



# Approaches to Service Coordination

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These contributions from LBS practitioners were augmented by the experiences of a number of Employment Service providers; that is, agencies delivering “sister” programs to LBS and, in many communities, the very types of services that many LBS learners will need to access to be successful. Bernadette Beaupre was instrumental in making these connections and helping to integrate the understandings these providers offered.

Finally, while there were important contributions from numerous organizations and individuals, the responsibility for this document remains with its author. Any errors, either of omission or commission, or of interpretation, remain mine and mine alone.

Norman S. Rowen  
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## About the Author

Norman Rowen has a long history in literacy and education. He was a volunteer and founding board member of Parkdale Project Read. For nearly fifteen years, he was a senior research associate at OISE. He is the author of various studies on the relationship between literacy and basic skills and the broader employment and training system including *More Walls Than Doors* (1997), *People Over Programs* (1999), and *Terribly Obvious, Awfully Complex* (2000). Beginning in 2000, Norman developed the first Pathways to Education Program in Regent Park and was its Program Director for Pathways first five years, after which he became a senior staff at Pathways to Education Canada to support the Program's replication in other communities.

Norman is co-author (with K. Gosine) of "Support That Matters: A Case Study in Raising the Achievement of Economically Vulnerable Youth" in Armstrong, Denise and Brenda J. McMahon (eds) *Inclusion in Urban Educational Environments: Addressing Issues of Diversity, Equity, and Social Justice* (Information Age Publishing Inc.; Greenwich, Connecticut; March 2006); is a contributing author to Wright et al "Institutional strategy & practice: increasing the odds of access and success at the postsecondary level for under-represented students" (Canadian Millenium Scholarship Foundation; April 2008); and is the author of "Context of the Research: What is Pathways to Education?"; in Alister Cumming (editor) *Adolescent Literacies in a Multicultural Context* (Routledge; forthcoming, 2011).

Norman was appointed a member of the Minister's Advisory Committee on First Generation Students in February 2006 by the then Ontario Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, the Hon. Chris Bentley.

## Executive Summary Approaches to Service Coordination

The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities' (MTCU) vision of Employment Ontario (EO) is that a comprehensive system will eventually be in place which, in addition to breaking down barriers between programs, will also better integrate the supports that clients require to be successful in their training. Indeed, under Employment Ontario, 'service coordination' is an explicit criterion in the evaluation of the quality of program delivery to EO clients.

Given the challenges faced by many literacy learners and by other EO clients who may benefit from literacy programs, there is broad understanding that Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) programs cannot, in and of themselves, be responsible for the delivery of the range of supports necessary for learner success. Indeed, there is a broad consensus that the success of learners in LBS programming is a function of more than the curriculum and delivery of literacy skills themselves; and, particularly, of other supports beyond literacy programming. Therefore, it is important to consider how services among different providers might be coordinated, so that learners might have (better) access to the supports they require.

### *Findings and Conclusions*

We examined four possible approaches to service coordination: case management, interagency cooperation, integrated programming and community-wide planning. While there are examples of each approach from Ontario LBS agencies, the four approaches increase in complexity and in the difficulty of execution and likely effectiveness in coordinating the broad range of services.

While there are certainly challenges, including resources and mandates, coordinating services using a case management approach is likely to be most effective; and the challenges to adopting this approach are, on balance, can be addressed with current resources. The results of using this approach can be relatively easy to measure and report. Most important, there is widespread consensus that this is a key factor in the success of harder-to-serve learners and those likely to benefit from additional supports. In a "post recovery" environment which needs to include a greater number of harder-to-serve learners, where some but not all LBS learners need multiple supports to address multiple challenges, the absence of a coherent approach to case management is a recipe for failure since the evidence across a variety of contexts and jurisdictions is strong that case management is a precondition for success for large numbers of literacy learners.

Inter-agency cooperation is more challenging since it involves "shared" responsibility, rather than single-point accountability. Historically, within colleges and school boards, the level of cooperation has been largely to ensure transitions within the same organization, though there is evidence that many of these traditional organizations have been unable to coordinate the potentially available supports even within their own institutions (e.g. the lack of consistent access for LBS learners to counselling support at colleges, or to special education supports through the school boards' K-12 oriented structure). In addition, if cooperation is through a "formal" program of two (or more) distinct supports or services, it is not clear if all learners enrolled in the shared program will need each of the supports mandated by the partnership.

There are many examples of integrated programming. The most likely benefits are from integrating LBS with vocational skills training as well as LBS with social/life skills and employment supports, for which there is much evidence that these kinds of integration can be effective. Less effective appear to be the "integration" of college LBS with pre-apprenticeship, and school board LBS with credit programs; both of which are examples of sequential, rather than concurrent and truly integrated programming. As an approach to service coordination, integrated programming appears to be most effectively executed by community-based agencies and, especially, multi-service centres which have the opportunity to make internal referrals to secure the necessary supports for their clients.

Community-wide integrated service planning is by far the most challenging approach to service coordination, though there are two examples offered which suggest its potential. Combined with more thorough case

management, community-wide planning might be furthered through directive by the Ministry (as a precondition) and through an initial “project” focus around which to organize the coordination. For example, a focus on the development of a community-wide consensus and protocol on the use and interpretation of initial assessment and referral for both academic and for the range of supports to address identifiable barriers. However, this approach, in addition to the complexity of implementation, also has the added challenges of the scope and authority of the process, as well as the likelihood of identifying increased demand for some supports which service providers may not be able to address.

### *Possible Next Steps*

Given the importance of continuing to build a more integrated employment and training system for Ontarians, there are a number of actions which may move agencies toward this goal:

(1) Clearly express the vision of a fully integrated system. While this may appear easy at the most general level, it has several key components: (a) integrating all Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU) components including LBS; (b) including the employment focused activities of Ontario Works (OW), Ontario Disabilities Support Program (ODSP) and Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB); as well as (c) integrating ESL training when a precondition for employment or other training programs (since Ontario is one of the only jurisdictions which organizationally separates ‘language’ from ‘literacy’ training).

(2) Articulate clearer expectations for LBS and partner agencies around what constitutes truly integrated programming. Given the evidence, direction should be given to increase the number and range of offerings beginning with more integration of LBS with specific skills training, as well as LBS with social/life skills and employment services and supports.

(3) Support practical initiatives. Whether as a ‘stand-alone’ project or as part of a broader community-wide planning process, an important first direction is for each community to effectively and efficiently organize the case management support all clients need. As the simplest and most direct way to coordinate services, defining, providing and documenting case management would help all providers identify the actual level of demand for the different services being supported through the development of an integrated system. One option to be explored is for a “third party” (i.e. an agency not delivering program elements) to deliver a central case management function including analysis of client needs, referral and follow-up with program agencies as well as client follow-up and tracking. This approach would also alleviate a significant irritant to LBS and Employment Service (ES) providers who lack the capacity for such activities.

(4) Articulate the next steps in developing a truly community-wide planning process which goes beyond the current Literacy Service Planning (LSP) process. Several demonstration projects could be supported which include all employment and training providers, referring partners (i.e. OW, ODSP, etc.), as well as major funders of these providers.

The initial and immediate focus of these initiatives should be:

(a) Agreement on tools for common academic assessment and referral, including a screening tool for use by non-LBS providers in determining who will likely benefit from referral to LBS programs. The agreement should include consensus on the specific thresholds (including a range of scores) which would automatically lead to a referral for literacy and basic skills programming.

(b) Development of a common assessment tool or approach to determine other client/learner challenges and barriers, with resulting agreement on the supports needed to address these identified barriers. This assessment should similarly lead to a common protocol for referring clients/learners to the required supports and be as automatic as the referral to LBS programming.

(c) Development of the community's approach to active case management. Since there may be differences in capacity among agencies in the community, and important differences across communities, the provision of active case management to a subset of clients may be best located in a range of agencies in the community which should be the subject of a community-wide discussion.

(d) Development of a community-wide approach to data analysis, integrating data from a range of sources. The purposes of this task include projecting demand for different services and supports, determining who is successful and who has not been successful and the various factors which distinguish these groups of clients, as well as factors which include the supports they have received and the effectiveness of delivery. These data, taken together, are as crucial for program planning and service coordination as they are for accountability and program improvement.

Each of these four tasks is important in and of itself. Taken together, these tasks provide the basis for important progress on service coordination. However, they are merely first steps to be followed in a more rigorous program planning function which can begin to rationalize and consolidate existing services to ensure a broader range of supports necessary for success as well as ensuring service delivery is more effective for more clients. However, the reluctance conveyed by many providers, not only LBS, requires locally developed approaches which conform to government guidelines that direct participation, though not its form, for beginning this complex undertaking.

If a truly integrated employment and training system is to continue to evolve, it is crucial to first identify and then deliver the supports clients require in an effective and efficient manner which. This, in turn, will require considerable coordination across the range of service providers. If the steps taken are successful, if more learners and clients gain access to the supports they need and if these are coordinated by a series of practical and effective processes, and if the services, supports and programming they receive is demonstrably effective in helping them realize their employment and training goals, it will certainly be no small accomplishment.

## Approaches to Service Coordination

### Purposes

While much other work was underway to develop the elements of the Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework (OALCF), the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU) provided an opportunity to look specifically at the learner supports and service coordination which might complement the OALCF work on the curriculum framework itself as well as the associated tasks, assessments and learning materials. Both of these topics – Learner Supports and Service Coordination – are important to the development and implementation of the OALCF for several reasons.

First, as noted in *Transition-Oriented Programming: Foundation Document*, there is a broad consensus that the success of learners in literacy and basic skills programming is a function of more than the curriculum and delivery of literacy skills themselves. It is also a matter of the other supports a learner receives beyond literacy programming. Five areas of support have been identified in the *Transition-Oriented Programming: Foundation Document* and outlined further in the *Introduction to the Learner Plan Template*.

Second, there is a similarly broad understanding that LBS programs cannot, in and of themselves, be responsible for the delivery of the range of necessary supports.

Third, the Ministry's vision of Employment Ontario (EO) is that there will eventually be a comprehensive system that, in addition to breaking down barriers between "programs", will also better integrate the supports that clients/learners require to succeed. Indeed, under EO, "service coordination" is an explicit criterion in the evaluation of the quality of program delivery to EO clients.

Therefore, fourth, it is important to consider how services among different providers might be coordinated so that learners might have (better) access to the supports they require.

It is also important to note that the discussion in this document is not about how literacy and basic skills services might be coordinated among LBS agencies. There has been much work done on this topic and the literacy service planning process is specifically designed to address this need. Rather, the focus of this document and the work undertaken has been to consider approaches to service coordination among agencies not limited to LBS providers. Here we explore how these providers might work with non-LBS agencies to better coordinate the supports already identified.

### How Approaches to Service Coordination was developed

A broad range of LBS practitioners was consulted through regional literacy networks, sectors and streams. Preliminary and follow-up interviews were conducted with practitioners in all regions of the province and in all sectors to better understand the broad range of experiences and variety of processes used in different communities. Eight networks and practitioners from twenty-four programs were consulted and they provided important input which has been documented and integrated to develop this work.

An extensive range of literature was reviewed aimed at finding the best practices documented in Ontario, in other provinces and in other jurisdictions with a focus on the U.S., U.K. and Australia.

Key informant interviews were also conducted with more than half the Workforce Literacy and Essential Skills (WLES) projects; projects which had a specific mandate to provide a range of wraparound supports to their learners and which did so in a variety of ways including relationships with both partner and non-partner agencies. Seventeen of twenty-six provided important input.



To complement these interviews, an analysis was conducted of “learner support” data for nearly three thousand learners involved in the all of the WLES projects as of December 2010. These data included information on the supports provided through project partners and through non-partner agencies.

In addition, local literacy networks, sectors and streams were invited to submit examples of integrated programming they have identified as being good practices. In some cases, these were submitted by the sector or stream organizations themselves; in others, submissions or interviews were arranged with the specific LBS agencies which are now or had been involved in delivering integrated programming. As might be expected, the definitions and descriptions of these programs varied greatly from lists of program partners to extensive reports on the specifics of the programming referred to. While demonstrating considerable breadth, these examples were reviewed and integrated into the approaches presented in this document.

It was not possible, however, to list all of the approaches and their variants which could typify the way LBS and other agencies have attempted to coordinate services. Nor is it possible to evaluate the effectiveness of the work done by many different providers. To do so would have required data beyond that which is currently available; data which would allow the attainments of learners to be related to the both the supports they received and the ways in which and organizational relationships from which these services were coordinated. Such detailed data is not available either about individuals or organizations.

However, there is reason to believe that the approaches outlined represent the experiences of a range of practitioners and from different communities; experiences that will allow the benefits and challenges of different approaches to be appreciated.

### **What we learned: Approaches to Service Coordination**

As noted in *Transition Oriented Programming: Foundation Document*, four principal approaches were identified: active case management, interagency cooperation, integrated programming, and integrated community planning. In what follows, we try to define each approach and why it is important, outline how it coordinates services and then offer some observations about the main benefits and challenges of the approach. For each approach, examples from the experiences of Ontario LBS programs are offered.

### **Providing the supports to learners: Service Coordination and Integrated Programming**

As noted above, service coordination and integrated programming are complementary and flow from a common conclusion: LBS agencies cannot, by themselves, meet the range of needs and address the breadth of challenges learners bring. Making the necessary supports available requires coordination among providers, either as independent supports or as part of an integrated program through a single provider or partnership.

### **Active Case Management**

In an effort to provide the range of supports needed by many learners, perhaps the most common approach has been active case management. This is an approach adopted by Employment Service providers under EO and has been suggested – and is being done informally – by some LBS practitioners as well. Indeed, when addressing the needs of the “harder-to-serve”, it has been among the major investments of system reform in both the U.S. and U.K. A “soft” version of this approach is currently used by many LBS agencies who have reported that individual practitioners are often working to find the right supports for particular learners.

Case management has been a hallmark of social services for many decades. However, it has been adopted far less often by educational programs which have focused on curriculum and delivery, particularly in the K-12 systems. Most school systems have an array of support specialists including guidance, special education, psychology and social work. The case management function however, has largely fallen to classroom teachers to advocate for students who might benefit from such services, to make the necessary referrals and to follow-up with the students and their families. Independent case management is comparatively rare and, as ratios have been increased as a result of funding pressures, social work staff who have the professional training in case management, have been severely stretched.<sup>1</sup>

More recently, the ability to meet the range of learner needs has become a focus within post-secondary systems with, for example, the growth of “student services” as both a focus of activity and a department within every college and university. This growth emanated from the analysis of student success and the challenges that an increasing proportion of post-secondary students brought to their institutions, coupled with an understanding that high attrition and failure rates were only in part a function of academic challenges. Rather, the challenges learners faced and the causes of attrition derived from circumstances beyond the scope of their educational programs. The growth of these services as an important part of post-secondary institutions began with important components of both academic and career guidance and assessment of special needs and remediation (including tutoring and peer mentoring programs) and continued by incorporating elements of financial support including both student aid and employment services. As the proportion of older adults returning to education increased, and the complexity of learners’ needs became apparent, additional services became formalized. These services include personal counselling, housing services and health services (including supports such as programs in stress reduction and time management) as well as spaces created for women, Aboriginal and international students – groups that have traditionally been underrepresented among post-secondary graduates. Indeed, it would be difficult to find a college or university student services function which does not provide this range of supports to students.

For adult learners in other non-postsecondary (and non-credit) settings, access to this range of supports has been much slower to develop. In all jurisdictions, this appears to be the result of several factors: often such programs are delivered in smaller, community-based agencies other than traditional colleges, and when such programs, including literacy, are part of larger institutions (be they colleges or school boards) these programs and their learners are not well integrated into these institutions. Many current practitioners attribute this lack of connection to the lower status of “preparatory” learners within the colleges (and of adult learners within school boards); others to the central mandate of school boards as K-12; while yet others attribute this to the greater funding which flows to colleges from post-secondary students, both as tuition and government grants.<sup>2</sup>

For adult literacy learners, practitioners and the field more widely have acknowledged the need for an active case management approach in a variety of contexts and ways. It may appear obvious on reflection that literacy programs include a large proportion of harder-to-serve learners, certainly a greater proportion than would be found in a typical post-secondary cohort, which includes students who would generally have had positive experiences of schools, would be younger, would continue right from secondary schools and who would have fewer other needs that come from years of other challenges faced by many adult literacy learners (be they health, mental health, substance abuse, etc.). So the lack of supports built into literacy programs may be more a function of institutional and organizational constraints, than a lack of understanding of the needs of adult literacy learners.

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<sup>1</sup> Indeed, these limitations formed part of the rationale for the design of the Student Parent Support Worker role in the Pathways to Education Program, the highly successful program for secondary school students begun in the Regent Park community in Toronto more than a decade ago. It was understood that those students struggling the most (and their families) had an expressed need to be better connected to a range of services and that the available school staff was unable to meet this need. The extraordinary results of the program have been often attributed to this unique role among similar programs for at-risk youth. See Rowen and Gosine 2006 for an overview of the program, Rowen 2011 for results and [www.pathwaystoeducation.ca](http://www.pathwaystoeducation.ca) for the latest program results and learner outcomes.

<sup>2</sup> It has been suggested that a major focus of activity for the College Sector Committee on Academic Upgrading has been advocating for literacy within the college system, and supporting college-based LBS programs to advocate within their individual colleges.

An added factor may be the assumption that such case management is provided to a significant portion of adult learners through their source of income support; that is, the assumption that caseworkers responsible through Ontario Works (OW), the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP), Workers Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) or counsellors through existing employment services (through EO) will be providing the necessary case management and, therefore, there is no reason for literacy agencies to even consider such support(s). While these other programs may indeed have this case management function, there may be challenges of workload or disposition (of either the client or the case worker) that precludes its effectiveness, as has been suggested by many literacy practitioners in a variety of communities. Stated differently, many literacy practitioners consider these other case managers to have too many challenging clients to provide the necessary services.

There is, however, general agreement that a significant proportion of literacy learners require comprehensive supports and that their access to these supports significantly increases the success of such learners. The active case management approach acknowledges the need for degrees of comprehensive supports and seeks to ensure that the required supports are available. For example, the need to provide connections to other supports is a key commitment expressed by Community Literacy of Ontario (CLO) in their outline of commitment to “customer service quality” (CLO 2010; Statement #9), an example of a soft case management approach. It has been observed that “the more ‘wrap-around’ services [literacy programs] can provide their students, the better educational results they will achieve” (Liebowitz et al 2003: 30, 13). While this is true for adult literacy learners in general, it is seen as particularly important for harder-to-serve learners including, for example, disengaged older youth (Bloom et al; 2010).

In examining design features of several programs, one review (Lodewick et al 2004) noted the importance of case management, stating that a major program design theme is the provision of “comprehensive and flexible support services”:

One of the keys to the success of any comprehensive service strategy is effective case management. Successful case management strengthens the program’s capacity to assess client barriers and provide referrals or direct services to meet identified issues. Strong case management can also help case managers best understand participants’ skills and needs to assign them to the most appropriate program activities (Lodewick et al 2004:4)

A recent study of Career Pathways initiative in five states (Stephens 2009) noted that “key leaders in the states knew that a different approach to delivering education and training to adults was needed: a holistic approach that blends skills training with comprehensive support and student services to help low-income and/or low-skill adults persist in completing a certificate or degree program and earn a credential that has value in the labor market.” (p. 6)

One U.S. educator summarized the importance of this approach succinctly: “support services and case management are not frills; they are central to student success.”<sup>3</sup>

A further role of case managers suggested in Ontario is their importance to increasing learner motivation. Several of the U.S. states, as well as studies in the U.K. have led that country to adopt a staff position to assist learners in “navigating” the various (non-literacy) systems they deal with. This function has, in their analysis, yielded important benefits in motivation and outcomes and is clearly one version of an active case management approach.

Among Ontario LBS agencies, many have historically worked specifically to provide such supports. We have heard from LBS practitioners who informally provided case management and from programs that provide numerous referrals, who said that they need additional resources to provide these referrals to greater numbers of learners more effectively. In addition, there is the view that, among college-based programs, such support had been more available in the past when faculty counsellors were available to LBS (and OBS) students, but who are not accessible

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<sup>3</sup> Elaine Baker, Community College of Denver’s Director of Workforce Initiatives, quoted in JFF 2004:20.

to those students today. One college administrator noted that, when the person acting in this role for LBS learners retires (at the end of the year), their position – however important – will not be replaced. A recent study found that, within US colleges providing basic skills training, “support services, to the extent that ... colleges make them available, are almost always reserved for students in the for-credit [i.e. post-secondary] side of the college” (JFF 2010, citing Liebowitz and Taylor 2004).

In several other jurisdictions, the function of active case management, assumed to be necessary for a large proportion of their adult basic education (ABE) learners, is embodied in a role which goes by a variety of titles including “case manager”, “mentor”, “literacy support worker”, “coach”, etc. Regardless of title however, the roles appear to include the need to build an ongoing relationship with the learner in an effort to use a the more direct knowledge of the learner’s circumstances and challenges to anticipate (as much as possible) when additional support will be needed; and, when unanticipated events happen, to be available to provide or refer to the most appropriate support. The idea of “mentoring” or “coaching” seeks to address the need to provide support to such learners to help them “navigate” the various systems and institutions, be they academic, employment, income support, health or other social services.

These are not small matters for those who are, by definition, unlikely to be able to succeed without support. The overall role can be summarized as needing “to have someone focused on helping students to surmount many barriers... [to be] ‘intrusive’, rather than wait for students to seek them out, they check in with students proactively... act[ing] as liaison to ... services on and off campus” (JFF 2010). While written about the role in the US college setting, it is similar to the understanding of program roles in the U.K. where the role of “learning support worker” has been institutionalized in many ABE programming and which has been evaluated favourably based on data on retention and outcomes for learners in programs with this support (see Robson et al 2006).

Perhaps the most important lesson from the experience of providing such a function is the need to ensure that there is a single point of contact, a person with the explicit function, who has a clear responsibility to provide support and coordinate services to meet the needs of such learners. And having such a role, combined with the data from which to evaluate its effectiveness, is a principal learning derived from both the U.S. and U.K. experiences.<sup>4</sup> Literacy providers in Ontario have also worked with this role and it is, in fact, one of the principal means by which other learner supports have been provided and coordinated. In general, and outside of the previous ability of (at least some) colleges to provide this role as part of their services to LBS learners, several examples of the active case management approach can, in fact, be offered.<sup>5</sup>

As part of their WLES project, the Tilsonburg and District Multi Service Centre (MSC) created a position they call “Case Manager/Wrap-Around Consultant” for the expressed purpose of identifying the necessary supports for each learner. The main vehicle for doing this on an ongoing basis is scheduled meetings between this staff and each learner (at least every three weeks). In addition, there is a formal “case conference” between the case manager and instructors as well as the opportunity for informal daily communication. The purposes of the conferencing “could include, but [are] not limited to the following:

- Provision of supports to ensure continued client involvement in the program;
- Provision of the supports to facilitate appropriate outcomes including employability or further education and training;
- Referrals to other agencies which could support the client in areas associated with life skills/significant needs (e.g. Drug Addictions counselling, Canadian Mental Health Association, etc.);

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<sup>4</sup> While the relationship between an integrated data system and program improvement is not an explicit topic in this discussion of service coordination, that others have noted this is more than coincidence as the development of the approach to active case management has, in part, arisen directly as a result of examining data on the factors related to high attrition among these learners. The lesson – to have single point of contact and accountability – was also a rationale in the development of the SPSW role in Pathways to Education which works with youth from similar backgrounds and with equally complex challenges.

<sup>5</sup> Examples are meant to be illustrative only and do not exhaust the number of agencies which provided examples of different approaches.

- General support, encouragement and focus for students to reach their program goals;
- Identification and addressing students' present needs and sequencing them in appropriate order for student success;
- Addressing and revising client's training plan if needed;
- Timely identification of client issues/associated barriers and measures to address this as a means of preventative maintenance;
- Clear communication regarding attendance, exits and new clients entering the program to ensure continuous intake and program preparedness." (Tillsonburg 2010)

In addition, the purposes of the scheduled meetings between the case manager and the learner include all of the above as well as working with the learner "to

- Revisit the training plan to identify progress in goal direction or revision of the training plan;
- To identify barriers (as per the training plan) or any further barriers to the client and support the client in addressing these barriers../. To identify any new goal areas;
- To provide supports to ensure continued involvement in the program;
- To provider supports to facilitate appropriate outcomes including employability and further education/training;
- To support and make referrals to other agencies, which could support the client in areas associated with life skills/significant needs...;
- To support and make referrals to EO agencies and other employment related agencies which align with the client's plan;
- To provide support, encouragement and focus for students to reach their program goals;
- To identifying and addressing students' present needs ..." (Tillsonburg 2010)

As well, MSC service delivery practices note that "the case manager/wrap around consultant is considered available for client consultation not only once every three weeks, but upon client request or instructor request". (Tillsonburg 2010)

The documentation also states that detailed case notes are made regarding recommendations and follow-up. It may be important to note that there are many other LBS providers across sectors, which include the practice of maintaining detailed case notes. The importance of other agencies doing so is an acknowledgement that other providers have performed at least some of the case management roles, however informally. Many agencies who work with this approach feel they do not have the resources to perform this role properly though, in some cases, they would like to provide more case management services and see it as necessity.

As part of the Tillsonburg project, there are at least some indicators of the efficacy of their approach. For example, the program used the Barriers to Employment Success Inventory (BESI) to record pre- and post-program barriers in five areas: Personal and Financial, Emotional and Physical, Career Decision Making and Planning, Job Seeking Knowledge and Training and Education. It is these barriers that provide important information to the case manager. In their report on the initial phase of the project, Tillsonburg report that 90% of participants showed a decrease of barriers in at least four areas while 60% showed a decrease of barriers in five areas. Learner evaluations were quite positive, both to customer service questions and in workshop evaluations (e.g. fully 96% said they would recommend to others). While BESI gains were significant, the documentation suggests more uneven results with respect to literacy achievements (represented in pre and post program Prose, Document use and Quantitative assessment (PDQ) scores (Tillsonburg 2011).<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> One of the conclusions in their interim report was that the BESI tool was not capable of identifying all the barriers which later emerged in the discussions between the case manager and individual learners. This is not to say that the tool wasn't useful; rather, it reinforces the observation of several other programs that additional time is needed for the development of the necessary relationships through which trust is developed which is, in turn, a necessary condition for the disclosure of some challenges by learners.

These results echo the finding of a U.K study (Sadler and Smith 2004) which reported a decline in attrition rates of more than half in one program and a fully two-thirds in another based, in large measure, on the monitoring provided by the “literacy support worker” and the supports available through their case management. While this approach may not be solely responsible for the improvements reported, it was clearly an important factor, as noted by the study authors who state the following learnings with respect to working with at-risk learners:

- Providers need to be proactive, and identify potential problems and take corrective action quickly. A ‘cause for concern’/‘expression of concern’ form is an invaluable tool to highlight issues early on.
- Individual strategies are needed to meet each learner’s needs. In many cases there is value in putting staff time into more intensive support early on, which can be withdrawn gradually as the learner gains in confidence.
- Learners need to feel that they belong: this encourages commitment and increases the likelihood that they will stay on programme and achieve.
- Additional visits and extra contact time are often required to address difficulties effectively.
- Staff working with learners who are at risk need a non-judgemental approach and to develop good counselling skills in order to give the right level of support. They need to be sensitive enough to pick up any hints that there could be something not quite right. (Sadler and Smith 2004; 29)<sup>7</sup>

It should be noted that several other WLES projects also included active case management as a vehicle for facilitating the relationships necessary and coordinating learners’ access to supports. These projects included those undertaken by Northern Community Development Services (Fort Francis), The Skills Project (Eady Consulting in Sault Lookout), Georgian College and the John Howard Society (project in Sault Ste. Marie). In each, the role of active case management was integral to the delivery of the program and in each there was an expressed objective of working with learners with multiple challenges.

There are a number of questions and lessons that arise from the experiences of the projects cited. First, it is difficult in the absence of more intentional data to determine the number or proportion of learners who might benefit (or require) more active case management. From discussions with practitioners in the several projects, a “best guess” at this time is that perhaps one quarter of learners might require more comprehensive supports and, at the same time, lack the capacity to access these supports without this additional support. This proportion however, is not necessarily spread evenly across all LBS providers. Specifically, in the analysis of data from the survey of all LBS agencies, one third of agencies said that at least half of their learners required more intensive case management, while another quarter of agencies reported that less than ten percent of their learners had this need. These proportions cannot, in themselves, allow for an accurate figure since there is no way of knowing from the data available the activity levels of the agencies in each category. That said, it would seem that the figure of one quarter is not an unreasonable starting point for the proportion of learners who might benefit from this support and approach to service coordination.<sup>8</sup>

This estimate, in turn, suggests a second question: namely, where should such a function be located? The evidence, albeit anecdotal from Ontario practitioners, somewhat more systematic from the UK and US, suggests some reasons why this function might be properly located within LBS agencies. The most important of these

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<sup>7</sup> It can also be noted from their study that the importance of having comprehensive data cannot be underestimated as good information is a precondition for the evaluation of program challenges. In addition, it should be noted that the programs in this study which appear to have fully integrated basic skills training with work experience, a factor which in itself may have contributed to positive outcomes for many learners, including a proportion of those most at risk of leaving the program prior to completion. However, the conclusions from the UK study of “learner support workers” (Robson et al 2006) suggests that the value of case management is clearly documented in improved outcomes based on systematic data collection.

<sup>8</sup> Indeed, one agency we spoke with noted that fully three-quarters of the learners in their WLES project required this support. While this may be a function of specifically focussing on a group of learners known to have significant and multiple challenges, it was not perceived by the agency as an atypical group; and the agency believes there are many more such learners to be served.

reasons is the ability of the literacy program to develop the relationships of trust required between the learner and her or his case manager when located in LBS programs. This is likely for two or three reasons: first, that the practitioner would not be directly responsible for the income support the learner is receiving (whether OW, EI, ODSP, etc.); second, that they would have a more limited caseload than that of a typical case manager in these settings (and of Employment Supports counsellors in EO-funded agencies); and, third, that they are distanced from the institutions which are likely to provide the supports themselves (e.g. mental health, other social service agencies, the justice system, etc.).<sup>9</sup>

A principal conclusion of a major U.S. study of ways to help more “non-traditional” learners succeed offered the following:

Low-skilled adult students face ongoing life challenges that may include the lack of stable housing, domestic abuse, or childcare needs. These challenges have the ongoing potential of derailing students’ persistence in education. We have learned that they will fall off track unless comprehensive supports are available..., primarily by providing coaches and training them to be effective with this non-traditional student population, including how to connect them to community-based resources. (Jff/NCWE 2010; p.1.13; see also Section 3 of that volume.)

As a means of to service coordination, therefore, it may be worth considering some of the benefits and challenges of adopting the approach of more active case management.

### *Some Observations on Case Management*

Active Case Management is possibly the easiest mechanism to consider among the approaches to coordinating services. It does not require any other organization (as part of the coordination). It is well understood (though not necessarily well executed in all cases). It provides a single point for responsibility and for accountability; that is, the agency providing case management and the case manager him or herself can know both what supports are needed and what is needed to coordinate these services. If the particular support a learner needs is to be provided by another agency, the ability to track if the client got there, to get feedback and to see the result of the referral, is relatively straight-forward. Implementing a more active case management approach could be done in stages, beginning with those agencies with the required capacity and at a relatively low cost depending on what agency accepted this responsibility. The outcomes could be documented through the data expected to be widely available as part of the continued implementation of Employment Ontario Information System (EOIS)/Case Management System (CaMS) to include LBS learners.

However, there are several challenges as well. One of the main challenges would be in determining who should be the case manager and then allocating the resources to staff the function. If this function were explicitly resourced within LBS (rather than through EO or OW), it would require an increase of staffing to accommodate a ratio of perhaps forty learners to one full time equivalent (FTE) case manager.<sup>10</sup> Programs in the UK address this challenge a bit differently. Rather than a dedicated position, they have their Literacy Support Worker position be part mentor/part “classroom assistant” and part case manager, which combines some very different skill sets, though all of which are clearly “learner-centred”. Several of the WLES projects we spoke with (including John Howard Society/Sault Ste. Marie, NCDS, and Georgian College) provided a similar integrated position, perhaps as a result of only having a limited number of learners who required that supports be coordinated in this way.

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<sup>9</sup> It may be noted that the overwhelming majority of participants in the Tillsonburg project were, in fact, OW recipients. That these learners needed the case management provided through the LBS project does not suggest “neglect” on the part of OW case managers. Rather, that those staff may simply not have had a sufficient understanding of the particular needs of the learners in question.

<sup>10</sup> This ratio is suggested in examining the discussions on the topic with several of the practitioners interviewed.

A second challenge is the expectation that the role requires developing different kinds of relationships with learners than has been the case in many (if not most) programs. As such, the results may be variable. That is to say, services may be more or less well coordinated and accessible to learners depending on the quality of the relationships, first with learners and second, with the other agencies (or parts of the organization) that is providing each support. It is not clear if a large number of LBS agencies have either the capacity or disposition to move in this direction. And if adopted, and if LBS agencies are not responsible for its delivery (i.e. if others such as ES providers or OW, for example were providing more active case management to a portion of their population), it is far less likely that the benefit of ease of implementation would be realized.

Third, there is the challenge of the skill and willingness of other agencies (or parts of agencies) to provide the needed services. While the interpersonal relationships among practitioners may be quite good, the organizational demands of many other (non-LBS) agencies may preclude providing the services for funding and/or mandate reasons. The case management approach cannot (help to) address this challenge.

In sum, it would appear that the active case management approach holds much promise as a means of service coordination. It is consistent with existing practice of at least some LBS agencies and with approaches used successfully in other jurisdictions. It may be the most straight-forward to implement, at a reasonable cost and without the involvement of other Programs (e.g. ES, OW, EI) for its implementation. Results could be known and easily reported.

### Interagency Cooperation

A second approach to coordinating services, interagency cooperation, arises from two important realities: first, that the types of supports required by learners in LBS programs is broad (i.e. including financial, health, social services, as well as academic and employment related); and, second, that LBS agencies cannot, in and of themselves, be expected to provide this broad a range of supports. While this may have always been a challenge, as institutions and organizations have become more specialized, it has been necessary to consider how different agencies might work together when several providers each have discrete services which, taken together, are crucial for a learner's success; and to ask how agencies can work together to provide some of those supports and coordinate these services most effectively, particularly given increased specialization.

At different points in relatively recent history, some organizations were funded (albeit from different programs or even different departments or levels of government) to provide a range of supports. For example, the Federal government had, for many years, funded the Basic Job Readiness Training (BJRT) program which integrated elements of life skills, employment preparation and literacy training to select groups. However, HRSDC is no longer funding direct program delivery and this is one of several reasons that the BJRT program has ceased to exist, at least in that form.

More recently, provincially-funded LBS and JobConnect programs were each funded through MTCU, though they are not necessarily delivered by the same organizations; indeed, often they are not. With the advent of Employment Ontario, however, whether as separate departments of the same organization or as distinct agencies, the funding streams remain separate. And there are a variety of other distinct programs which may provide support to literacy learners or those who might become literacy learners: English as a Second Language (ESL) (overseen by the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration), credit programs (through the Ministry of Education), Mental Health supports (through Ministry of Health, but also Ministry of Children and Youth), in addition to income support (though both the Federal and Provincial governments, but administered through municipalities in the case of Ontario Works) which comes in a number of forms such as OW, EI, ODSP, WSIB, etc. which also have different delivery agents and administrative structures. And there are also the supports provided through other EO and MTCU bodies: employment supports, apprenticeship, second career, post-secondary programs, etc.



That there are so many distinct programs which embody a range of supports for clients of different types, including LBS learners, suggests that cooperation among delivery agencies may be an important approach to providing access to these supports. As well, there are many forms of interagency cooperation that are common and some are longstanding and agencies delivering Literacy and Basic Skills programming have a long history of cooperation. As noted, there has been a geographically-based literacy services planning process for many years. In addition, there are many examples of how literacy agencies have worked with organizations providing other services and programming. As well, in the case of colleges in particular, there is likewise a history within the colleges of departments working together to meet the needs of learners, including those in preparatory programs of different kinds.

The first type of cooperation cited above (i.e. among literacy providers) is exemplified, for example, in the area of common assessment and referral. EO providers who are asking for a common “screening tool” is an example, as are those communities where, among LBS providers, a single common assessment is provided by a dedicated process which results in referring different learners to particular agencies. For example, Adult Basic Education Association (ABEA) in Hamilton has developed a variety of assessment tools which are being used across the network and by a range of providers. This voluntary agreement facilitates a common approach to referrals in which learners approaching the different agencies (including some non-LBS providers) benefit from the use of instruments which help the different organizations cooperate in the allocation of learners.

Many states in the U.S. and many communities in the U.K. have mandated common assessment and referral protocols as part of their overall systems of ensuring that literacy and basic skills learners are treated similarly across their systems. A particular feature of one version of this approach is to have an “independent” body assume this function, thereby having a specially trained cadre of staff and removing any suggestion of favouritism in the referral process.<sup>11</sup> In addition to the reporting of referrals, some LBS practitioners have voiced their interest in having an information system which reliably tracked the effectiveness of referrals and what happens to learners from their program.

The benefits of this sort of cooperation are assumed to address the issue of “capacity”; that is, that each individual agency cannot have the capacity to be experts, for example, in the assessment of learners with special needs or in the analysis of data about referral patterns and the outcomes of these referrals. Therefore, vesting these functions in an “interagency” form is thought by some to allow individual agencies to focus on developing excellence in their programming.

While a common assessment and referral process has become more commonly accepted and is generally seen to be effective in some communities, in others there is a sense of “distance” and a perceived lack of common understanding among programs and organizations. For example, with some income support or service providers referring to LBS programs, or to particular agencies, while others in the same community are seen as not referring learners with equivalent needs and goals or limiting which agencies they refer to.

#### *Referral Centre for Adult Training (RCAT)*

An example of a more formal approach to cooperation in assessment and referral is found among agencies serving predominantly Francophone clients where the interagency cooperation has been supported by written agreements and referral protocols. “All agencies use these protocols to refer learners to the most appropriate LBS program in the area. For example, in Greater Sudbury, the four French-language service providers agreed to use the same entry assessment instruments. Other areas have more elaborate referral protocols involving other levels of cooperation.”<sup>12</sup> Lurette and Russell (2011) note that,

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<sup>11</sup> See Wayland 2010 for a recent analysis of the ABEA common assessment and also Peel Halton Dufferin Adult Learning Network 2009.

<sup>12</sup> PGF 2010 cited in Lurette and Russell 2011.

[t]he partnership(s) with(in) the Referral Centre for Adult Training (RCAT) seems to be the best example in French Ontario of “single point of access” for assessment and referral, which involves all the service providers within the same area (both French- and English-language colleges, school boards, community-based training centres, reference agencies, etc.).

Created in the mid-1990’s, this formal partnership includes not only LBS providers, but a range of other organizations that are the “source” of potential learners including income support (e.g. OW, ODSP), Employment Services of Prescott-Russell, and the local family service agency. Equally important, a broad range of employment and training organizations participate in this partnership including those delivering LBS programming, school board credit and college post-secondary and apprenticeship, as well as agencies delivering shorter-term employment-oriented skills training programs. In addition, the local training board as well as the local community economic development agency are also represented. It is perhaps unique in its client-centred approach in that it includes not only assessment and referral for LBS programming, but also for a variety of other training opportunities. Lurette and Russell (2011:3) note that RCAT “centralizes, in one location, services for assessing learners’ skills and needs and then referring learners to organizations that can meet these needs within the community. It is the only bilingual, multi-sector one-stop referral, training and employment centre in Ontario.”

The proponents of this initiative consider it more effective for a local adult training network to provide training programs using a single-point-of-access approach, without distinction for specific service providers. Such an approach makes it easier to reach the pool of adult learners, with the purpose of overcoming several barriers to retraining. It is thus easier to find unemployed adults, determine their levels of proficiency, link their levels of proficiency with the local labour market needs and create or adapt training projects to meet these needs. (Ibid:4)

The inclusion of this broad range of employment and training supports in a formal arrangement which provides a single point of contact allows for multiple challenges to be identified and the appropriate services designed, though they may be delivered through more than one provider. Similar to the less formal approach to common assessment cited above, the presumed benefits of this type of interagency cooperation include the ability of each of the service providers to remain focused on the delivery of their services and the creation of new programming to meet local needs. And the identification of local needs as part of the RCAT allows learner goals to be more directly related to future opportunities, particularly for those with employment goals, but which also provides direct routes to further skills training and certification through school boards, colleges and other training providers. These programs (combining literacy and specific vocational skills training) are themselves examples of integrated training (which is a third approach to service coordination and discussed below).<sup>13</sup>

An additional version of the interagency cooperation approach is common to many LBS providers; namely, the informal arrangements between agencies in which practitioners “negotiate” with each other to provide particular services or supports. These are often based on specific and personal relationships within the community. Many LBS practitioners find this effective, but also want to consider how to make such inter-agency activities less dependent on their own personal relationships; that is, to “formalize” what many LBS practitioners now do informally.

An example of this approach can be seen in an informal arrangement developed at one college with respect to those learners with mental health needs. Through an informal arrangement, mediated by the local OW office, such learners were able to access the supports available through the local office of the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA). While accessing these CMHA supports would have normally required a considerable wait (said to be up to two years, given the capacity of that organization), the arrangement facilitated the quick entry

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<sup>13</sup> It is apparent that there is not always a clear line between the interagency cooperation and integrated programming. While it may seem arbitrary, for this discussion the former focuses on initiatives which coordinate services among independent agencies, while the latter focuses on initiatives where a single program is providing more than one support or service to the client/learner.

needed for these learners to be able to maintain their participation in LBS programming. Indeed, there are many other examples of such informal arrangements.

#### *John Howard Society of Durham Region*

A more formal version of interagency cooperation with a related group of learners is found in the WLES project involving the John Howard Society (JHS) of Durham and its partnership with the Ontario Shores Centre for Mental Health. The project provided LBS programming to participants in the hospital's vocational services programming. The hospital's Employment Support Worker referred individuals with vocational treatment plans and worked collaboratively with the LBS instructor from JHS to develop a training plan for each learner. And that plan included, for many participants, regular participation in both LBS and mental health programming, as well as access to case management and employment supports. The collaborative design of the program included extensive cooperation between the agencies to meet the needs of a previously underserved group.

Services include vocational assessment, counselling and referral services, job placement and retention services, pre-employment groups (resume and job preparation workshops), benefits counselling, employer outreach, community employment partnerships ... and supports regarding Educational Upgrading referrals...

All the necessary wrap-around supports will be provided by both partners collaboratively to ensure learning success. These include housing supports, income supports, and community mental health supports. Both partners have established protocols into place that will link the participants to all these services. The John Howard Society of Durham Region has seven program areas: Employment, Counselling, Housing, Literacy, Youth Justice, Harm Reduction, and Residential Services, which deliver 15 different programs. This diversity allows for resources and expertise to be shared. (JHS Durham 2010)

This project demonstrates not only the cooperation between two organizations for the provision of several supports, it also suggests that cooperation among departments within a multi-service organization can be equally beneficial. An important opportunity for LBS learners to access these other supports as needed is provided when there is a broad range of supports available (as noted above) and when there are internal referral protocols. And these other supports are needed, particularly by learners who have previously been identified as needing to address multiple challenges. While this may be seen as an example of "intra-agency cooperation", it is nonetheless an important component of an interagency approach to effective service coordination.

An important understanding, therefore, may be that there are some important benefits in locating LBS programs within multi-service agencies; an approach which merits further discussion.

#### *Multi-provider Coordination*

A third example of a formal version of interagency cooperation is evident through the response to a major plant closure in Southern Ontario and involves the work of a college, two school boards and several community agencies. A description of the initiative provided by the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) (one of the partners) outlines the cooperative activities.

Since January 2009, the TDSB's Literacy and Basic Skills program has been a partner in the PMP Worker Action Centre and Training Centre in Vaughan. The PMP Worker Action Centre was formed in response to the layoff of 2400 non-unionized workers due to the sudden closing of Progressive Molded Plastics, an automotive parts manufacturer, in July 2008.

While the educational background of the laid-off workers varied, many were second language speakers with low literacy levels and a long employment history at PMP. The acquisition of foundational literacy skills was key for these workers.

At its peak, there were 13 classes with over 400 students enrolled in ESL, LBS (Level 1-5) and Academic and Career Education (ACE) programming offered by the York Region Catholic School Board, Toronto District School Board and Seneca College. Adult credit programming and other post-secondary options were also available through referral. The collaboration of these educational services under one roof allowed learners seamless transition between programs.

Many of these learners made career decisions under Second Career and Skills Development and the Action Centre, with its educational partners, organized regular on-site Career Exploration and Decision-making Workshops to ensure career options were clearly understood by the program participants. When their career options had been defined, learners received LBS instruction using occupation-related instructional resources.

The Action Centre established a partnership with COSTI, Job Skills and Labour Education Centre and Employment Advisors from these three agencies conducted holistic needs assessments and provided case management on a daily basis. A core team of 50 active peer helpers and 10 committee members ensured that services were relevant to the needs of their co-workers. This extensive peer support offered in partnership with the Action Centre ensured workers were offered a culturally sensitive and supportive learning environment, while reducing the isolation and emotional hardship which result from being jobless. The 'wrap-around' supports provided to LBS learners through this holistic model proved to be essential in addressing barriers to retention, regular attendance and goal achievement. (TDSB 2011).

Several observations can be made about the kind of interagency cooperation exemplified under this initiative. First, the Action Centre was explicitly organized to develop the various elements of the initiative under a single rubric.

Second, the number and diversity of the workers meant that no one educational provider could meet the range of backgrounds and retraining needs which included literacy and ESL, as well as retraining in specific vocational skills.

Third, the long-term tenure of many employees meant that many needed job search and other employment supports. Meeting these needs required additional program partners and, especially, the availability of "employment advisors" in the role of case managers. This role was of particular importance given the cultural diversity of the workers and their needs for emotional, as well as educational and employment support.

Finally, as an example of interagency cooperation it should be noted that the variety of supports available is not part of an ongoing arrangement. Unlike the RCAT initiative, the elements offered in this initiative were organized to address a particular situation, rather than being regularized in an ongoing structure. To the extent that the project was successful, it may be a model of cooperation that can be applied to other, less immediate, contexts. However, the relationships developed and expressed through the interagency cooperation have not been formalized in how these organizations work with other learners.<sup>14</sup>

The types of interagency cooperation which enhance the supports and services available to LBS learners have also been a focus in other jurisdictions. In a recent report on pilot activities in several U.S. states (Alamprese and Gwaltney 2010), the authors note the importance of several factors in developing interagency coordination. In many of the sites they studied, the primary purpose of the coordination was to better link learners and the adult

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<sup>14</sup> At the time of preparing this document, no report of results has been available making it difficult to assess the costs and benefits of such a large-scale initiative. Nor is there an indication that these relationships among the several agencies have been maintained beyond the project.

basic education organizations they were in with OneStop centres (which have similar functions to Ontario's "full suite" providers of Employment Services). In developing their own individual partnerships, the authors note the importance of considering the type of change sought:

The characteristics of the type of local changes that should be considered are:

- Change in ABE services is the primary focus.
- Change involves ABE services and other entities within a local institution.
- Change involves ABE services and external agencies or institutions.
- Change in ABE or partner staffs' skills, knowledge, and attitude will be required.
- Change involves certain types of state interagency activities to facilitate enhancements in local ABE program.

Change that involves primarily ABE services will require a different level of support and amount of time than change involving coordination between ABE and partners within their own institutions or with partners from other agencies. Generally, the more local partners that are involved in the pilot site, the longer it will take to organize and begin a new practice. If the new practice for the initiative requires local ABE staffs' development of skills or knowledge, then state ABE staff may need to arrange for internal or external experts to provide professional development that can assist local ABE staff in acquiring new knowledge or skills, or in implementing the new practice. If an initiative requires state partners to work together in supporting local pilot sites, the amount of time it will take for state partners to coordinate their local support so that the local partners are receiving consistent messages about their activities needs to be taken into account when planning the initiative. (Alamprese and Gwaltney 2010:24)

In their reporting of approaches used at the local level, the authors note two principal forms used in the majority of pilot sites: "cross-referral of clients between ABE programs and One-Stop Career Centers, and targeted instructional services for specific ABE populations", both of which are relevant to this discussion. The four factors they found which led to greater success for such interagency cooperative ventures included:

- **Forming Partnerships.** Set goals and objectives that are concrete and attainable. Develop a shared vision with agree-upon objectives and a strategy for meeting these objectives.
- **Communicating.** Establish formal communication links, such as meetings and telephone conferences, to keep partners apprised of the progress of joint activities and to identify barriers to accomplishing these activities. Open and frequent communication will help to engage partners and facilitate the resolution of issues that arise.
- **Developing Interpersonal Relationships.** Carry out activities that can promote the development of mutual respect, understanding, and trust among partners. In discussing joint activities and their outcomes, ensure that the benefits of participating in a partnership outweigh the costs. Monitor the cost-benefit ratio through frequent communication. Be willing to compromise and be flexible to sustain the partnership.
- **Accessing Resources.** In planning partnership activities, ensure that the key resources needed for success are available. Skilled leadership, sufficient funds, staff, materials, and time to carry out activities often are critical resources required for partnerships to thrive. (ibid. 22)

Through the experiences of LBS agencies and other organizations involved in several of the interagency initiatives examined, these same factors would appear to have been important. An added factor discussed in the report is the importance of evaluating the initiative in light of actual data on learner needs and learner outcomes. To the extent that the initiative is successful, clear measures should be able to be identified in advance which demonstrate that learner attainments have (or have not) been enhanced by the cooperation between and among partner agencies.

In addition, several other observations may be useful, particularly in considering the relative merits of alternative approaches to service coordination.

### *Some Observations on Interagency Cooperation*

Interagency cooperation as a means of coordinating services almost immediately raises the challenge of how different organizations can “share” responsibility for providing the range of services. Most often, this is done by having a clear demarcation: you do “x” (e.g. LBS), I’ll do “y” (e.g. Employment Supports). And most often these are separate elements (as opposed to integrated programming where traditionally different elements are combined). We could even consider how some colleges, school boards or multi-service agencies operate as examples of this; that is, that LBS is function separate from other elements of the organization’s programming (whether employment services, counselling, housing support, etc.). Therefore, to the extent that learners benefit from cooperation in securing the supports they need, the “organizational” relationships involved (albeit within the same institution) are similar to working with another organization or agency.<sup>15</sup> This challenge is made clear in the examples of best practices documented for a practitioners’ guide on “Providing Comprehensive Support Services” which identified three strategies: (a) “connecting students with ... services previously unavailable to non-traditional students”, (b) “partnering with external entities for the provision of support services” and (c) “creating essential supports in-house” (JFF/NCWE 2010).

It is important to note that the kind of interagency cooperation which can coordinate very different services also involves learning about and working with another organizational culture, with shared responsibility. An alternative to this important dynamic is to develop a “third party” which can assume responsibility, as in the case of both ABEA and the RCAT. The realities of different and potentially conflicting organizational cultures is also minimized when there is a clear “project” around which to organize the relationships, as was the case in developing the RCAT as a “new” entity with a function that was understood to benefit all participating organizations.

Beyond these (and other) challenges, a clear benefit of this approach is that, when well executed, there are clear roles and well defined services. The supports needed are clearly identified, as are who will provide them. The results, while perhaps more difficult to attribute to one or more of the cooperating agencies, are similarly clear. And the details of the partnerships under this approach are not constrained by an overarching (government) policy or mechanism; but, rather, can shift to accommodate both the needs of learners for different supports and services, and the growth in the relationships among the cooperating agencies.<sup>16</sup>

### **Integrated Programming**

A third approach to service coordination centres on arrangements to provide more integrated programming; that is, to ensure that some elements from the range of employment and training services and supports are provided concurrently wherever possible and through a single provider or partnership. The basis of this approach owes much to the research on “functional context education” (e.g. Sticht 1997). A recent report of PTP cited the following by way of explanation:

FCE focuses on (1) improving motivation by making explicit the relationship between what is being taught and its application in the contexts that the person will be functioning in after the

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<sup>15</sup> We heard many colleges described in ways that suggest good internal cooperation while others were described as little, and petty, fiefdoms which rarely cooperate. This is an important leadership question since it matters greatly to the coordination of services (even those available in the same institution) and necessary to meet the needs of learners. There was little of this discussion about school boards where the divide between services for adults and those for K-12 students appears much clearer.

<sup>16</sup> It may be useful to note that some U.S. states have included this form of service coordination in their goals and performance requirements for agencies delivering adult basic education. For example, Kansas includes the objective that: “The program actively collaborates with multiple partners in the community to expand the services available to adult learners and to prevent duplication of services” (KBOR 2010). Though this is required, there is no prescription on how such interagency cooperation is to be achieved.

educational program, (2) improving learning by ensuring that instruction relates to the learners' prior knowledge in such a way that the learner can function within the learning situation, (3) on improving transfer by deriving instructional contents as much as possible from the future contexts in which the person will attempt to apply the learning. (Sticht 1997:24, cited in Meinzer 2007:15)

Indeed, it is possible to see the importance of this orientation and its central place in the Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework (OALCF) which has adopted a task-based approach as described in the Foundation Paper *Practitioners Guide to Task Based Programming*. This orientation however, is also important to our understanding of how integrated programming can help to coordinate services since the approach informs not only the delivery of LBS together with vocational skills (as has been its most common usage), but also the integrated delivery of LBS with a range of other supports. There are many examples of the range of integrated programming which can be cited, in Ontario and other jurisdictions.

As well, there is some important evidence of considerable benefits to this kind of integration which show major gains in skills attainment, in perseverance in programs, and in later success. A recent overview of transition-oriented programming in the U.S. (MPR Associates 2010) noted the value of efforts "which combine contextualized skills instruction, workforce training, and other support services to help adults improve their basic skills," and that "research indicates that adults enrolled in IBEST perform better on basic skills tests than adults enrolled in non-contextualized basic skills instruction." The efficacy of this approach and recommendations for implementation are also noted in a review of integrated programming in five U.S. states (Stephens 2009). This conclusion is also echoed in an extensive study of the benefits of integrated programming for literacy and basic skills in the U.K. (Casey et al 2007) which reported significant increases in both learner retention and attainment compared to traditional programs, specifically

[for] learners on fully embedded courses, 93 per cent of those with an identified literacy need achieved a literacy/ESOL qualification, compared to only 50 per cent for those on non-embedded courses. That is, on fully embedded courses, 43 per cent more learners achieved literacy qualifications. For learners with an identified numeracy need on fully embedded courses, 93 per cent achieved a numeracy/maths qualification, compared to 70 per cent for those on non-embedded courses. On fully embedded courses, 23 per cent more learners achieved numeracy qualifications. (Casey et al 2007: 5)

The evidence in the U.S. is equally compelling. For example, the results of the I-BEST (Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training) program, include that I-BEST learners were fully fifteen times more likely to complete their skills training than were comparison students and subsequently earned five times more college credits than students who did not take I-BEST courses. (MPR 2007 and Washington State 2005). A more recent study found that

students participating in I-BEST achieved better educational outcomes than did other basic skills students... (and) were more likely to continue to credit-bearing coursework, earn credits that count toward a college credential, earn occupational certificates, and make point gains on basic skills tests. On all the outcomes examined, I-BEST students did moderately or substantially better than non-I-BEST basic skills students in general." (Jenkins et al 2009; see also Zeidenberg et al 2010, and Wachen et al 2010).

In Ontario, there are examples of this approach in the programming provided by, for example, PTP Adult Learning and Employment Programs (PTP) which has pioneered integrated literacy and skills training for more than a decade. As well, the college sector has focused on a form of such programming in the transition-oriented programming focussed on "pre-apprenticeship" and for those learners seeking to transition to post-secondary programs (Follinsbee 2009, and Hennessey and Glass 2008, respectively).

It is, however, worth noting that there are several other models of integrated programming which are emerging in other jurisdictions. One recent study (Zafft et al 2006) notes five models involving U.S. colleges, of which the “college preparatory” approach featured in Ontario is just one. There is much promise noted for the “career pathways” approach which is exemplified by the highly successful IBEST program. As well, there are numerous examples of “embedding” literacy and basic skills in specific vocational contexts in the U.K. which can be found in a series of vocational-specific publications by Skills for Life and the Quality Improvement Association for Lifelong Learning (2008).

Two principal versions of integrated training have been suggested in a recent report which focused on approaches to pre-apprenticeship training:

The integrated linear model offers LBS learners the ability to transition sequentially from LBS and Essential Skills upgrading that is contextualized but is not immediately being applied in a practical setting. The hands-on application often occurs later on the shop floor. The integrated concurrent model seamlessly weaves together the LBS and Essential Skills directly within trade-specific applications and contexts. What is taught in the morning math class is often applied immediately that same day on the shop floor or in the field. (PTP 2008)

In addition, there can be a distinction within the concurrent model between programs that include discrete components for each of LBS and vocational skills, and programs which would more fully integrate their LBS activities as part of an extended vocational skills component.

While several years old, the trend to provide more integrated programming has been noted as a key to innovation in literacy programming. “Most of the promising new approaches for improving basic skills go beyond traditional adult education, workforce development, and developmental education practices by developing new ways to integrate academic and occupational learning.” (JFF 2004: 26) It is likely even more true today.

Finally, the majority of examples of integrated training have focused on the integration of literacy and basic skills with vocational preparation. In some cases, this has included some additional supports. For example, job search, job coaching and vocational placements. However, it is important to consider examples where LBS programs might integrate other services and supports.

In the sections which follow, some specific Ontario examples of program integration are presented to the extent possible, taken from examples of integrated programming submitted to this OALCF project. The examples selected for inclusion are intended to cover a variety of programs, from different sectors, which have integrated LBS not only with skills training, but with a range of other services and supports as well.

#### *Integration with Pre-Apprenticeship*

As noted above, colleges in Ontario have worked hard to develop programs integrating LBS and pre-apprenticeship training, and several of these initiatives have been the focus of study. The initiative developed by George Brown in conjunction with several partners may demonstrate the potential to integrate not only the key academic components of the program, but to coordinate a range of other services and supports as well.

George Brown Pre-Pre-Apprenticeship Support for Heating, Ventilating and Air Conditioning (HVAC), Plumbing and Carpentry (From Follinsbee 2008)<sup>17</sup>:

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<sup>17</sup> Follinsbee (2008) reports on six case studies focused on the integration of pre-apprenticeship with literacy and basic skills. In addition, the “Doorways” project at The Centre for Skills Development and Training through the Halton District School Board has also developed programming which integrates LBS with skills training, as did several offerings through PTP for which funding has not been maintained.



George Brown offers a unique initiative through pre-Pre-Apprenticeship support enabling students to have realistic opportunities for a successful career in the skilled trades. In 2007–2008, this support was provided for Pre-Apprenticeship programs in HVAC, Plumbing, and Carpentry. The George Brown partnership worked with East Toronto Employment and Social Services and PTP Adult Learning and Employment Programs to conduct outreach, referrals and assessments; provide upgrading, and provide supports to learners. The initiative used a resource developed by PTP entitled *Building for the Future* to assist students in their exploration of the trades.

This initiative offered an extended period of upgrading before and after students commenced their Level 1 training. Thirty-seven adults participated in the pre-Pre-Apprenticeship program. Students received 22 hours a week of preliminary upgrading focusing on contextualized math and communications over eight weeks. Support focused on developing academic and social skills to assist them in their future trade, academic life, or career. The program also included additional curriculum that focused on student learning styles, essential employability skills, and trades exploration. Students also received employment search and preparation in the program. Students learned in a supportive environment where they could pursue featured trades or consider other trades, employment opportunities or further upgrading.

Those who went to a specific Pre-Apprenticeship program also received extended classroom and lab time before and during their Level 1 training (10 additional classroom hours and 6 additional lab hours during Level 1 training).

Students had the opportunity to visit local unions and had work days at Habitat for Humanity. Job coaches supported students' learning, social needs, and future job searching. Students got help securing a co-op work placement and paid employment opportunities which lead to successful Level 1 apprenticeship certification for many students.

The George Brown team coordinated joint outreach, interview and assessments to targeted high needs communities. Matt Foran explains that George Brown and its partners did outreach and invited community members to come to the College. This is important because often the people coming feel intimidated because they think that only "smart kids" come to college. This approach has been very successful. The College also held events at shelters and community centres.

The team advertised the upcoming Pre-Apprenticeship and Upgrading options. A common referral process was developed to and from Ontario Works offices, shelters, and literacy agencies.

George Brown works with a variety of community partners such as Regent Park, Miziwe Biik Aboriginal Employment and Training, and the Downtown East Community Collective. These partners work with George Brown on outreach and referrals and provide cultural and social support to learners. Community partners may conduct interviews and assessments with program candidates and instruct the upgrading and career exploration component of the Pre-Apprenticeship support.

The role of the East Toronto Employment and Social Services in this partnership is to refer clients and get the word out about George Brown programs. There are specific caseworkers who make referrals to programs. Information about programs is sent to the caseworkers who, in turn, provide their clients with the information. The East Toronto office also supported Ontario Works clients who attended the training.

The role of PTP in the partnership was to partner with George Brown to bring in a cohort of students to the pre-Pre-Apprenticeship initiative. PTP conducted the assessment using the

Canadian Adult Achievement Test (CAAT) and the Communications and Math Employment Readiness Assessment (CAMERA), performed the program intake, and delivered math and communications upgrading and the trades exploration component.

Students also had the opportunity to work on goal setting. PTP's Job Solutions met with students to help them prepare résumés. Students accepted in the pre-Pre-Apprenticeship program needed to score at or above a Grade 9 level in reading comprehension, a Grade 8 level in numeracy, and an LBS level of 4 or 5.

Those students who did not get into the pre-Pre-Apprenticeship program received an individual learning plan. They were referred to literacy upgrading at George Brown, PTP, or other agencies to help them work towards their goal of getting into the skilled trades. If they had employment as a goal they were referred to employment services agencies. Twenty-nine students completed the initial 8-week upgrading.

Twenty-one of these students were accepted into Pre-Apprenticeship programs at George Brown. Some students received more upgrading as part of their preparation for their Pre-Apprenticeship program.

This brief description indicates a number of elements in the integrated programming. In summarizing the results of these efforts, Folinsbee noted:

The majority of collaboration on specific projects across cases was related to pre-apprenticeship training. Across the board, pre-apprenticeship training included an Academic Upgrading component focusing on subjects like Math and Communications even though participants might already have their Grade 12. In other cases, participants had the opportunity to work towards getting ACE credentials or the GED. One college offered a pre-pre-apprenticeship program that provided trades-related Academic Upgrading, trades exploration and some work experience. This combination allowed participants to make more informed career choices around pre-apprenticeship programs and the skilled trades. Job Connect also played an important role in the partnership in terms of program intake, testing, referrals, resume writing, interview, job search and work skills, and supporting students in securing work placements as part of their program.

The second type of joint project was between Academic Upgrading and Apprenticeship to offer extra math support to apprentices during their in-school training. There were a variety of ways that apprentices could get support including 1) one to three hour classes offered once a week through Academic Upgrading geared to the trades, 2) individual tutoring through college tutoring services or 3) entry into a regular Academic Upgrading program. The extent to which the math was geared to the trades depended on the background of the professor. For example, in some cases the math professor had a trades-related background. Ensuring that the extra math is practical and applied was an ongoing challenge. (Follinsbee 2008:14-15)

Overall, the results of the research show that there is a positive movement towards integration on the part of Academic Upgrading and Pre-Apprenticeship, Pre Trades and Apprenticeship programs. In almost all cases, there is at least information sharing among programs and a large majority of the integration work is occurring in the area of curriculum development and delivery. Academic Upgrading is offering basic and essential skills especially math in pre-apprenticeship programming and as support to apprentices during the in-school component of their program. Integration is taking place to a much lesser degree in the areas of assessment and intake and formalized referral processes. These areas need to be further understood in terms of both challenges and opportunities and require more attention and development in future integration work. (Folinsbee 2008)

### *Integration with Credit Programs*

The St. Charles Adult Education Centres of the Hamilton Wentworth Catholic District School Board provided an overview of the several components of their “Pre-PLAR” program and its links to the credit system, another of the goal paths identified for LBS learners. The program has several components which provide links between LBS and credit offering. While not precisely an example of directly integrated programming, it represents activities also being undertaken by other school board LBS programs which have emphasized the PLAR approach to integration.

#### **ST. CHARLES ADULT EDUCATION CENTRES LITERACY AND BASIC SKILLS PRE-PLAR PROGRAM DESCRIPTION**

##### **GENERAL INFORMATION:**

Specialized LBS program delivery offering transitional supports for learners waiting to begin new PLAR sessions, learners waiting to enter LBS/BOLD session and/or learners entering a credit program

LBS assessment provided

Pre-locator identifies strengths and/or gaps

Program delivery according to MTCU guidelines using a curricula embedded with Essential Skills which addresses time management, academic management, practice with assignments and/or like materials of PLAR and/or Credit expectations within LBS learning outcomes, learner centered and goal directed approach

Ongoing intake, timelines for completion dependent upon individual learners

Optional classroom delivery, online and/or Independent Learning Centre (ILC) model

##### **HOURS:**

9:00 am- 11:50 am (Monday –Fridays)

12:30 pm-3:30 pm (Monday-Wednesday)

12:30-1:45 pm (Monday-Thursday)

##### **FEES:**

\$10.00 registration fee (if applicable)

##### **TO REGISTER:**

Offered to LBS level 4/5 learners

Offered to LBS learners waiting (up to 4 weeks) to enter LBS/BOLD program

Offered to learners waiting to enter upcoming PLAR session

Offered to learners requiring strengthening of academic skills for entry into Credit programs (Basic Academic Essentials, Second Career or Vocational Schools)

St. Charles Adult Education Centres

LBS level 4/5 Program Description

#### **BOLD: Bridging on Learners’ Development**

##### **GENERAL INFORMATION:**

5 week program

Supports provided for LBS level 4/5 learners whose goals are further education/training

Curriculum built around Second Chance Program (PLAR)

LBS learner can earn up to 17 high school credits in 5 weeks

LBS instructor reinforces and provides extra assistance for those learners transitioning to the Credit program

##### **COURSES:**

Guidance (designing your future) GWL Credit Course:  
English (Grades 9/10)  
Math (Grades 9/10)  
Science (Grades 9/10)  
Geography (Grade 9)  
History (Grade 10)

LOCATION:  
St. Charles 150 East 5<sup>th</sup> Street

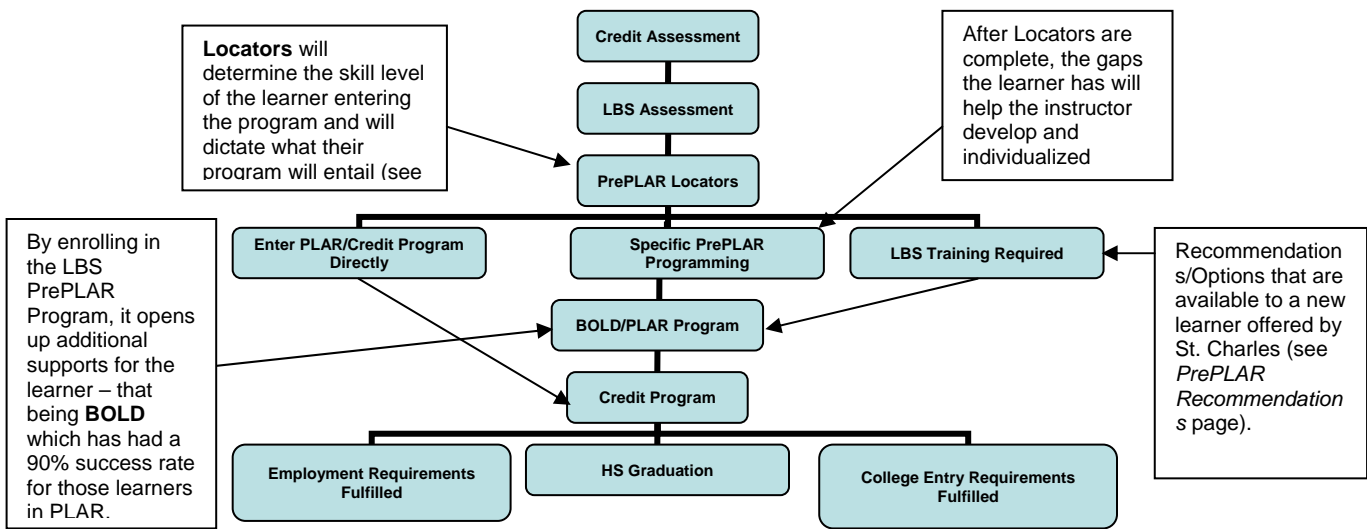
TIMES:  
Sessions run alongside PLAR terms  
9:00-12:00 am & 12:30-3:30 pm

FEES:  
\$135 for consumables and credit assessment

TO REGISTER:  
Offered to LBS level 4/5 learners  
Referrals made through LBS assessor, LBS Instructors and LBS/BOLD instructor  
Call 905-577-0555 # 1

The relationship between these components is shown in the following schematic.

### **Organizational Chart for Pre-PLAR/Credit Program**



*Integration with Employment Supports, Social and Life Skills*

The WLES-funded program provided by the John Howard Society of Sault Ste. Marie is an example of integrated programming which provides both literacy and basic skills activities with a range of life/social skills supports. In addition, the program explicitly integrates several employment supports (including employment readiness, job development and job coaching) as well as supportive case management. The description included here outlines the history and rationale for the program, its main elements and some of the mechanisms which define how the program works.<sup>18</sup>

**JOHN HOWARD SOCIETY OF SAULT STE. MARIE AND DISTRICT OPTIONS TO SUCCEED PROGRAM**

***ACHIEVING SUCCESS FOR THOSE FACING A COMBINATION OF LITERACY/EMPLOYMENT BARRIERS***

Over the past 25 years the John Howard Society has seen fluctuations in the economy and how it impacts the wellness of our community. As a multi service agency, we have extensive experience providing services to multi-barriered individuals, as well as providing supports to employers and employer groups. It is our experience that literacy and essential skills deficits lead to further barriers which can result in long term unemployment. Long term unemployment is costly to our communities, families and any individual’s ability to make healthy decisions. Our belief is that this client group needs to be treated differently than the traditional unemployed client group, serviced by traditional employment programs. Our expertise over the years has provided evidence that additional supports are required if we are to be successful in stopping the cycle of long term dependence on social assistance. Experience has also taught us that the approach to dealing with this client group is crucial to their success.

In 2010, MTCU approved a pilot project for JHS to address the needs of literacy and essential skills to multi barriered clients. We delivered this enhancement program to the unemployed and employed to improve success in their education, training and/or employment goals. Services were provided for one year beginning in April 2010 and ending March 31, 2011. This program was called: **Options to Succeed**.

<sup>18</sup> This description was prepared by Suzanne Lajambe Stortini, Executive Director, John Howard Society of Sault Ste. Marie and is included in its entirety.

Throughout the year we offered up to 200 hours of paid training to each participant, plus weekly case management meetings with a case manager, followed by a 12 week fully paid work placement.

The training was provided to five groups of unemployed participants, which included social skills and literacy training to 69 participants.

40 participants graduated from the social skills/employment readiness and literacy training  
17 participants completed placement\*

31 participants secured employment during or following the Program\*

*(\*16 participant placements will end on March 31<sup>st</sup> therefore have not been counted in these stats as of yet therefore there is a potential of 33 successful completions in placement "83%" and 47 securing employment while in the program "68 %")*

We also offered 100 employed participants social skills workshops, to improve employee retention through enhancing communication in the workplace, reducing conflict.

**Experience and Research** indicated:

- ✓ Coordination of a range of services is required to serve this target group
- ✓ Assessment is required to identify areas of need
- ✓ Specific interventions (Social Skills Training and individual counselling) can reduce the intensity of barriers to finding and maintaining employment/schooling, by teaching new behaviours and developing thinking skills (problem solving, decision making, conflict resolution, anger, etc.)
- ✓ No one organization can provide all the services required for these target groups therefore partnering with and making referrals to other community services is necessary
- ✓ Work experience is an effective way to develop employment skills and experience
- ✓ Employers who practice the skills taught to their employees are more successful in sustaining employees, including participants of the Options to Succeed Program

Healthy work environments improve retention and productivity of all employees therefore we added an incentive to employers by providing workshops to their employees who worked with our participants. The workshops were delivered in a three part series consisting of "Personality Dimensions" and a two part Conflict Resolution session. This added incentive increased success for our participants through improved communication skills of their employees and improved the long term sustainability of all employees. The Options to Succeed Program is a true example of a win/win scenario, bringing the private and public sectors together.

**Key Characteristics of Targeted Clients:**

**Individuals 18 years of age and over, living in Sault Ste. Marie**, where any combination of the following barriers exist:

- low levels of reading, writing and numeracy
- lack of skill in document/computer use
- low levels of confidence and self esteem
- anger management problems
- economic issues
- poor/no work experience history
- poor communication/people skills
- poor decision making/problem solving skills
- anti-social attitudes and beliefs
- pro criminal attitudes and beliefs

- a criminal record

All unemployed participants had an individual training plan developed following an assessment of their risk and protective factors, along with their literacy levels. Those clients facing the greatest deficits in literacy and essential skills were offered the most intensive services. JHS provided 8 weeks of skill enhancement services followed by an employment placement of up to 12 weeks and/or support to return to school. Mornings encompassed social skills workshops through which participants learned 5 of the essential skills. Afternoons were devoted to the 4 essential skills related to Literacy for 2 hours daily, which was provided by our project partner, Program Read.

#### Client Services and Activities

- Client assessments performed
- Individual Counselling as needed
- Social Skills / Employment Readiness Workshops (5 essential skills, 8 weeks)
- Literacy Training (4 essential skills, 8 weeks)
- Referrals to other community agencies for wrap around services
- A paid work placement up to 12 weeks
- Onsite monitoring for clients and employers
- Pardon assistance for clients with criminal records

Specifics that made the program most effective: from the Social Skills Facilitators, Case Managers, Job Developer/Coach, and Literacy Teachers perspectives:

- *Weekly 1 hour case manager meetings with each client to assess and address barriers unable to be addressed in a group setting and develop an individual plan for each client*
- *Wrap around services available with our agency to refer and to address specific issues participants may be facing: homelessness prevention, literacy issues, social skills, job readiness, advocacy for participants, job development etc.*
- *Partnership with Program Read*
- *Having the literacy instructor involved in our weekly Options meeting, gives us the often “missing pieces” to the participants abilities and barriers in literacy*
- *Some of the lessons were drawn directly from group needs identified from social skills group or to enhance social skills lessons*
- *Sharing information on clients helped both the instructor and the facilitators/case managers to work towards a common goal with clients*
- *Having the Social Skills Facilitators, Case Managers, Job Developer/Coach, and Literacy Teacher take the same social skills training as the participants before they begin to work with clients was absolutely invaluable – we were all talking the same language, and the instructor was able to reinforce the skills through interaction and incorporating information into lesson planning*
- *Partnerships with the employers involved*
- *12 week **fully funded** placement was instrumental in developing new and continuing community partnership*
- *8 weeks paid training in the classroom to the participants which increased motivation*
- *Motivational interviewing as a tool to work with resistant clients*
- *Comprehensive multi stage intake process, including a second interview/ intake assessment to determine barriers as well as the strengths of the perspective participant*
- *Coaching model for facilitation of groups*
- *Job Developer/Coach being involved with the group on a daily basis and further meeting each client for a “Pre-Placement” assessment*

- *Job Developer/Coach bringing participants to meet with placement employers for interviews allows for further preparation before hand and allows for de-briefing afterwards*
- *Job Developer/Coach attending the first day of placement to ease the transition into the labor market, as well as attending weekly to meet with participants to address concerns and continue to use motivational interviewing to provide support*
- *Job Developer/Coach meeting with placement supervisors and staff weekly to offer support*
- *Sharing of ideas and information between Social Skills Facilitators, Case Managers, Job Developer/Coach, and Literacy Teachers (multi-disciplinary team)*
- *Having the literacy instructor available for consultation/sharing throughout the days*
- *Making literacy classes obligatory for everyone at least for the first few weeks; after that, at the discretion of the instructor; it takes at least a week to develop a true picture of learners' needs*
- *Strong focus on document use literacy using a wide variety of workplace documents, including policies and procedures materials*
- *Identifying the level and kinds of reading, writing, numeracy and document use participants will actually be using in the work placements – this might mean that the literacy instructor has to change some preconceptions though research in workplaces*
- *Using CAMERA (Communications and Math Employment Readiness Assessment) and the correlated Workwrite series worked well*
- *Having volunteers available to work one-to-one or with groups of 2-4 people needing more assistance. The larger the group, the more volunteers are needed*
- *Having a focus on numeracy: people are insecure about their math skills, and when they experience success in this area it boosts confidence levels in other areas*
- *Having literacy, social skills and employment readiness training delivered together. It was one program and one multidisciplinary team working together to increase the effectiveness of an individualized case plan for each client.*

The John Howard Society has developed curriculum which has proven effective to motivate, train, and maintain a person who has failed in school, work and relationships. Our modules are developed from more than 25 years working with this client group through funding from municipal, provincial and federal governments. We've watched the full circle of each government as they design and redesign programs, none of which have been successful with the hardest to serve unemployed. Why...Because this client group isn't easy to motivate due to their many failures in all aspects of their lives. The pilot through WLES was different than the other models of service we had offered in the past, by adding funding to pay the client group to learn the communication and literacy skills necessary to succeed, followed by a fully paid 12 week training placement with employers. Funding the participants is something we've seen for youth in different employment models but not for adults. It was enough incentive to get the clients to come voluntarily to our agency and the employers to give them an opportunity to work. We feel it was the most successful of our models thus far.

This client group costs more in the initial stages of service. However, the long-term savings, if we can stop the cycle of dependence, is immeasurable, given that it will impact on generations that follow. Employed parents bread healthy children which increases opportunity for education and employment in their future.

#### *Integration with skills training and employment supports*

As noted above, the most frequent object of integrated programming has been to facilitate increased effectiveness for learners developing literacy and basic skills within the context of vocational skills training. The focus for much



of this integrated programming in the U.S. and U.K., as well as in Ontario, has been for learners with direct employment goals who are interested in short-term skills training. However, the impact of such programming has also facilitated many such learners to pursue additional training, ladder into post-secondary vocational programs (typically in U.S. community colleges and Further Education institutions in the U.K.).

*PTP Adult Learning and Employment Programs (PTP)*

As with other examples included in this document, there are other LBS agencies which are developing integrated programming. In the case of integrating skills training with LBS, perhaps the longest standing example is PTP. Their current initiative integrates LBS, skills training and employment supports and is described (in Meinzer 2007) as follows:

**Teamwork – How it Works and its Integration with PTP’s LBS and Employment Services**

Teamwork is a component of and essentially complements the Workplace Communications Program, PTP’s full-time literacy and basic skills program. The two go hand in hand. Each student joins a team upon entry to the program. Students choose the team they want to participate in. Their decision may be based on a job goal or other personal goal (e.g. wanting to improve cooking skills) or viewed as a way to develop particular literacy/numeracy skills (e.g., writing skills, money handling). Students spend five mornings and two afternoons each week in class. Two afternoons each week are spent in Teamwork activities. Classroom activities are connected to, but not directly correlated with, team activities while team activities support instructional activities in the classroom. Each of these programming approaches is informed by the other. Instructors actively look for and generate opportunities in the literacy and basic skills classes for students to apply and practice skills in authentic ways. For example, planning the annual picnic was carried out in the classroom. Students created posters, communicated with program administrators by email, made brief presentations to students and staff, held a vote to choose a location and budgeted for the event. In addition, Occupational Research in which students use online and other resources to find information about jobs, training and volunteer opportunities is a critical component of PTP’s program.

Occupational Research as it is conceptualised at PTP does not focus on job-searching, resume writing or interview skills. It is real occupational research and involves knowledge building. A sample exercise is to have students collectively think about the kinds of questions they should ask themselves, trainers, employers and others in order to be able to make an informed decision about whether to invest in a particular training course. They are then asked to find the answers to the questions they formulated. The result may be that what at first seemed appealing is less so on closer examination. These activities are carried out in the classroom and are essential to the success of students as they move on to employment or further training.

The work that students undertake in the Occupational Research component is also an important source of information for instructors about the employment/job goals of students. This information informs classroom activities, curriculum development and important areas to be addressed in the various teams.

When students move on to the Job Solutions Employment Services<sup>25</sup> component of the PTP program they must identify a specific job goal. The Occupational Research component of the Workplace Communications Program provides students with information that allows them to identify realistic employment goals based on an understanding of job requirements and further education and training needs.

PTP students attend workshops and have Job Solutions staff visit their classrooms on a regular basis. These visits are intended to help students develop an early rapport with Job Solutions staff so that the move from upgrading to job search is less intimidating. Job Solutions is specifically designed to meet the needs of job seekers who face literacy or language challenges. Resources used have been modified to be accessible to this group. Further accommodations are achieved by offering a longer than usual program (12 weeks in duration), one that also allows students enrolled in the Workplace Communications program to integrate job search and upgrading—preferably towards the end of their upgrading program.

Through Job Solutions [Employment and Job Search supports], PTP sets up on site job fairs for students, and information about Job Fairs at other locations is shared with students who are encouraged to attend either alone or in a group organized by PTP staff or Teamwork members.

To support students on their path to employment, training or further education, assessments are conducted using CAMERA. Since CAMERA allows students to track their progress in four areas – document use, reading text, numeracy and writing – they can easily identify strengths and weaknesses. Initial placement assessments are carried out at intake. Follow up assessments are usually conducted five weeks after enrolment and eight weeks following that assessment. Assessments are also conducted when a student exits the program. After every CAMERA, students meet with a staff member to discuss results, to reflect on their progress as well as to address concerns. These meetings are also an opportunity to map routes to attaining individual job related goals. They are also an occasion to inventory, list and track job readiness basics, for example, that the student is legally eligible to work, has a social insurance number and a bank account.

Signposts are an additional feature of the assessment process at PTP. Signposts are used as an in-class assessment, administered and marked by the instructor. (In contrast, CAMERA is administered by non-teaching staff, to avoid “teaching to the test”.) Signposts assessments were developed to provide instructors with an assessment tool to be used in the intervals between CAMERA evaluations. Signposts also provide success markers for students who may not be able to achieve level completion.

Students receive Certificates marking progression from LBS level to level. PTP supplies employer reference on request, although this is infrequent and there is no formal process in place.

Using MTCU’s outcomes based model, PTP has consistently achieved a 70% success rate. In other words, 70% of students go on either to employment, training, job search, further education or volunteer work. At PTP, however, success is marked not only in terms of outcomes. Offering an appropriate referral, helping to foster a feeling of belonging and self-worth, building confidence and providing a sense of direction are as important. New students are often referred by former students, and former students may return to the program when their circumstances change. [Meizner 2007]

#### *Le Cap: Centre d'apprentissage et de perfectionnement*

A different approach to integrated programming, also related to both employment supports and skills training, has been developed by Le Cap in Eastern Ontario.

The example which follows is related to initiatives developed by Le Cap (Centre d'apprentissage et de perfectionnement) in Eastern Ontario. They are exemplary of a range of practical relationships which demonstrate program integration involving a comprehensive range of partners, integrations and transitions. The description of their integrated programming builds upon the referral and assessment activities delivered through RCAT (see

above) which has worked to bring the providers of a range of supports and training programs together including credit, post-secondary, skills training and LBS. What follows is an edited summary of the integration taken from the submission to this OALCF project (Lurette and Russell 2011).

The description provided begins by discussing the challenges of LBS learners in the community and the needs they tried to address; specifically, the historical lack of appropriate programming, coupled with the challenge of LBS programs which appeared to not be getting referrals from other sources (e.g. OW, JobConnect), nor were they able to provide training in both LBS and vocational skills.

This situation involves some major difficulties: adult learners lose interest in LBS training because they do not see where it is leading; LBS service providers receive few referrals from employability services; LBS programs are too long and too linear and do not often lead to a job. The TGV programs thus provide solutions that are real and adapted to these problems. Starting with the reality of the job market, they provide answers to the following questions:

- Which LBS training programs are likely to lead to rapid employment?
- What partnerships are required to set up these programs and publicize them in the labour market?
- How can maximum use be made of existing resources in a given territory to provide high-quality training at little cost to LBS learners, thus addressing the barriers to learning and encouraging greater participation?

The description then outlined some of the assumptions informing the development of their integrated programming.

#### **TGVs as a solution of interest to the problems of LBS client recruitment and participation**

Our need to retain this market share [of adult learners] was the reason for creation of twinned programs that would then give rise to creation of “Fast Track” programs, which were later renamed “TGV training programs”. This formula was so successful that it encouraged even institutions that were originally resistant to join the host of new partnerships engendered by this innovative training product.

That being said, the TGV programs have become occupational training programs designed for LBS clients looking for training leading rapidly to employment. These programs are aimed at expanding employment sectors that LBS learners will be able to quickly enter without necessarily having achieved Level 5 in LBS. These programs have significant advantages both for the learners themselves and the referring agencies (OW, EA, etc.):

- they are of a predetermined duration;
- they quickly lead to employment;
- they often include more than one form of qualification or recognition;
- the LBS component provides valuable educational support throughout the occupational training;
- participation costs are minimal;
- they address the main barriers, both structural and psychosocial, that can hinder participation and learning of LBS clients in training programs.

Several types of integration were considered and their description indicates that they were very conscious of the potential of their intended integration to provide for effective service coordination.

- **Integration of literacy and occupational training.** It has been proven that literacy training focused on development of occupational skills is five to six times more effective (“context-based approach”)...
- **Integration of literacy and credit training.**
- **Integration of literacy and employment assistance programs.**
- For clients with special needs, **integration of literacy training with other support services.**
- Integration of literacy training and learning a second language, always in relation to the need to return to a job.

[It was] also believed that integrated training for LBS programs would mean that it would be possible in this network to develop the ability to provide a complete service that would be difficult to achieve in a single program. This way of doing things also has advantages for learners: one location for receiving services, a wider range of services, shared information system and common entry so that learners’ progress and their transition from one program to another can more easily be tracked and fully documented.

In this way, the programs can better concentrate on service delivery. Related services can be pooled for all training and support programs, creating the required critical masses on a community basis. As well, not all those working in the field are necessarily equipped to provide the full range of integrated services to meet the multiple needs of learners. Better transition is provided in this way, preventing programs from needlessly holding on to learners. As well, accountability is maintained through shared funding.

The focus on integrated programming developed to include a range of providers as well as a focus on employment and training opportunities directly related to learners’ interests and the local economic circumstances.

**Participants in TGV programs: Target clientele of the project**

CAP is currently taking part in various TGV programs that we have categorized in terms of the extent of levels of partnership. The table below shows the TGV programs that have been developed in the last few years, with each of the partners involved.

Name of Program	Level of Recognition <sup>19</sup>	Names of Partners in Training
Food Preparation and Service	Triple	- CAP; Eastern Ontario Education and Training Centre (EOETC), Hawkesbury campus; Alfred campus, University of Guelph
Office Technology and Accounting	Triple	- CAP; EOETC, Hawkesbury camps; Alfred campus, University of Guelph
Educational Assistant	Triple	- CAP; EOETC, Hawkesbury campus
Personal Care Attendant	Triple	- CA; EOETC, Curran campus
Sales Clerk	Triple	- CAP; EOETC, Hawkesbury campus; Alfred campus, University of Guelph
Professional Sales Certificate	Triple	- CAP; EOETC, Hawkesbury campus; La Cité collégiale, Hawkesbury campus

<sup>19</sup> A double level includes an LBS component + specialized training; a triple level includes an LBS component + credited educational training + local occupational training; a quadruple level includes an LBS component + credit training + local occupational training + provincial certification for the apprenticeship program. [Footnote included in original.]

Early Childhood Education	Quadruple	- CAP; EOETC, Hawkesbury campus; La Cité collégiale, Hawkesbury campus; MTCU Apprenticeship Office
Millwright	Quadruple	- CAP; EOETC, Hawkesbury campus; La Cité collégiale, Hawkesbury campus; MTCU Apprenticeship Office
Horticultural Technician	Quadruple	- CAP; EOETC, Hawkesbury campus; La Cité collégiale, Hawkesbury campus; MTCU Apprenticeship Office

These programs are called TGV (for *Très Grande Vitesse*, meaning “very high speed”, known elsewhere as “Fast Track”). By TGV we mean training programs of short duration (20 to 30 intensive weeks) that enable unemployed **learners with low literacy levels** to undertake or continue an LBS program that includes at the same time: **recognized occupational training; specialized content leading to employment; training for development of the targeted basic skills.**

#### **Partnership – the foundation of the success of TGV training**

As we can see in this table, the TGV programs include different forms of delivery and various levels of partnership, both for delivery of instructional services and for development of the training’s content, the setting out of each partner’s mandate, the logistics for recruiting and referring clients, transportation, training in adult education for the trainers, funding, and so forth.

#### **How does it work with learners**

Under the model, Le Cap receives all clients at their ‘One Stop’ assessment / referral depot. Clients who express interest and meet the profile for the professional training program [are] then invited to information and orientation sessions.

For example, La Cité for their Apprentice Industrial Millwright training programs are referred to the College for orientation. If the student is accepted into the program, they will commence their training, which runs typically for 25-30 hours / week for 17-25 weeks. Intake for new students follows the schedule of the professional training programs. During the program, instructors from Le Cap and the Eastern Ontario Education and Training Centre (EOETC, a consortium of three school boards in Eastern Ontario, UCDSB, and two of its French language counterparts, CEPEO and CSDCEO) deliver contextualized upgrading and high school classes during the morning or afternoon at La Cité; when students are not doing practical trades school training. All students must attend the upgrading sessions and high school credits up to a Grade 12 diploma can be earned.

Throughout the training, exchange of student information is shared among the partners – for contact hours, progress, concerns, etc. Under this current model, all parties have come to a unique consensus and framework for working for the benefit of the student.

Under this model, the student is not aware that they are participating in LBS upgrading, they believe that they are learning materials which are essential to their success on the job. In the words of an instructor, “If we told them that they should go to LBS upgrading, they wouldn’t attend. But since we have integrated these materials into the overall training program, they attend and they work harder to succeed.”

Attendance for all professional training courses and upgrading courses are closely monitored. If a student has more than one unexplained absence per month, they will meet with an advisor to visit the situation, which may result in the student’s termination from the program.

The integrated TGV model allows for the student / apprentice to receive focused training in specific areas by specialized delivery groups. The stakeholders have niche expertise in the instruction of materials and due to the nature of the partnership, whereby each partners know who is responsible for their specific piece, there is no duplication of services. Moreover, there is integration of services, integration of instructional materials.

The TGV model also ensures that the student is familiar to all stake-holders; in the event of performance challenges, all parties meet to discuss possible strategies to remedy the situation.

Contextualized upgrading is delivered concurrently to compliment 'real-time' trades or other professional and practical training. This is a very important component, as a large portion of trades students, especially LBS trades students have aversion to formal classroom environments. Among the largest reasons listed for disliking 'school', is that they can't 'see why the material they're learning is relevant to their 'real-world'. Apprentices more often prefer to work with their hands, rather than their pencils.

Under the TGV model, the student's classroom learning is reinforced by material they can see, look and feel in their trades school environment. The amount of time between concepts being learned and being applied in a practical setting is very short, as a result, there is greater retention of skill and concept.

Representatives for La Cité and Le Cap state that approximately 80% of students who begin their Millwright apprentices programs successfully complete the program and secure jobs as first level apprentices following le CEFEQ's paid co-op placement term at a local employer.

Among the reasons why students fail to succeed, instructors and coordinators of the programs list social challenges, including drug or alcohol issues, commitment, maturity and poor workplace behaviour.

The staff noted that all of these issues are very challenging for them, as 'outsiders' to have influence over the student; resolution requires the individual to address and make personal changes before they can be successful in their career or future.

According to the instructors and coordinators of the program, there are notable differences between younger and older students and those who are independent or receiving EI or Ontario Works [Social Assistance]. Older students, over 30 years of age, tend to be more focused on their personal success and more inclined to take advantage of all instructor or personal supports. Younger students have a lesser likelihood of viewing the training and supports as essential for their success and regard their current training as a temporary option in their long working career.

The TGV model is very comprehensive and provides support, qualification and certification for students. The TGV model has evolved and offers would-be students in Prescott-Russell 8 options for further skills training and certification:

- Office clerk and Accounting Certificate program [College Alfred partnership]
- Dietary Aide Certificate program [College Alfred partnership]
- Horticultural technician (College d'Alfred partnership)
- Sales Clerk (College d'Alfred partnership)
- Early Childhood Education Apprenticeship [La Cité, partnership]
- Industrial Millwright Apprenticeship [La Cité partnership]
- Pre-Apprenticeship in Parts person [Collège d'Alfred and La Cité partnership]

- Pre-Apprenticeship in Welding [La Cité partnership]

The TGV model has taken close to ten years to arrive at this point, where all parties feel mutual benefits. In order to replicate this model to other jurisdictions, potential partners must be willing to work collectively in the best interest of the student. Partners must have regular dialogue amongst each other and there must be dedicated trust among the partners, to prevent territorial issues and subsequent devolution of the partnership.

#### *Some Observations on Integrated Programming*

Integrated programming is generally more difficult and complex than either active case management or interagency cooperation, particularly if its intention and design is to involve a range of providers in the coordination of services. It can be done within one organization (or even program) and it can be done by creating programming across two or more organizations. But it is a complex undertaking, as each of the examples suggests. There are however, some important lessons from the experiences, both in Ontario and elsewhere.

First, it is difficult to coordinate services even within a single institution. The experiences of LBS practitioners in Ontario colleges echo those in other jurisdictions in enunciating these challenges. While there may be a desire to integrate programming, particularly where a college is an LBS provider, an Employment Supports provider, and a provider of apprenticeship and/or pre-apprenticeship programming, it appears to be extremely difficult to actually ensure these programs are working together and actually producing results for learners. This may be a function of the complexity of the organizations, the primacy of some college functions over others and an orientation in which “integration” is more often sequential than concurrent.

This is not however, the case universally. The examples of WLES projects which embodied new and more dynamic integrations are, hopefully, initiatives of interest. And these may certainly be needed as it is far from clear that the now “traditional” integrations (of LBS and pre-apprenticeship) have been particularly effective in increasing the retention or transition rates for those learners who might be interested in apprenticeships. Since a major challenge with apprenticeships is finding employers, it may be that this needs to be the focus of additional effort. So, while the reports received and informants interviewed suggest that there have been important successes, the benefits of this kind of integrated programming may in fact, be quite limited.

Second, the integration of LBS and credit programs through school board based programs seems, on the surface, to be quite simple. While the PLAR route is relative new and was difficult for its practitioners to describe, it appears promising for those learners who choose it. Certainly, it will be necessary to determine if there is sufficient demand and, subsequently, if this becomes an effective means to support learners moving into either credit or GED paths. As with the college pre-apprenticeship undertakings, it is far from clear that this form of integrated programming provides a model for coordinating the range of services learners might need. Few, if any, of the additional supports needed by LBS learners are necessarily a part of the version of integrated programming presented and, therefore, it may be important to separate the approach to programming (self-contained) from its value as an approach to integrating services.

Third, the examples which appear to hold the most promise, both in themselves and as an approach to service coordination, appear to be those developed by community-based organizations. In each case, the examples offered are longstanding and have demonstrated positive results over a period of time. In addition, they developed as vehicles for integrating elements of LBS, Employment Supports and specific skills training, with an explicit commitment to at least some of the “softer” supports (e.g. case management) which the experience of practitioners emphatically concludes to be of great importance in helping learners succeed. As vehicles for service coordination, these examples suggest that there are several variations on the integration theme which merit further consideration: multi-service agencies which provide opportunities for integration within the same organization (e.g. JHS, Tilsonburg), and “single focussed” agencies which have developed the necessary relationships to ensure integration addresses learners challenges, regardless of their immediate destination (e.g.

Le Cap). Other examples of community-based agencies, both large and small, urban and rural, demonstrate this same ability, albeit with limited capacity and dependent on the energies and commitments of their practitioners to forge the necessary relationships on behalf of their learners. However, it is inescapable that the range of supports able to be coordinated through integration in these organizations was greater than for other, seemingly more comprehensive, institutions (i.e. colleges and school boards).

Fourth, results, for those examples where some data exists, tend to be nearly uniformly high and consistent, particularly with respect to integrating skills training. However, a great deal of data is simply not reported and possibly unavailable.

Fifth, if integration is within a single organization, it would appear both easier to implement and simpler to establish accountability. If across organizations (or across departments within a single institution), it can be very stressful and, if organizational cultures cannot work well together, actual integration will be extremely difficult. Not only will accountability suffer, but the very ability to implement the integration will likely falter without the necessary relationships which, in turn, derive from a shared vision of the project, of learners' needs and of the connection between the two organizations.

Finally, it would seem obvious that the "seamlessness" of integration is an important factor. Learners, of course, do not generally decide which organization provides what supports or services. For those the field seeks to serve, the greater the integration, the easier to ensure that the supports will in fact be accessible.

### Service Coordination through Community-Wide Planning

The overriding - and overwhelming - characteristic is not for planning among LBS programs, but rather for relationships between LBS and the other services which must be integrated for literacy and basic skills delivery to be effective. The experience of LBS providers in the several communities involved in this project is frankly sceptical of how this can be accomplished in the present circumstances. The time and energy that need to go into the current process is already considered onerous and the results of the process for service delivery and funding seem dubious. (Rowen 1999: V-42)

More than a decade ago, a report on integrated planning concluded that LBS programs needed to be more outward looking and that a planning process which involved providers – and funders – beyond LBS was necessary to better serve literacy learners. According to many of those informing our current understandings, little has changed. However, some very important things have.

First, the creation of Employment Ontario (EO) has provided a focus for more integrated service planning and delivery, including the integrated data management all service providers, as well as government, need to ensure both accountability and program improvement. And the mandate of EO is indeed predicated on a client-centred, rather than a program-centred, approach to the delivery of services.

Second, as the experiences cited elsewhere in this document attest, there is a much clearer understanding of the types of supports required for literacy learners (and other employment-oriented clients) to be successful. These supports are, in many cases, complex and taken together, there is an understanding of the need for a comprehensive service plan to include the provision of the necessary supports as well as for agencies to work together to provide the range of supports learners need.

Third, there has been a much wider understanding of the need to invest in more integrated delivery of services and for agencies to develop a variety of approaches to planning – and delivering – coordinated services which



might address the needs of so many learners. There is also an increasing understanding that new approaches will need to be developed – that more of the same will not achieve the desired ends.

As well, other jurisdictions have faced similar challenges. Over the past decade, the U.S.- and each of the fifty states – has tried to develop more effective approaches to coordinating services under the Workforce Improvement Act, through their One Stop centres, albeit with mixed results. The United Kingdom has launched several versions of customer-focused service coordination, most recently through their Job Centre Plus and Total Place initiatives. In both countries as in Ontario, the separation of income support from service delivery organizations, and the separations among types of provider programs has added to the complexity of truly integrating supports and coordinating services to the most needy whose success is the mandate of our respective efforts.

There are however, ideas for alternative approaches, in this case for integrated planning, which complement the three other approaches to service coordination discussed above.

The foundation for these ideas is firmly located in the community, in local communities whose agencies hold the knowledge of learner needs, of local employment and labour markets, and of opportunities; local communities where practitioners have the experience of longstanding service provision, and share a commitment to build the relationships necessary to design potential solutions to the challenge of service coordination. While there are constraints on their capacities, the argument to improve local, community-wide planning is compelling.

The consultations with a range of LBS programs and networks suggests a clear desire, not always perceived as likely, to implement a broader planning process - one that includes those providing the range of services and supports literacy learners need and which require coordination among historically very different organizations.

As well, these informants spoke of a range of initiatives which have emerged from the development of Employment Ontario which suggest this approach. For example, the approach to common assessment developed by ABEA (cited above) is just one example of such coordination, at least in the area of learner/client assessment. Other networks have also considered common assessment, as have several Employment Service providers who indicated a desire for a common “screening tool” to determine, in a systematic way, which of their clients require LBS support. As well, there has generally been a commitment by literacy networks to work with ES providers in the area of referrals, though with mixed success. However, most of those informing this project noted the general absence of a systematic referral protocol among literacy, Employment Services and Ontario Works, with those clients on OW seen as an important pool of learners, many with literacy and basic skills needs, who are not routinely referred to LBS programs.<sup>20</sup>

As well, among several informants, there was a desire to see a common information management system coordinated at the local level to support the development of services and the analysis of data for the purpose of program planning.

From the information provided by several literacy network informants, there has been the development of new groups of Employment Service providers in a number of communities, groups that, in some locales, include the LBS network, though certainly not in all of them; for example, the Community Employment Resource Partnership (CERP) in Peterborough, and the Employment Assistance Resource Network (EARN) and Skills Development Flagship in Hamilton. As well, there are numerous examples of communities where agencies (sometimes managers, sometimes front line staff) can come together informally (e.g. the Employment Networking Group in Peterborough and the Employment Sector Council of London Middlesex). These and other examples in communities both large and small, urban and rural, in all regions of the province, are compelling evidence that

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<sup>20</sup> This is not a challenge unique to Ontario. In the U.S., there continues to be a tension between services and supports funded under the Workforce Improvement Act (WIA) to support integration into the workforce, and those provided under Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), largely an income maintenance program which also has employment and employment preparation goals (along with the provision of other social services); both of which are jointly funded and administered by state and federal governments.

those providing services in the community are seeking and creating opportunities, to share their experiences and challenges.

There is also a consensus from those informing the project that there are some crucial limitations to such groups and the way they function.

First, there are some groups which have evolved from the initiative of Employment Service providers which have not included the LBS network or LBS providers.

Second, there are some groups which have evolved to include funders and/or income support institutions, but do not include managers or staff from Ontario Works.

Third, the consensus is that these groups lack a clear mandate beyond the sharing of information which is most certainly seen as valuable, but hardly merits an ongoing organization if it is their only function.

Fourth, there is unanimity about the need for the provincial government to send a clear message which provides a mandate for such groups; that the absence of positive sanction from the Province suggests these are neither important nor useful vehicles to help foster service coordination.

This is not to suggest that there is a consensus on what type of body is needed and what mandate it should have. Practitioners, in both literacy networks and individual LBS agencies, are fully aware of the investment in, for examples, local training boards which had similarly “confused” or ambiguous mandates. However, there is a clear understanding that, if a community-wide process is to be of value, it must move beyond the current Literacy Services Planning process to include a range of providers beginning, but not limited to, agencies providing employment supports, as well as those institutions from which referrals are (or should be) common (such as OW, ODSP, etc.).

Further, there is a view that two levels of coordination may be beneficial: management, where information and planning can be the focus; and front line staff, where the relationships necessary to meet client service needs can develop and be practically coordinated. It is not without effect that these organizations have noted the paradox of wanting greater coordination of services in the absence of a mandated mechanism in the community to do so, other than through individual agencies working cooperatively on building individual approaches.<sup>21</sup>

Two examples from Ontario LBS organizations seem to embody creative versions of service coordination which exemplify community-wide planning as a potentially important approach to service coordination.

The first is present in the work of the Referral Centre for Adult Training (RCAT) in Prescott-Russell cited earlier, which has been described as actually being an “adult training network” as it has moved beyond a focus on referral. Without going into additional detail, RCAT has been able to include the range of education and training agencies, including those offering LBS programming, employment supports, and skills training (including both school board and post-secondary providers); as well as the all of the major referral sources (e.g. Employment Service centres, OW, ODSP, etc.), and also includes the local training board, the local community economic development corporation, and HRSDC among its advisory organizations. As well, the service delivery activities include programs leading to employment, credit programs and programs which may ladder into other post-secondary offerings.

In addition to program delivery are several functions which the many parties to RCAT have decided to share cooperatively. These include common assessment, referral and advertising. Perhaps more important, are the program development function and a shared function of data analysis. The relationship between these two functions has been described as follows:

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<sup>21</sup> It is worth noting that, while many informants suggested it would be beneficial, few thought it likely that management from the variety of program funders would similarly come together.

Over time, RCAT also took on the responsibility to analyze diverse local data about adult training in its area, including data about the background of adult learners in its services, the results of assessments conducted over the years, the learners' need profiles and the modes of operation of the various partner programs. These analyses allow, among other things, to make regular local planning for adult training in RCAT area. This local planning process often results in the creation of new joint adult training programs, which most of the time are implemented and coordinated by RCAT, another responsibility that it naturally assumed over the years (Lurette and Russell 2011:16)

In connecting the assessment and referral functions to the development of a community-wide process, the authors note:

We believe it is more effective for a local adult-training network to present their integrated training programs, such as the TGVs, based on a single-wicket approach, without distinction of specific service deliverers. In our view, this approach makes it easier to reach the pool of adult learners, with the aim of getting around the numerous barriers to returning to training. The single-wicket approach (rather than providing individualized training programs, and rather than attempting to recruit learners directly for each of the training programs) integrates and presents in the same training program a number of training and employment support services, thus simplifying for the adult learners and the population in general the perception they may have of the adult-education system, and so encourage them to become a part of it. (ibid:16)

In discussing these functions, it was also noted that this capacity, coupled with the commitment to develop a more systematic approach inclusive of both the range of clients and the varieties of supports, would allow RCAT to also analyse outcome data which, in turn, would also feed into the program development (and program improvement) process.<sup>22</sup>

#### *London-Middlesex*

A second example is from the cooperative work being done in London-Middlesex. As with RCAT, this initiative is premised on the need to bring a variety of agencies, both LBS and beyond, to the same project. In this case, the explicit focus is on service coordination of which program development and integrated delivery is but a part.

The following is a description provided by Literacy Link South Central (LLSC) as their Literacy and Employment Integrated Service Plan (March 2010). It resulted from an extensive process which involved not only the literacy network, but a wide range of employment service delivery partners under the auspices of the Employment Sector Council of London/Middlesex which in turn, is comprised of forty-five employment and training organizations. In addition, several other groups were involved through the consultation process and in particular, through the Joint Service Planning Task Force which, in addition to ESCLM and LLSC, also included the local training board, United Way, City of London, London Council for Adult Education and Partners in Employment.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Personal communication with the principal author; February/March 2011.

<sup>23</sup> Partners in Employment is an umbrella group of agencies providing employment services to the disabled in London/Middlesex. The development of PIE and its relationship to both integrated service planning and delivery is described in Rowen 1999 which also discussed the then current initiatives in London-Middlesex which included a Funders Forum of employment and training service funders (involving all three levels of government and their departments) and the London Middlesex Labour Market Planning Council (LMPC) comprised largely of service providers. PIE grew out of the collaborative work of these two groups and was an example of the ability to develop a creative approach to planning which would avoid service duplication and enhance integrated service delivery for the client groups. The work of these groups, more than a decade ago, remains an important example of how local leadership can develop creative solutions to planning and delivery challenges; and the history of these initiatives likely informed the development of the current service planning proposal. It should be noted that, while individual representatives of several funders were involved in the consultations and work groups, there appears to be no organized group of funders working formally together at the present time.

The plan (LLSC&ESC 2010) proposes four “models” to support more integrated service delivery.

**1. Stand Alone Literacy and Employment Agencies**

- a) In this integrated service delivery model, both literacy and employment service providers would remain as is; as stand alone agencies and service systems. A series of information tools and referral protocols would be employed to ensure that those clients with literacy and employment needs were receiving needed services from both service systems. The integrated plan would be completed for the client by each of the organizations with which the client is involved and each front line worker would case manage his/her aspect of the integrated plan.
- b) This integrated service delivery would be the same as a) above, except that the client would be co-case managed by the literacy and employment staff.

**2. Co-Location of Literacy and Employment Programs**

In this integrated service delivery model, literacy programs would be co-located for specific days and times at an employment organization that has a critical mass of clients with both literacy and employment needs (six to ten clients) and/or employment programs would be co-located for specific days and times at a literacy organization. The integrated plan would be completed jointly for the client by the organizations that are co-located and the client would be co-case managed by the literacy and employment staff.

**3. Integrated Literacy and Employment Programming**

In this integrated service delivery model, existing employment service providers would expand their suite of services to directly provide literacy programs and services. The integrated plan would be completed collaboratively for the client by the staff at the organization with integrated programming. (Note: This service delivery model may be something that could be piloted in Middlesex County due to the lack of literacy services and the breadth of employment service providers or could be used to expand the literacy capacity in London).

**4. Centralized Case Management**

In this integrated service delivery model, clients with both literacy and employment needs would be referred to a centralized agency for literacy and employment assessments (target is fifty clients per year). This agency would provide the primary case manager to the client and would make referrals for needed services to existing literacy and employment service providers.

As part of each of the above integrated service delivery model options, the use of online technology may be explored.

This service plan recommends that all four integrated service delivery models be implemented and evaluated to determine the right mix of service delivery models for London and Middlesex (see the next section on Service Priorities and Action Steps).

**Integrated Service System Coordination**

In order to ensure the sustainability of the implementation of the integrated service plan and new service system, a system for coordination needs to be put in place. The recommended model for this is:

- The integrated service plan is owned by the community of literacy and employment service providers
- The implementation of the integrated service plan and the coordination of the integrated service system for those clients with both literacy and employment needs will be led by the Employment Sector Council of London/Middlesex (ESCLM) and Literacy

Link South Central (LLSC). ESCLM and LLSC will develop a partnership agreement to delineate roles and responsibilities in this joint coordination model

- Staff of ESCLM and LLSC will coordinate the work of the integrated service plan and will establish sub-committees/task forces through identified accountability paths, as needed, to implement the integrated service plan and to conduct future service planning for clients with both literacy and employment needs
- A Project Reference Group will be established to oversee implementation of the year one pilots of the four integrated service delivery models. A Terms of Reference will be developed for this group.

### *Functions*

While there are a number of possible functions for such a community-wide planning process, several seem to arise frequently and are clearly represented in the two examples offered above, as well as several in other jurisdictions.

First, there is a commitment to common assessment and referral, not only in principal, but through the development of concrete tools and protocols. Indeed, as the LLSC proposal points out, these would be a precondition for any attempt at coordination involving stand-alone agencies.

Second, there is a commitment to joint activities: in the case of LLSC, something beyond simply the co-location of otherwise discrete services and agencies, to the shared responsibility for working with the client and developing a “unified” service plan which would include a range of supports. In the case of the RCAT, the practical projects have also moved beyond common assessment and referral to include their joint program development and delivery - not a casual undertaking.

Third, both examples hold out the promise of more integrated programming. That is, building on best practices to more specifically integrate services. In the case of LLSC, it is to more fully integrate employment supports with literacy and basic skills programming. Through the RCAT, learners have access to a range of programs integrating LBS with either vocational training or credit programming, while also providing a range of employment supports. And it is likely not a coincidence that both examples include a focus, at least initially on clients and learners with more direct employment goals (i.e. those in London needing both literacy and employment services and those who, through the RCAT, self-identified as having employment goals).

Fourth, while very different communities and different models of service coordination, both examples typify one of the important lessons learned from experiences across jurisdictions; namely, that a shared vision and a concrete “project” focus are both important.

Fifth, both examples are instances of creating a “third” body. In the LLSC proposal, the beginning would be an independent case management function. In the RCAT example, it was itself an entity (largely) independent of (though sponsored by) the existing agencies.<sup>24</sup>

Finally, both examples anticipate a common reporting system, data from which agencies could better evaluate their undertakings, learn from them, and use their experience to improve services to their learners.

### *Some Observations on Community-Wide Planning*

There are several additional observations about a community-wide planning approach to service coordination.

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<sup>24</sup> The idea of creating an “independent” body concurs with the conclusion that “it has been extremely important for there to be a sense of “neutrality”, that no one agency has dominated the more integrated service; that a successful outcome needs to create “a culture that no one owns”. In varying degrees, this has been the ... experiences in other jurisdictions”. (Rowen 1999: V-23)

First, there is the obvious benefit that this approach builds on a history of related activities within the literacy community. Many LBS agencies and networks have suggested that their experience with Literacy Service Planning provides an important basis from which to build a more thorough service planning mechanism which could be expanded or adapted to include other EO providers and, possibly, other social service providers as well.

Second, a community-wide planning approach has been advocated in studies of the Ontario system (e.g. Rowen 1999), and has been developed in different forms in other jurisdictions. For example, in the U.S. where state and regional Workforce Improvement Boards have this function, and in the U.K. where such planning activities are expressly encouraged at the local community level, integrated planning across types of providers (i.e. not only LBS) is now the rule.

Third, while a number of LBS agencies and networks suggest formalizing this approach, there is a clear sense that the process needs to be driven locally, rather than through a single, centrally-determined model. As a more integrated employment and training system evolves over the coming years, the alternatives available to communities may benefit from the work now being done to identify possible approaches. Indeed, it has been suggested that communities start such work informally; that doing so

affords the opportunity to find common ground and common challenges; to try to work through some possible approaches to what had felt like insurmountable obstacles...; (second), that it allows the development of some of the new relationships which are necessary to plan and implement an integrated service to begin without the pressure of [immediate] funding or results.. allow[ing] for some needed flexibility...; and (a) third reason to start informally may be to show commitment... rather than responding to the needs or interests of another provider or funder, starting informally allows people to explore those areas which may not be fashionable or immediately fundable, but which may be quite important in the long run. (Rowen 1999: V-25,26).

Fourth, of the four approaches outlined in this document, planning is the most difficult and, as a result, the approach with the fewest examples. The results tend to be longer term and, often, are difficult to see. Among its main benefits, are (a) developing some protocols to ensure services are available and provided, thereby serving more learners and more needs, (b) ensuring that some agencies are not working at cross purposes, that all major components of an integrated system are present in the process, (c) providing a focus for new and emerging initiatives, (d) providing the opportunity to reallocate resources and to consolidate organizations, if needed; and (e) it could provide a community building opportunity depending on who is present and participating.

Fifth, a major challenge is that a community-wide planning approach runs the risk of increasing demand for services. That is, to the extent that it uncovers heretofore unaddressed needs, it raises expectations of being able to provide these supports.

Sixth, under any form of such a process, people and the agencies and interests they represent, have to bracket their individual and institutional/organizational interests in favour of the broader public good. While this may not seem different than other approaches outlined here, there is a clear sense that the other approaches allow organizations to retain more of their individual identities and prosecute their own interests in a variety of ways. Community-wide planning suggests that this would be neither necessary nor productive to the goal of service coordination.

Seventh, there are many examples of how agencies can cooperate around program delivery, but not around service planning which can, at the extreme or during particular times, be quite threatening. If a possible result of the process is the consolidation or rationalization of services, there is little incentive to participate. However, there are some examples, as illustrated not only by the two presented above, but by the work in each of these two communities which, over a decade or more, helped position them for the progress they appear to have achieved.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> It is likely not a coincidence that both communities' work was unique at the time and the subject of study reported in Rowen 1999; work that

Eighth, a community-wide planning process poses several challenges for funders. In particular, as with the LTABs, there is an unavoidable challenge of defining the mandate of such a process. While bodies dedicated to integrated planning in the U.S. and U.K. have varying degrees of control over funding, certification (of local providers), and data collection and management (including program improvement), no such authority has existed in Ontario in relation to education and training services (though the LHINs are possibly an example in Health). As well, the membership in such a body could be problematic; specifically, whether municipal and provincial OW would be involved, whether ESL would be involved, whether funders (including non-government funders such as United Way or community foundations) would be involved; whether employers or employer groups would be involved. Either these questions would need to be clarified or, alternatively, local communities would need permission to experiment and determine what was appropriate themselves. The complexity of these decisions and the politics of each make addressing these challenges quite a daunting task.

Finally, in the absence of a clear and compelling shared vision or directed by mandate, a community-wide planning process must be centred on a “project”, several of which have been suggested in the discussion above. These are each ideas which can begin concretely to give substance to the approach by demonstrating that at least some services can indeed be coordinated through this approach.

It is likely not coincidental that a number of planning initiatives begin by focusing on the assessment and referral functions. This has been true in Ontario, as the examples cited suggest, as well as in other jurisdictions.<sup>26</sup>

Two specific projects come to the fore as both practical and worthy of a community-wide effort.

First, agreement on tools for common academic assessment and referral, including a screening tool for use by non-LBS providers in determining who will likely benefit from referral to LBS programs. As well, the agreement should include consensus on the specific thresholds (including a range of scores) which would automatically lead to a referral for literacy and basic skills programming.

Second, the development of a common assessment tool or approach to determine other challenges and barriers, with resulting agreement on the supports needed to address these identified barriers. This assessment should similarly lead to a common protocol for referring clients/learners to the required supports and be as automatic as the referral to LBS programming.

Neither of these efforts should suggest that the judgement of practitioners is not crucial. It is and the use of the term “automatic” is not meant to suggest otherwise. Rather, it is important that an assumption be built into the design which holds that clients will have access to the necessary supports as a matter of common practice with the judgement of practitioners leading to exceptions. The specifics of the assessment and referral process should include one or more screening instruments which are demonstrably valid and reliable as their results should be acceptable by both clients/learners and service providers. As well, the referral protocol should be able to clearly delineate the appropriate services which are based on the assessments of both literacy and basic skills, as well as of other needed supports based on defined barriers and challenges.<sup>27</sup>

In understanding why these particular projects might be a good initial focus for community-wide coordination, Rowen noted,

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clearly provided the cultural and developmental basis upon which their current activities have built.

<sup>26</sup> For example, these were and have remained among the core services to be provided by local authorities under the then new Workforce Improvement Act.

<sup>27</sup> While a common assessment, with a common referral protocol among community partners, is not quite the same as a single point of access, this latter ‘physical’ unification may or may not be needed for services to be equally available and commonly available regardless of how a client/learners comes to the integrated service delivery system.

There may be a good reason for this [focus] given that it may be easier - and extremely important - to integrate assessment and referral (i.e. how people come to access a given service) than to immediately try to integrate programming (i.e. what services are delivered and how they are delivered once the person gets there). It may be more difficult, at least at the outset, to open the “black box” of each agency... These efforts are also beginnings of integration, but limited since they neither redefine the service nor break down the distinctions among programs and eligibility criteria. Nor do such sequential partnering arrangements affect accountability, since each provider is responsible for their own part of the service and is separately accountable for results. However, it represents another form for beginning to consider what a fully integrated service might look like in the future. (1999:V-25)

A third project follows from the above; namely, developing the community’s approach to active case management. Since there may be differences in capacity among agencies in the community, and differences of import across communities, the provision of active case management to a subset of clients may be best located in a range of agencies in the community which should be the subject of a community-wide discussion.

All three of these areas, also not coincidentally, have been the subject of some discussion about whether a “neutral” or “third party” might be the appropriate form for these functions. While it might be true in some communities, there is no necessary reason to be directive about this form. There is good reason to suggest that case management, in particular, will benefit from the relationships between actual program staff and the learners/client.

A fourth project might focus on data; that is, on the functions of integrating data, of examining the various kinds of information and, finally, on developing the important understandings which should come from these data. Such understandings go to the heart of the purposes of service coordination: that is, determining who is successful and who has not been successful and the various factors which distinguish these groups of clients. These factors include the supports they have received and the effectiveness of delivery.

The continued development of Employment Ontario Information System (EOIS) suggests an information system which will, eventually, be as comprehensive as the supports it is able to track. The field – institutions and practitioners alike – should benefit from this system. More important, our learners and clients should benefit. A principal benefit to accrue to all should be the ability to analyze the patterns of service provision within the community relative to the demonstrated needs of clients for services and related supports. While the capacity for this function did not exist a decade ago, it is developing and its use should be obvious. The data must be made available to communities and to agencies, in a form which will allow their analysis – analysis which is necessary to improve the delivery of programs and services. Any attempt at program improvement begins by confronting the many possible relationships between service delivery and client outcomes. As Jim Collins work has offered, it requires “disciplined people” using “disciplined thought” to work on “disciplined action” (Collins 2005). A prerequisite for such discipline includes the use of good data to inform decision making. The analysis of data at a community level is therefore an important task for any emerging community-wide planning effort, as suggested by both the Ontario examples outlined earlier in this section, as well as the experiences in other jurisdictions.<sup>28</sup>

While it would be commendable if every community was able to work through these specific projects and challenges in their own way, there is certainly evidence that some direction from the provincial government may be required, particularly in cases where either a municipal (e.g. OW), or other provincial supported agencies (Employment Services in some communities, ODSP, etc.) need to be “encouraged” to cooperate. For the initial stage, these projects could be offered (along with a minimal financial incentive, if needed) to interested communities who are both willing and able to support the work as “early adopters”. But the goal that this will be

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<sup>28</sup> Support for the need for comprehensive data and its necessity for program improvement include, in the U.S., Strawn (2007), Allen and Kazis (2007), Duke and Strawn (2008) and Alamprese (2009), to name but a few.



part of program integration in coming years, that it is a fundamental part of the “vision” of an integrated Employment and Training system, should be made through a clear statement by the Government.

In the interim, while such work is developed in some communities, LBS agencies in all communities should be encouraged to work together with other service providers to begin by developing a common list of providers to which clients/learners would be referred for each type of support required. This need, however basic, arises from data, both informal and from the survey of LBS providers, which suggests that there are LBS programs where practitioners play no role in connecting learners with needed supports; where information is neither provided to learners nor specific referrals made. While these agencies may be a distinct minority of LBS agencies, a list, common to all providers in the community, both LBS and others, might help support those agencies and the learners they serve

### Summary and Conclusions

Each of the four approaches to service coordination outlined in this document has benefits and challenges. While none can be unequivocally recommended, each suggests some avenues to pursue. That there are current examples of each approach among the activities of existing LBS agencies suggests that practitioners and their communities have found their particular approach to be useful in providing at least some of the supports that LBS learners may require to be successful. It may be useful, therefore, to summarize some of what has been presented above.

Case management is possibly the most straight forward approach to coordinating services, a function integral to the role by definition. It does not require any other organization as part of the coordination, though obviously as part of the delivery of the appropriate services. It is well understood, though its effectiveness is predicated on how well it is executed. Among its benefits, case management provides single point accountability. That is, the agency providing case management and the case manager him or herself knows what supports are needed and how to provide the service. If the service or support is to be provided by another agency, the ability to track if the client got there, to get feedback, and to see the result of the referral is relatively straight forward. While the ultimate success of the supports provided rests with the receiving providers, as a means of service coordination, the success of case management rests on the skills and commitment of the individuals in the role, particularly in forging relationships of trust with their clients.

Among the largest challenges in operationalizing this approach in a multi-provider environment is in determining who should be the case manager. Since there are staff assigned to this role in some, but not all, organizations (e.g. OW, ES, ODSP), it would appear that many learners who potentially have need for this support will already be receiving it. However, there is good reason to believe that the caseloads of such staff are often too large for those organizations to effectively provide this support and, as a result, services which may be available are not being effectively coordinated. This challenge may be a matter of resources or, alternatively, there may be a need to more fully define the role of case manager with respect to expectations for service coordination. This would include tracking and timely follow-up. For learners/clients who do not have access to appropriate case managers, the challenge of where to locate such a function is more difficult.

In sum, while there are certainly challenges (including resources and mandates), coordinating services using a case management approach is likely to be effective and the challenges to adopting this approach are, on balance, able to be addressed. The results of using this approach can be relatively easy to measure and report. Most importantly, there is widespread consensus that active case management is a key factor in the success of harder-to-serve learners and those likely to benefit from additional supports. In the current environment, and increasingly in a “post-recovery” future which needs to include a greater number of harder-to-serve learners, where some but not all LBS learners need multiple supports to address multiple challenges, the absence of a coherent approach to case management is a recipe for failure.

Interagency cooperation for specific programming, the second approach, immediately raises the challenge of how different organizations can “share” responsibility for providing services. Most often, this is done by have a clear demarcation between the services one organization provides and those provided by a partner; and the components are sequential or at least separate elements (as opposed to integrated programming where traditionally different elements are combined). It is possible to consider how some of colleges, school boards or multi-service agencies operate as examples of this; that is, that LBS is functionally separate from ES (and other elements of the organization’s programming) and therefore, to the extent that learners benefit from cooperation in securing the supports they need, the “organizational” relationships involved (albeit within the same institution) are similar to working with another organization or agency.

When this approach is well executed, the benefit is that there are clear roles and well defined services. Often, however, learners are “given” both services whether they need them or not, as part of a pre-existing arrangement to cooperative programming. Therefore, a specific challenge is how the development of the cooperative arrangement between two agencies reflects the actual supports needing to be coordinated based on the identified needs of each learner.

A second challenge is that this approach to service coordination also involves learning/working more closely with another organizational culture. In addition, there is the challenge of accountability; that is, if there is shared responsibility as implied in the approach, neither party may feel accountable to provide the necessary supports or to have overall responsibility when needs for particular supports emerge. Compared to the case management approach, the results of this coordination may be harder to see and accountability harder to determine.

Integrated programming is likely a more challenging approach to service coordination. It can be done within one organization (or even program) and it can be done by creating programming across two or more organizations. Results, at least for literacy learners, tend to be nearly uniformly high and consistent. If within one organization, it would be both easier and provide greater accountability. If across agencies (or across departments within a single organization), developing integrated programming can be very stressful. Furthermore, if organizational cultures are unable to work together, actual integration will be even more difficult.

There is also the challenge of whether the services are provided sequentially or concurrently. Sequential delivery is both easier to conceive of and to execute, and it provides clearer accountability for delivery of the service/support. If concurrently, it is clearly more difficult to both develop and deliver such services, and more difficult to ensure accountability, but is also likely to be more effective based on evidence to date.

Therefore, in considering the likelihood of this approach being an effective means to coordinate services, it is likely to be successful when integration is developed within a single organization. As well, the particular services to be coordinated may have some bearing on successful outcomes since it may be easier to consider delivering complementary supports than to deliver core programming (e.g. LBS and vocational skills training) through this approach. There are, however, clear exceptions to this conclusion, particularly among the examples cited in the text; and in a number of agencies, there was the ability to provide case management as a feature of the integrated programming (albeit within one agency).

In sum, an integrated programming approach to service coordination may be more difficult than both case management and interagency cooperation, but may have the benefits of being more effective when attempted in a single organization and, in particular, if case management is integrated as part of the regular programming. As well, if within one agency, accountability is easier to establish. Finally, there is evidence of demonstrable benefits in terms of learner outcomes in a variety of settings and jurisdictions.

A community-wide planning approach is the most difficult and, as a result, the approach with the fewest examples. The benefits tend to be longer term and, often, are difficult to see. However, the main benefits are potentially crucial in the development of a truly integrated employment and training system. Specifically, with the development of common tools and protocols adopted across the range of providers and provider types, and

supported by the funders of those agencies, as well as those both making and receiving referrals, the ability to coordinate services as demonstrated by appropriate and successful referrals will be significantly increased.

A second important benefit is the consensus which would hopefully emerge about the level of demand for a variety of services and which would be based on evidence gathered from agreed upon instruments. Related, accountability for appropriate referrals among agencies would be easier to develop if community-wide agreement on the appropriateness of the supports was the basis for these referrals.

The approach shares with case management the ability to be implemented without immediately creating tension among providers' cultures or interests since, in its initial focus, there is no need to intrude on the programming of each agency.

The challenges of later stages of development, however, are significant. A desire to build upon the initial community-wide efforts to develop new or integrated programming may be viewed as a threat to institutional autonomy. Similarly, the collective use of data to support community-wide improvements in programming, or to suggest an individual agency's programming is (or is not) related to client/learner success, may renew historic competition and resentments. And the need to consolidate programs and agencies to support and enhance integration would obviously benefit from a community-wide process. However, there is reason to believe that this needs to be an explicit objective of the Ministry if it is to occur under the rubric of community-wide planning. (As the experience of London-Middlesex PIE demonstrated more than a decade ago, it is clearly possible for funders to agree on such directions and have the support of their respective providers.) The opportunities for such developments are far more complex with the number of funders who support the different providers. Both groups, funders and providers, need to be involved if a community-wide approach is adopted.

Therefore, a precondition for developing this approach to service coordination would seem to be the positive sanction from "authorities", whether in the form of direction or incentives. In the absence of such support, it is doubtful whether some partners in some communities would participate, and there is much evidence to support this conclusion.

The community-wide planning approach shares with each of the others the ability for decision-makers to begin to "seed" additional initiatives in the form of purposeful pilots to determine whether the capacity exists and whether it will yield the desired results, both in coordinating services and in greater success for clients. A funding envelope to support such purposeful demonstration projects may be a useful beginning and a time-limited means to gather the needed evidence from which to make an evidence-based decision about which approaches and variations might be most likely to be successfully applied across the Province.

In all four approaches, the pilot or demonstration projects which could be developed may well spur the cultural shifts required for success. Several shifts in orientation are possible but difficult: from an institutional to a client focus; from separate agencies, programs and services to coordinated, if not integrated, supports; from general to greater and specific accountabilities, from historically-based programming to evidence-based and data-driven decisions which inform program improvement. These are changes to the very culture of delivery, of expectations and of support which the OALCF seeks to bring about.

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