment Service Provider) has been a good strategy. They have been helpful to make sure that my resume is updated and professional. They taught me about cover letters.” - Job Seeker

Networking continues to be an important part of searching for employment opportunities. Job seekers discussed the supports they received when it came to developing their network. This can be especially helpful for those who are new to the area and have not had the opportunity to establish a network. We also heard of staff members who advocated for clients in the working world.

“One thing specifically I noticed that my counsellor has done differently, everyone I have applied to she has gone to go see or has sent a personal letter or note, which no one else has done for me. It makes an impactful difference.” - Job Seeker

An important part of networking is volunteering. One job seeker spoke of how she learned about volunteering, which is not something that is part of her culture, and how that helped her career path.

“In my country there is no concept of volunteering- it was hard for me to understand the value and importance of this in Canada and what it is.” - Job Seeker



Barriers in Accessing and Using Services

Job seekers shared with us the barriers that they have encountered when trying to access and make use of local employment services. As seen in the quotes referenced below, areas such as transportation, lack of awareness of services, and childcare all impact a potential client's ability to access services.

Some focus group participants mentioned that there is a stigma and people may be “too proud” or may think that the service will not help them. While some organizations are able to offer childcare to targeted populations, others cannot due to the funding model. Childcare services for programs such as language learning are helpful in aiding these clients in removing the barriers that may have otherwise hindered them from gaining employment. We wonder if funding for childcare services for employment services would help to further remove barriers for job seekers as well.

Some focus group participants shared that they were unable to access some indirect employment related services due to their permanent residency status.

“As a newcomer, I didn't know the employment services were available.” - Job Seeker

“Barriers: transportation infrastructure. Windsor has an issue with public transportation.” - Job Seeker

“If you want to succeed you'll find those services, but a lot of people won't take that first step. They need someone there to tell them “these people will help you.” - Job Seeker

“We don't know all the agencies.” - Job Seeker

“Some people are too proud to seek out help.” - Job Seeker

“...But I can't bring my son here, I asked and you can't, so I have to find someone else to help me, so it's not convenient. You ask a friend, they are busy or don't have time.” - Job Seeker

“You know transportation is a barrier if newcomers are complaining about it. They are used to walking great distances to get to work.” - Service Provider



“I’d like to see a daycare for people who want to come – a lot of people want to come, but there is no services for their children and stuff. If I could just drop them off and go to class, that would be perfect.”

- Job Seeker

We learned from job seekers and service providers that some individuals have limited access to computers/low computer literacy skills.

“The number one barrier is the assumption that all of the population is computer literate. That is a huge barrier because a significant amount of the unemployed are also lower educated...For EO and all of the services, the more and more we put them online and we decrease the face-to-face where until that population has that skill level we are neglecting them....Low income families cannot always afford the computer to begin with.”

- Service Provider

Some job seekers expressed concerns that the jobs that were being shared with them through employment services did not align with their experience and background. Some clients touched on the point that they are aware that organizations have certain targets that they are required to meet. This reflected poorly on the service they received and gave them a negative impression of services.

“My worker insisted I go to job fairs. All industrial jobs. How does someone like me fit? I gave up a networking opportunity that same day because she said I really needed to do this.” - Job Seeker

“I want the job developers to stop sending out blanket jobs. Why don’t they specify? You know my resume, stop sending out jobs that have nothing to do. Just another piece of garbage in my mailbox. Send me jobs that have to do with my education and experience.”

- Job Seeker

“I went there for six weeks, they told us after six weeks there’s a placement position. I did that full time. They asked me what companies I want to have a placement with. I gave six or seven. We finished this classes. I was waiting for someone to call me about this. No one called me. Where is my placement position? This is our situation. They make workshops, writing their names, just to show the government so that the government can keep funding them, so they can show something here and there. The reality is there is nothing. They’ve provided nothing.” - Job Seeker

“They aren’t looking at anything but numbers and names.” - Job Seeker

“I know our employment people are trying hard and I’m not as hard on them, but I don’t want one more person calling me up saying, “Would you like to take a refresher course in IT?” Not one more, I don’t want to hear it. That’s not my problem. But it will give them a tickey box, the (Employment Service Provider) a tickey box, the province a tickey box and then it looks good on paper.” - Job Seeker

“Give Me a Chance”

We heard time and time again that job seekers were in need of an employer who would give them a chance:

“Can’t get a job that requires years of experience until someone takes a chance.” - Job Seeker

“Give us a chance to show them that we have skills and experience.” - Job Seeker

“Employers should try us for two weeks.” - Job Seeker

“Do a test for the person and then see, do training and see (what experience they have).” - Job Seeker

“If I don’t have experience, give me the chance, let me work. Give me three months. Just give me the chance, if I’m not good they can tell me, sorry we won’t hire you. Just give me the chance.” - Job Seeker





Ideas from Job Seekers

Job seekers also shared their insight on how employment services could be more widely marketed in our region so that more people are aware of what is available to them:

“Go to public places- libraries, schools, churches.”
- Job Seeker

“Send out flyers with the OW cheques.” - Job Seeker

“Even if there was an ad in the papers with shopping flyers...penny saver, etc. A lot of people don't throw them out. If there's an ad there it might catch your eye.”
- Job Seeker

“Do presentations in our classes.” - Job Seeker

Some job seekers shared ideas on workshops that they would like to see in our community and potential recommendations for employment services:

“There's Facebook and LinkedIn and networking and stuff, but there's so many pitfalls. There are viruses online, etc. It would be nice to get a workshop on that.”
- Job Seeker

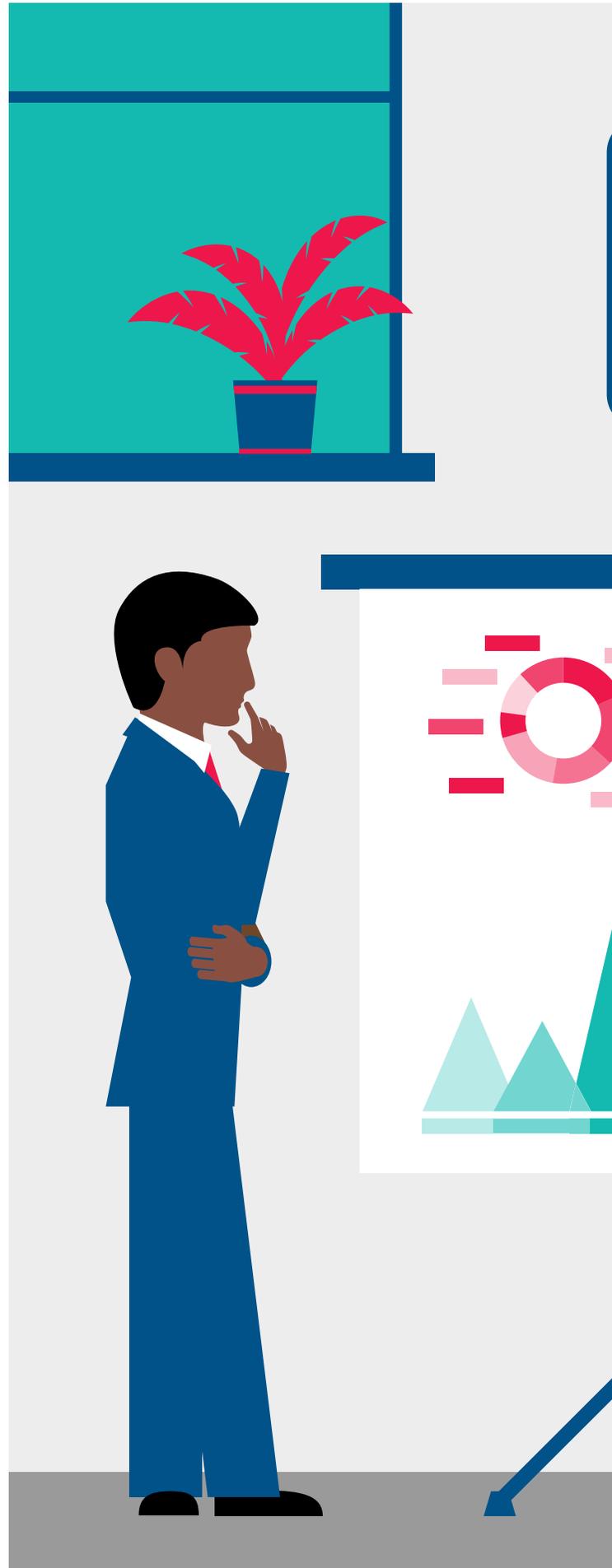
“I think if there was a separate course aside from what this process is. If there was some type of training in change and crisis management- my parents felt a constant state of crisis even if there isn't one. When you come from another country you have to learn everything- and the state of crisis doesn't ever leave.” - Job Seeker

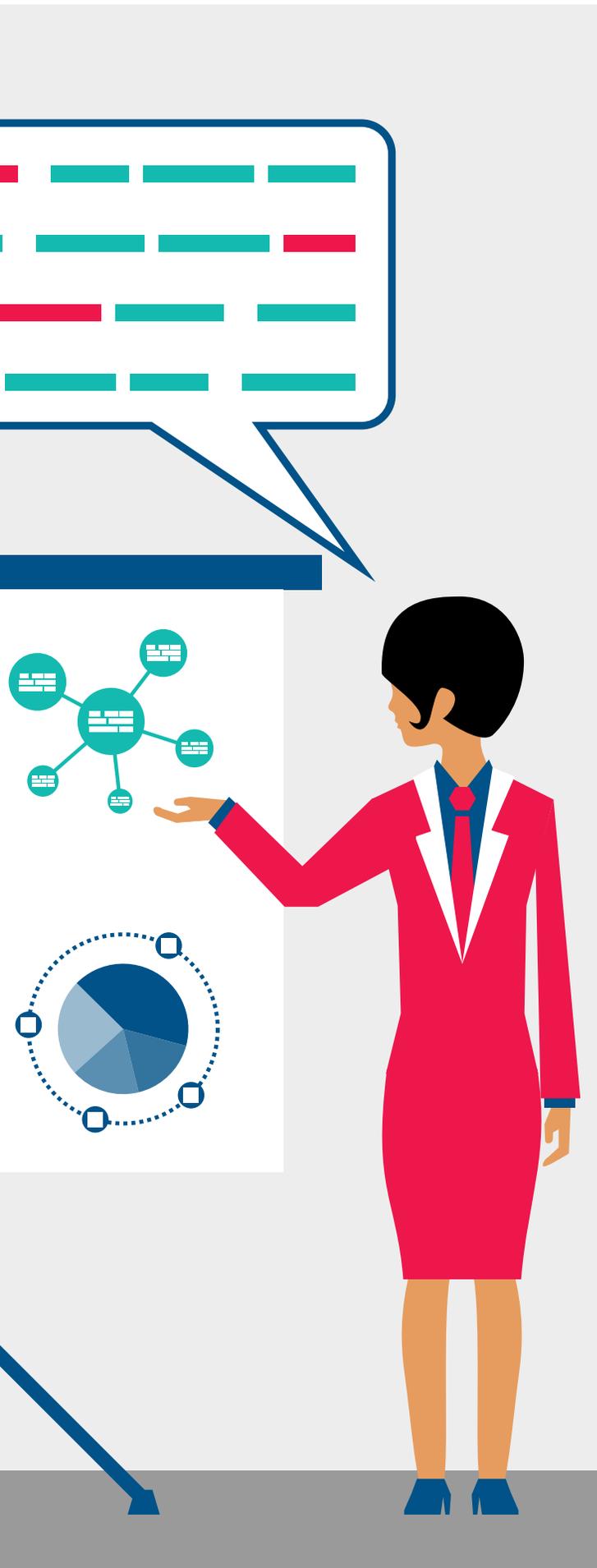
“Agencies have personal and confidential information – maybe create a general (database) that doesn't include personal information, just what you do, so they can share clients' information.” - Job Seeker

“I think, if there was internship, it would help a lot. Especially in the way when you come to a new place, and in an interview, what they tell you is you need Canadian experience, irrespective of the skills you have that you want to transfer to this place. I believe if there were internships with different companies that would help a lot because that would be the work experience. It will help you to get a job faster.” - Job Seeker

“A unified job board would also be nice.” - Job Seeker

“How about having a social service website – like a common website. You can put services with descriptions and you can explain who you serve. I don't know who services whom. That way you can have links and contacts. Maybe an email link.” - Job Seeker





GAPS

Through discussions with employment service providers, job seekers, and employers, some of the following gaps were brought up:

Service providers identified a lack of marketing ability for their services as a gap in communication for their organization.

Many job seekers emphasized the need for an increase in co-op/internship placements provided from service providers as well as from local post-secondary education institutions. Job seekers expressed how these placements provide the “experience you need for your resume” and allow you to use the skills that you have developed in your education. Temporary placements are also beneficial to newcomers as they can provide Canadian work experience and references for their resumes, while also allowing newcomers to develop their language skills in a workplace setting.

Newcomer respondents identified a lack of stress management programs/courses available to those in need. Some respondents felt that the program could serve those who are suffering from anxiety of being in a new location and culture, as well as those who suffered a previous trauma. While the many classes available on learning about Canadian culture are beneficial for some, others that are feeling high levels of stress and/or “constant shock” may benefit from stress/crisis management classes where they can overcome their anxiety and improve their living conditions. Mental health concerns were also brought up from service providers as this has been something that they continue to see an increase in with their clients. One provider noted that with the changing economy, they have seen less repetitive work injuries and more mental health issues.

With the increasing role of technology in our local economy, many job seekers are facing a pressure to learn new computer skills for both the job search and the job. Along with basic computer skills is the need for workshops focused on social media and how to use the applications in a job search. The most requested computer skills programs were for older/middle-aged job seekers.

Both job seekers and service providers identified the need for improved employability skills workshops. While some service providers did not have these programs, some providers identified those that do have them may need to improve their courses to better inform their clients. These courses could include identification and development of soft skills, as well as situational knowledge about the workplace that may not have been taught in educational settings.

Service providers identified a lack of services and seminars available to small businesses, which are known to be a large majority of businesses in the area. These services could consist of information sessions regarding the legal requirements involved with a business, such as WSIB. Additional services could include help with hiring and retention.

“If there’s one thing for employers, I would look at smaller businesses and offer them a program on how to hire. Government funded programs are assisting people to job search, wouldn’t it be nice to have a government funded program to assist a small business owner on how to hire. In Canada, if you have a particular skill and the resources, you can open a business in a couple of days, but who teaches you how to be an employer, how to hire fairly, screen candidates, recruit them without bias and prejudice? I’ve met with small business owners who were at the point of wanting to hire someone who hadn’t heard of WSIB. I trained them on WSIB. We are missing that gap for employers. Small businesses talk about turn over; the better the screening process, the better the orientation, the less turnover you have. It’s an established fact. Who is teaching the smaller business? When you look at the proportion of industry that is made up of smaller businesses, are we not neglecting them?”
- Service Provider

Lack of fast follow-up was brought up several times but was never in reference to any specific organization or any organization that hosted focus groups. Those who mentioned specific organizations they had worked with praised the follow-up speed. It is unknown whether this is a common misconception or

if they were referring to private employment agencies, who keep resumes on file for a longer time.

“I was with job placement agency. They get rid of resumes after six months and you have to reapply. I never heard back.” - Job Seeker

“The employment services for example take the CV and put it under the table, and they forget about it. Many of them are like that and don’t answer you for like one week, two weeks, sometimes months.” - Job Seeker

“With employment agencies, you leave your information and when they call you back you almost forget who they are, why they are calling you... they’re calling you in months.” - Job Seeker

Both service providers and job seekers identified an increased need for services that are available to the underemployed. With the varying definition of underemployment, there are different levels of services available to the underemployed at each service provider.

The Service Provision Working Group discussed how to best serve the underemployed and learned that the definition for underemployed can vary (for example, not working full-time, having seasonal work, not using skills in employment, etc.). The Employment Ontario representation from our working group agreed that they do not receive specific funding designated to help the underemployed, but the underemployed can access resource centers and may be able to receive additional assistance depending on their situation.



DUPLICATION

As many local service providers are funded as Employment Ontario Service Providers, their programs and services are similar because of their similar mandates. Feedback from job seekers has demonstrated that it can be confusing for people when choosing a service provider. Many service providers have their own specialties or deal with specific populations, which differentiate their services, though many organizations are mandated to serve all populations. One potential challenge with the Employment Ontario service providers that we have identified is that each organization has its own targets to attain in order to maintain funding. As some service providers mentioned in our consultations, this can create competition for clients. Potentially, this could hinder clients from receiving the best service for their needs as it may decrease the likelihood of referrals to other organizations.

Job search assistance is provided by most of the local service providers; however, having this service available at multiple locations in the region is beneficial to job seekers. Job search assistance, including resume writing help, interview preparation, and search strategies, was the most mentioned use of service providers by job seekers, which suggests that the service is fulfilling a need of the public rather than a duplication of services.

PARTNERSHIPS

Most of the local employment service providers noted that they refer clients to other community service providers if they cannot fully serve one of their clients. Many of the referrals discussed were in reference to clients that require financial incentives for work placements, clients looking for employment that requires increased education, and clients with a disability being referred for employment services.

Challenges were identified regarding collaboration between service providers as many of the providers are competing for funding opportunities and clients. There is additional tension between public and private service providers regarding collaboration and sharing of resources.

“Problem- everyone wants to be protective of their own service they provide.” - Service Provider

One service provider said, “Everyone has a niche, which helps with, but does not completely eliminate, competition. They will share resources, referrals.”

Another: “We try our best to work together,” and expressed that although there is competition, they are all client-based.

One service provider said they want to start a regional job developer network, but there is “not enough motivation from people to collaborate”.



SUCCESS STORIES AND BEST PRACTICES

Below are a few of the several success stories and best practices of organizations partnering together to improve services for clients:

The Canadian Mental Health Association has a contract with the City of Windsor to deliver their *Personalized Assistance to Competitive Employment Program*. The program consists of a mix of eight weeks of group training and individualized employment case management. The program was designed to fill a gap for Ontario Works' recipients who may be experiencing some barriers to finding employment. Participants exit the program with better job search skills and have a better understanding of the job market and how to navigate it.

On October 14, 2016, the Employment Ontario network collaborated to host Job Day, a large job fair that had fifty booths for employers and employment and training service providers. Job Day has been held for six years.

St. Clair College and the University of Windsor have collaborated to host a job fair for students and graduates. This year's event will be the 17th annual job fair for the two post-secondary educational institutions.

Community Living Windsor has a partnership with the Greater Essex County District School Board for their Focus on Youth program. The partnership provides opportunities for students to assist with the hospitality program.



Community Living Essex County has collaborated with ACCESS to implement four community gardens at their locations. The program employs persons with disabilities to build gardens, deliver food, and sell the food at farmers' markets in Kingsville and Windsor. They have also collaborated with two local organic farmers for the project. The program is looking to expand into canning processes to employ people during all seasons.

Workforce WindsorEssex's Service Provision Working Group brings together local public and private service providers, including both Employment Ontario and non-Employment Ontario service providers. The group allows for discussion of various issues that are affecting their clients in the community as well as allows for collaboration in developing solutions to these challenges.

Employment Ontario service providers have regular network meetings to ensure that the many organizations are familiar with services that the other organizations provide and can identify possible partnerships and areas of improvement.



Service Canada has other organizations deliver presentations to their clients, which can result in referrals for clients' whose needs would be better met at a different organization.

Participants who were taking classes at a service provider site mentioned numerous times that the classes have been beneficial. Having a "hub model" of services seemed to be a benefit for many organizations and job seekers.

*“When I applied for OW I was informed that they did a GED program here and I was a high school dropout, so I sought that opportunity to get my grade twelve to help with employment.”
- Job Seeker*

“I'm trying to get my skills upgraded to go into maybe something office related, so I came here and attended lots of programs, resume writing, mock interview, series of workshops, so many things, and it has really helped a lot.” - Job Seeker

“For me, the way we write resumes is different from here, so the resume thing was – I attended resume workshop and my counselor helped with how the resume was written and besides that, I attended a mock interview so I know what is expected and the kind of questions employers ask, how to answer, transferable skills, the skills I can transfer to the workforce in Canada.” - Job Seeker

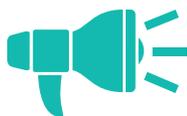
RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are based on feedback received from service providers, jobseekers, and employers. These recommendations may serve as a starting point for further discussion and exploration.

Collaboration with Other Service Providers through a Job Database

There were multiple recommendations from both job seekers and employers suggesting the creation of a collaborative job board/database. The database would host clients' information so that employers could search the database to find candidates to fill their open positions. The database could post information regarding the candidates' skills and experiences (their resume without the contact information) and allow the employers to choose a candidate and then connect with the organization that the client is involved with. Employers could also post job opportunities on the database for employment service staff to see and share with their clients. This database would increase the connection between employers and service providers, which should increase job opportunities for their clients while also increasing the candidate pool for the employers to choose from.

“If an organization was able to develop a website/portal where the employer could post jobs, candidates can post their background/resume (with or without names), and multiple agencies could be posting to put candidates in that database...perhaps pay a monthly fee to have access to these people. I wouldn't need to go to a staffing agency. The brilliant part of it- I'm putting the skills I need, candidates have the skills listed, then we have a gap analysis of the skills in our community.”
-Employer



Creation of Business Ventures for Clients to Earn Experience while Externally Job Seeking

Many of the job seekers responded that they are seeking more experiential learning opportunities through their service providers. Service providers could provide these opportunities through external activities and employment placements. Based on Community Living Essex County's community garden project, service providers have an opportunity to start their own business ventures that can provide their clients with employment experience and an opportunity to develop their skills further in a work setting. These programs can provide their clients with temporary employment while they are with the organization and give them experience and an employment reference to use in their job search. While external funding and community partners are likely necessary for service providers to provide these opportunities, the experience to their clients could be very beneficial.

Having Meetings with Organization Networks to Share Hard-to-Match Clients Outside of their Organizations

Many of the local service providers currently meet with their staff internally to discuss group approaches for hard-to-place clients, while referring clients to other organizations that could better serve their needs. Having these meetings as a regional network practice with multiple organizations coming together on a regular basis to gain input on hard-to-place clients from their peers could improve the benefits of their services for those clients. These meetings would not result in multiple referrals but rather the sharing of contacts (ex. employers) and resources to better serve clients while remaining with their current service provider. Using the network of service providers will allow individual service providers to serve their clients in a more efficient and effective manner.



Shared Space

To further develop relationships with employers, it may be of benefit to offer employers space for job fairs, interviews, presentations, etc. at employment service providing organizations. Some organizations are already doing this. This set up could also facilitate events such as speed networking with employers.

Employer Brainstorming

One of the service providers we met with proposed the following:

“There is an idea that I heard from the Toronto area where a committee of employers (well connected) look at client applications/resumes with no names added and brainstorm who they know is hiring.”

Ontario Centre for Workforce Innovation

The Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development has recently launched the Ontario Centre for Workforce Innovation. One of their focuses is on Employment Ontario. Now may be a time for collaboration to happen to encourage experimentation. For example, instead of organizations having their own targets, encourage collaboration between organizations by having targets for the region. Additionally, it would be helpful for organizations to get points and/or recognition for clients they refer to the most appropriate service.

Increased Partnership

It may be of value to increase partnerships between publicly funded organizations and between private organizations and publicly funded organizations. Service providers may want to think outside of the box and consider organizations they may not have thought of partnering with before.

Additional Supports

As seen in comments throughout this report, additional options for childcare and mental health supports would benefit clients facing barriers in accessing services and employment.

Accessing New Clients

In 2015-2016, the number of closed Employment Ontario Cases in Windsor-Essex was 8,104²; meanwhile, the number of unemployed individuals in 2015 in the Windsor CMA (not including Essex, Kingsville, or Leamington) was 17,200³. It would be of interest to explore opportunities to connect with the unemployed individuals who did not access services to see where they are at on the employment spectrum and to understand the types of services that would be required to move them closer to employment.



²Employment and Training Division, Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development, “Employment Ontario Data”. Government of Ontario.

³Statistics Canada, “Labour force survey estimates (LFS), by census metropolitan area based on 2011 Census boundaries, sex and age group, annual (persons unless otherwise noted),” CANSIM 282-0129.

LOOKING AHEAD

Workforce WindsorEssex has recently taken the following steps in seeking to further support and promote local employment services:

SUCCESS STORIES

As part of the “Your Job Search” (available: www.workforcewindsor.essex.com) booklet, a section on success stories featuring local employment services has been compiled in hopes of encouraging job seekers to access services at local employment service providers. Additionally, throughout the booklet, job seekers are encouraged to visit local employment service providers for assistance with their job search.

CONTINUED PARTNERSHIP

The recent announcement of an extension to the Local Employment Planning Council pilot initiative will allow for further work to be done on fostering an environment for collaboration and participation, and for providing timely labour market information to job seekers and the staff who assist them.

WESEARCH

WEsearch is an electronic tool that helps job seekers explore the types of services that are best suited for their current needs. Job seekers navigate a short series of questions to land on a page of recommended services to consider. Additionally, this tool allows employers to learn more about the services that are available to them. This tool is set to release at the beginning of April 2017 and can be accessed at:

www.workforcewindsor.essex.com/tool



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