

LOOKING BEYOND THE WANT ADS

LABOUR MARKET DIALOGUES PHASE I FINAL REPORT

a report of



**COMMUNITY
COUNCIL**

July 2007

Acknowledgements

The Community Council has responsibility for the Labour Market Dialogues Project, as laid out in a Labour Market Partnership agreement with Service Canada. The research was carried out by a Community Council research team: Jane Worton, Director of Research; Ruth Gillese, Project Manager; Tricia Irish, Researcher; Erin Davis, Interviewer. The following community service providing agencies partnered with the Community Council on this project: Cool Aid's REES (Research, Education, Evaluation and Support) Network; the John Howard Society; PEERS (the Prostitute Empowerment, Education and Resource Society); the Victoria Immigrant and Refugee Centre Society; the Victoria Native Friendship Centre; and the Victoria READ Society.

The following individuals contributed their time on the project's steering committee: Kari Comeau, Charleen Dunn, Lori Ferguson, Dave Johnson, Karin Llenger, Mayo McDonough, Jody Paterson, Claire Rettie, Ejay Russell, Helen Thomas, and Viet Tran.

Particular thanks to the 112 individuals from the community who shared their experiences and insights in the community consultation.

The Government of Canada has contributed funding to this initiative. The opinions and interpretations in this report are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the Government of Canada. Vancity Credit Union has contributed additional funds to the Labour Market Dialogues Project.

Canada

Table of Contents

Section 1: Introduction	5
Why is this research important?	5
What is meant by “barriers”?	6
Section 2: Methodology	6
Interviews	6
The interview model	7
Getting people’s consent	8
Survey	8
Section 3: Interest in the Work	8
How interested were people in the research?	9
How did people prefer to be involved?	9
What kind of meeting did people prefer?	10
How did people prefer to respond in writing?	10
The value of dialogues between stakeholders.....	10
Section 4: Designing the Research.....	11
Barriers to Work	11
Personal barriers to work	12
External barriers to work.....	14
Section 5: Supports	15
Putting supports in a broader context	15
Employer Supports.....	16
Different supports for different barriers.....	18
Financial barriers.....	18
Health barriers.....	18
Education and Training barriers.....	18
Social Inclusion barriers	18
Section 6: Current Gaps and Needs, and Ideas for Addressing	19
Gaps and Needs.....	19
Accessing the Labour Market	19
Building Knowledge of the Labour Market	19
Developing Retention Strategies.....	19
Ideas for Addressing.....	20
Accessing the Labour Market	20
Building Knowledge of the Labour Market	20
Developing Retention Strategies.....	20
Section 7: Analysis	21
Awareness of Barriers to Work.....	21
Not One But Many Barriers	22
The “Soft” Barriers – Social Inclusion.....	23
The Silo Effect	24

Harder to Keep Work than to Find it	25
Who is Helping... and At What Point?.....	26
Who is Responsible for Addressing Barriers?	27
How to Support Employees with Barriers.....	28
Section 8: Conclusion.....	29
Interest in Research	29
Research Design	29
Appendix A: Employer Interview Guide	31
Appendix B: Client Interview Guide.....	35
Appendix C: Online Survey Questionnaire.....	38

Section 1: Introduction

Phase One of the Labour Market Dialogues project was intended as a four month research planning process to:

1. determine the interest level in research on how employers can be better supported to hire and retain people experiencing barriers to employment, and;
2. design a research methodology for carrying out research on how employers can be better supported to hire and retain people experiencing barriers to employment.

Background

Why is this research important?

The Labour Market Dialogues has its roots in Phase One of the Quality of Life CHALLENGE. The CHALLENGE is a community-driven initiative for all sectors of BC's Capital Region to work together to create a sustainably vibrant community. The Community Council was a Leadership Partner in the CHALLENGE. One of the priority areas of the first phase of the CHALLENGE was to ensure individuals have a sustainable income from paid work.

Over the past three years, in response to the work of the CHALLENGE, employers in the region indicated that they were interested in addressing quality of life for their entry level employees but were not sure how to do that and had very little time to look at human resources issues.

At the same time, community service providers, and, in particular, employment agencies indicated that employers were increasingly concerned that they were dealing with job applicants and employees with increasing numbers of barriers to employment.

Finally, shifts in the labour market over the past few years have placed pressure on employers to find sufficient qualified employees. More than ever employers have to hire from a pool of labour they have tended not to hire from: people experiencing barriers to employment.

The Community Council wanted to build upon the good work that had been done, and to respond to the shifts in the Labour Market. The Labour Market Dialogues Project was developed.

What is meant by "barriers"?

The term "barriers" has been defined quite broadly in this project. It has been used to refer to a variety of issues that present obstacles to individuals in finding and keeping work. These can range from (but are not limited to):

- being a single parent;
- homelessness;
- addictions;
- low level of life skills
- mental and physical health problems
- criminal record;
- lack of work history;
- work in the sex trade;
- history of abuse;
- new to Canada;
- not speaking the language;
- discrimination;
- illiteracy, and;
- poverty.

Most people experiencing barriers in one of these areas also experience barriers in at least one other area. This research was conceived to explore whether or not employers could be better supported to hire and retain people experiencing these types of barriers. The Labour Market Dialogues Phase One created a strategy for tackling this research.

Section 2: Methodology

During the research design phase, two key activities took place: 1) interviews were conducted with employers, service providing agencies, and people experiencing barriers to employment, and; 2) an electronic survey was conducted with employers.

Interviews

The Community Council partnered with six service providing agencies in the research design phase:

- Cool Aid's REES Network;
- The John Howard Society;
- The Prostitute Empowerment, Education and Resource Society;
- The Victoria Immigrant and Refugee Centre Society;
- The Victoria Native Friendship Centre, and;
- The Victoria READ Society.

Each of these agencies work with people who experience barriers to employment and provide either pre-employment supports or programs designed to help their clients find and keep a job. The partner agencies referred the Community Council to

employers who have hired through their respective programs and to clients¹ who have experienced barriers to employment. Agencies referred clients who had experienced some success in overcoming a barrier to employment and finding and keeping work.

The Community Council conducted hour-long interviews with the clients, employers and representatives of each partner agency. The Community Council also conducted interviews with four other local service providers that have clients experiencing barriers to employment. In total, 112 interviews were conducted with 60 employers, 42 clients and 10 community service agencies.

The interview model

The interviews were designed using the Appreciative Inquiry model. That is, rather than focusing on the difficulties clients have had finding and keeping work, or the difficulties employers have had finding and keeping employees, the questions were framed in terms of successes. For example, employers were asked about their experience hiring people with barriers to employment and what had been the best thing about that experience for them.

A set of interview questions was developed for the employer interviews and client interviews (see Appendices A and B).² The interviews for both employers and clients were divided into two parts: 1) interview questions on the topic of employment and people with barriers to employment, and; 2) a short questionnaire focused on how employers and clients would ideally like to be engaged in the research phase of the Labour Market Dialogues project.

The section of the interview dealing with employment and barriers was divided into three parts, the first part exploring the individual's experience finding work (or finding employees), the second part exploring the individual's experience keeping work (or keeping employees) and the third part exploring what supports an individual would, in an ideal world, put in place to make finding and keeping work (or employees) easier.

The interviewer drew out detailed answers for each of the questions by focusing on five areas of potential support for clients and employers: agency support, employer support, individual support, family and community support, and government support. For example, an employer talking about an employee who had trouble lining up child care and was frequently late or absent as a consequence would be asked whether he/she had been supported in

That's the problem of North America. We are all scattered and we are not like a family that comes to fix your car or looks after your children. We are all scattered and do our own thing.

participant, speaking of the challenges of putting adequate supports in place to be able to work

¹ For the purpose of this report, the term "client" refers to people who are experiencing barriers to employment and have sought the assistance of the employment service agencies participating in this project.

² A set of formal questions were not developed for the interviews with the community service agencies.

resolving the issue by a service providing agency, by any supports the employer had put in place themselves, by any actions undertaken by the employee, by supports offered by the employee's family and friends or by a government program. The purpose of examining barriers mentioned by the interviewee in the context of a broad range of supports was to place the supports employers may be able to offer into a wider community context.

Getting people's consent

All of the interviews were done with the written permission of the interviewee. The great majority of the interviews were done in person, taped and transcribed. A few in-person interviews were not taped and detailed notes were taken instead. The few interviews that were not done in person were conducted over the phone or by the interviewee filling in answers to the interview questions and faxing the written responses to the Community Council.

While the interviewers aimed to gather similar data from all the participants, the interviews were conducted informally. The sample of interviewees was not large enough, nor sufficiently random, to be considered statistically significant. For that reason, findings reported in this paper should be regarded as qualitative data rather than rigorous statistical results.

Survey

An electronic survey was designed to gather data more broadly on employer interest in the research. The survey was sent out electronically to over 1,400 businesses in the region. The survey gathered information on whether or not employers are interested in taking part in the research and how they would like to take part (see Appendix C for a copy of the survey questions).

Section 3: Interest in the Work

The first goal of the research design phase of the Labour Market Dialogues was to determine the degree of interest of employers in BC's Capital Region in the project and how they would best like to be engaged in the research. In addition to determining employer interest in the research, clients were also asked whether or not they would be interested in participating in a research phase and how they would like to take part.

Participant interest was gauged in two ways:

- 1) the 60 employers and 42 clients who participated in the community consultation interviews were given a short questionnaire at the end of each interview asking whether they would like to be involved in the research and how they would like to be involved, and;

- 2) an electronic survey was completed by 40 people from the business community who indicated their level of interest in the research and how they would like to be involved.

How interested were people in the research?

When comparing the employers who were interviewed with the employers who only completed the online survey, more employers who completed interviews than employers who completed the survey said they would be interested in being involved in research into barriers to employment. Employers who completed the survey knew only what the introduction to the survey said about the nature of the project while employers who took part in a one hour interview had a much better sense of the project.

65% of employers (interviews and survey combined) said they would definitely be interested in being involved in the research. 79% of employers who were interviewed said they would definitely be interested in being involved in the research.

You're always counting your change to make sure you get something you need. Now I am working and I know it's full time I don't worry about it.

client participant, on the importance of having work

Clients who were interviewed were also canvassed as to their interest in being involved in the research. 95% of the clients said they would definitely be interested in being involved.

How did people prefer to be involved?

Employers were given three main options of how they might participate in the research: attending a meeting, taking part in a one-on-one interview, or responding in writing (such as giving feedback) to written materials. In presenting employers with these three options, they were allowed to choose as many as they liked. 81% of employers (interviews and surveys combined)³ preferred to attend a meeting rather than take part in a one-on-one interview or respond in writing. However, more than half the employers were also willing to take part in an interview or respond in writing. This result is interesting because it confirms that, busy as employers are, they see a clear need for research into barriers to employment and how employers can be supported to hire and retain people experiencing barriers to employment.

Clients who were interviewed preferred to participate in the research by taking part in a one-on-one interview (88%) and, as second preference, by attending a meeting (62%). This may reflect clients' feelings of vulnerability because of their barriers and being less willing to share their thoughts in a group setting.

³ Unless otherwise noted, all data on employer preferences includes both the interview and survey results.

What kind of meeting did people prefer?

Employers preferred to attend a one-time-only meeting as opposed to a series of meetings on a given topic. Employers strongly preferred (93%) a small meeting (6 to 8 participants) as opposed to a larger meeting (8 to 15 participants).

Employers were given a choice of meeting composition:

- 1) employers only;
- 2) employers and clients (people experiencing barriers to employment);
- 3) employers and service providing agencies, and;
- 4) all three groups.

Employers far preferred (77%) having all three stakeholder groups meet together to participate in research more than any of the other three combinations. Clients likewise far preferred (96%) having all three stakeholder groups meet together more than any other combination (keeping in mind that attending meetings was clients' second preference in terms of overall participation).

Both employers who were interviewed and clients reported feeling quite comfortable with, at a meeting:

- 1) participating in group exercises;
- 2) giving feedback on other people's ideas, and;
- 3) hearing feedback on their own ideas.

Employers, additionally, felt comfortable standing up and talking about their own experiences (87%) while clients were not as comfortable with this option (54%).

How did people prefer to respond in writing?

Of the employers who reported that they would be willing to respond in writing to written materials (39 employers), 95% said they would be willing to review a list of things people with barriers to employment think would help them enter the job market. However, only 54% of employers were willing to write a short story about their experiences and 48% were willing to share their story with the media.

Of clients who reported that they would that they would be willing to respond in writing to written materials (20 clients), all of them said they would be willing to review a list of things employers think would help people experiencing barriers to employment to enter the job market. 80% of clients were willing to write a short story about their experiences and 35% were willing to share their story with the media.

The value of dialogues between stakeholders

It is clear that both employers and people experiencing barriers to employment (clients) see research into barriers to employment as important. The most striking

finding, however, is the distinct appetite on the part of both employers and people experiencing barriers to employment to sit down together and participate in dialogue about these issues.

The findings on how to engage employers and clients formed an important part of the research design and will continue to inform the Labour Market Dialogues as the project moves into Phase II.

Section 4: Designing the Research

The second goal of the research design phase of the Labour Market Dialogues was to gather information from the community about barriers to employment and determine what areas of research would be most valuable in supporting employers in BC's Capital Region to be better able to hire and retain people experiencing barriers to employment.

The bulk of each community consultation interview focused on individuals' experience or knowledge of barriers to work and the supports that assisted them to overcome those barriers. Participants were also asked to comment on what areas they felt needed research and ideas for addressing gaps that were named.

Barriers to Work

The most striking aspect of the community consultation was the sheer number of barriers to work that all participants (employers, people experiencing the barriers first hand and service providers) named. In total, participants in the research design phase mentioned more than 1,700 barriers to finding and keeping work.

Many of these barriers were duplicates in the sense that they dealt with similar issues (for example, there were 40 transportation barriers mentioned) but each example illustrates how an individual's personal circumstances create subtle differences in the barriers they experience.

Each example of barriers illustrates how an individual's personal circumstances create subtle differences in the barriers they experience.

The barriers mentioned by participants were organized by the researchers into two main types, personal and external, then into six major categories and 33 sub-categories. It is important to note that the groupings of barriers in this report were imposed on the data by the researchers. That is, individuals in their interviews did not state whether they considered a barrier personal or external or into which of the categories named below they felt their barrier fit.

The types of barriers and categories of barriers described below were developed to explore the interview data from the perspective of someone who has not

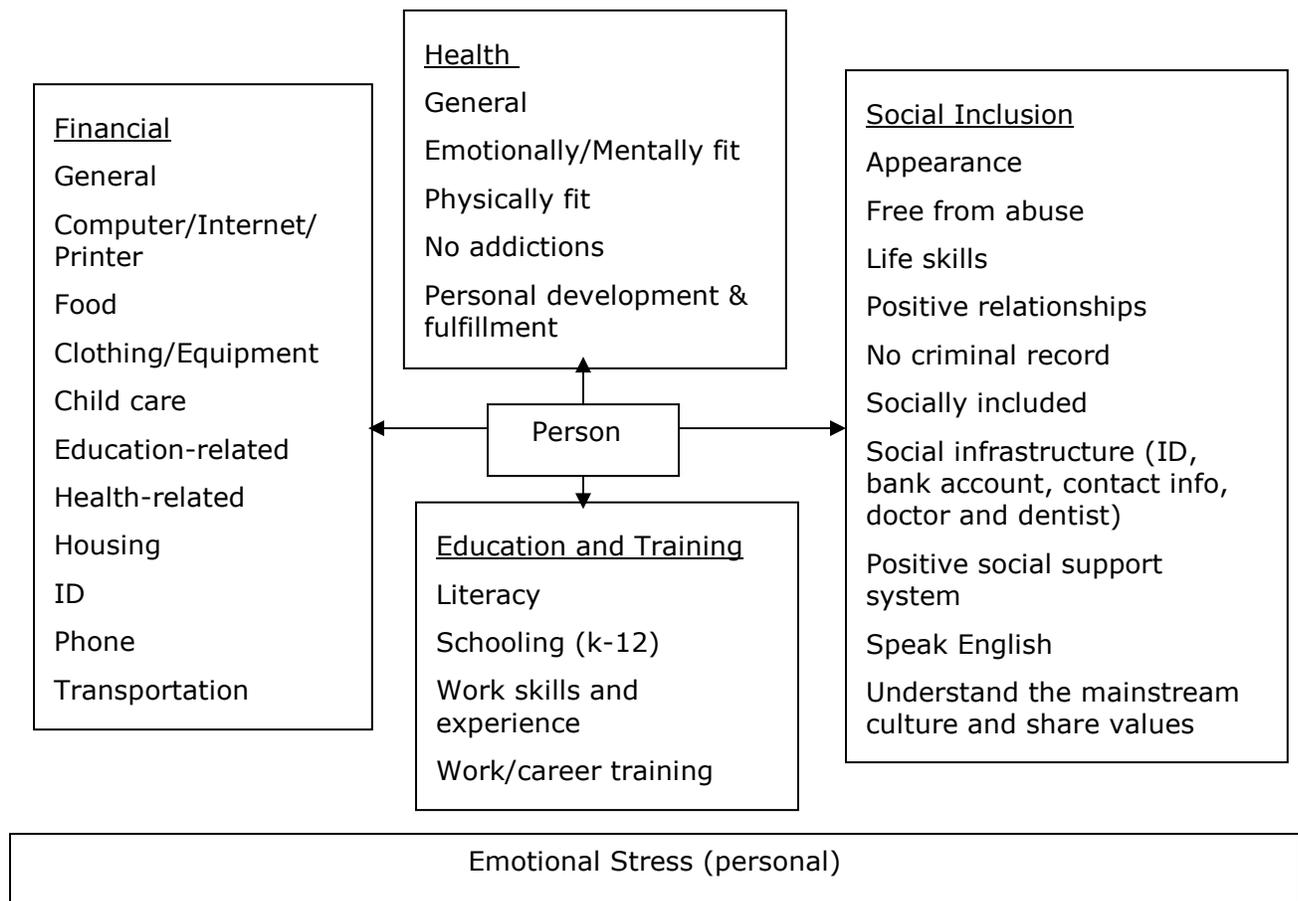
experienced barriers to employment and who therefore does not know a great deal about what causes various barriers in individuals' lives.

Personal barriers to work

The majority of the barriers listed by the people interviewed have been, for the purposes of this report, called "personal" barriers to work. That is to say, they have to do with things that, in Canadian society, individual adults are expected to supply for themselves or to have provided for them by their families. For example, owning a phone, getting job-related training, taking care of one's health and being able to understand and appropriately participate in mainstream culture are, generally speaking, assumed to be private matters for which the individual is responsible.

These personal supports make it possible to work in Canadian society. Many people who participated in this study are missing a number of these personal supports. Each client interviewed for this project reported, on average, 13 personal barriers to finding and keeping work. Moreover, half the clients interviewed for this project reported experiencing barriers in all four of the major personal barrier categories named above. All the clients interviewed reported barriers in at least two of the major personal barrier categories named above.

Diagram 1: Personal Barriers



Missing some or even one of the personal supports listed in this section is compounded by an invisible barrier to work: the emotional stress that occurs when dealing with a barrier. For example, a working mother who does not have adequate child care faces two problems. First, she does not have appropriate child care; second, she is worried about her child. Both the lack of care and the worry make it difficult to work.

The personal barriers reported by participants have been grouped into four major categories: Financial, Health, Education and Training, and Social Inclusion.

Financial

It is assumed that adults in society are able to look after themselves financially and manage their financial affairs to ensure that they can feed, clothe, and house themselves, arrange for child care, transportation, and all their other daily needs.

Now if you don't have a phone, number on your resume becomes pretty well a useless piece of paper. If you don't have an alarm clock, you can't wake up to go to work. If you are just out there living in the parkade, you are so far away from being employable

community service provider, on homelessness and employability

Health

It is expected that adults look after their own health. While government assists each individual with health insurance, it's expected that individuals will take daily care of their health, physical, emotional and mental, and make their own arrangements to access professional care, as needed.

Education and Training

It is assumed, when individuals are growing up, that their families send them to school, where they learn to read and write and gain a foundation in a wide range of knowledge areas important for functioning in our society. Moreover, families help individuals gain life skills and early job skills, perhaps helping them get their first jobs and learning about how to work. In an individual's first job, as teenagers and young adults, they learn how to behave in a work setting, gain some basic job training and job-related experiences. While family plays an important role in helping a person acquire these skills and experience, these experiences tend to largely occur outside the home in the relatively formal settings of school and early jobs.

Social Inclusion

This category relates to how integrated an individual is into our mainstream society. Like Education and Training, Social Inclusion refers to the knowledge, skills and competencies an individual is assumed to acquire in preparation for adulthood and independence from the family. However, while Education and Training refers to skills and knowledge gathered in the more formal settings of school and early jobs, Social Inclusion refers to knowledge, skills and competencies that individuals are expected to absorb informally from the positive role models of their families and friends. Socially, it's assumed that adults will speak English (in most parts of Canada) and understand Canadian culture, that they will obey the laws as well as

unwritten social values. Adults are expected to have family and friends that support them in non-abusive relationships. There are social norms about appearance, hygiene and behaviour that everyone is expected to understand and take part in. As well, there are certain structures that every adult establishes for themselves – legal ID, bank accounts, and ways to be contacted – necessary for obtaining and keeping work.

External barriers to work

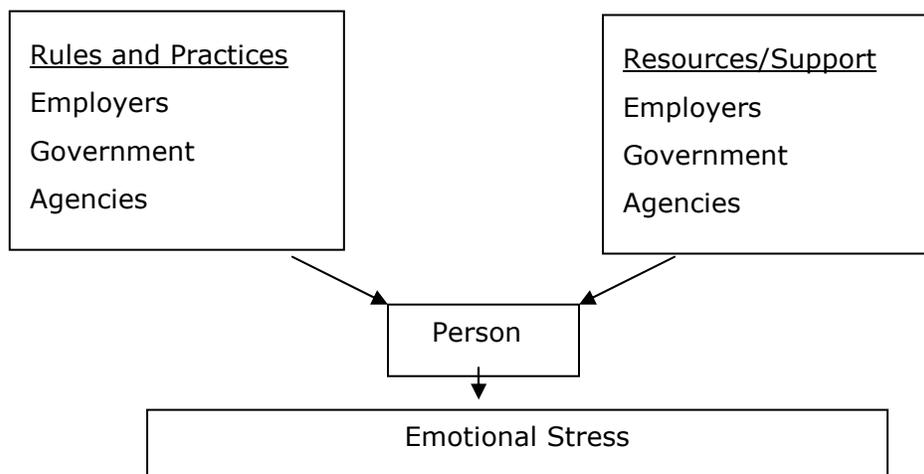
Participants in the study also named a number of barriers that may be considered things over which an individual adult in our society is assumed to have no control. The rules governing an individual's job search while on EI, for example, at times can create barriers to employment. However, no one expects an individual to be able to change those rules. Likewise, if a community service agency has limited funding to provide pre-employment programs, this could exclude some individuals and constitute a barrier to employment. For the purposes of this report, these types of barriers have been called "external" barriers.

The external supports described in this section assist vulnerable individuals to work in Canadian society. Each client interviewed for this project reported, on average, five external barriers to finding and keeping work.

The diagram below also shows emotional stress linked to external barriers. Just as personal barriers causes are compounded by the invisible barrier of emotional stress, so are external barriers. For example, a homeless man waiting to get into limited subsidized housing faces two problems. First, he does not have a safe place to live; second, he has the worry of trying to manage a stable life without the support of a home. The lack of a home and the worry make it difficult to work.

The external barriers reported by participants have been grouped into two major categories: Rules and Practices and Resources/Support.

Diagram 2: External Barriers



Rules and Practices

Rules and Practices barriers are external barriers to employment that are created unintentionally by rules or systems laid out by organizing bodies, such as levels of government, service providing agencies, and businesses or business sectors. They are characterized by being barriers over which an individual could not reasonably be expected to have control.

There is too many rules to get an interview. Like you have to have a resume... also they [expect a] cover letter... so too many thing that usually we don't do in our country so we have to start learning all the things [like] how to do a resume in Canada... It is not easy.
client participant

Resources/Supports

Organizing bodies, such as government, community service providing agencies and businesses can unintentionally create barriers to employment through shortfalls in resources and the supports they put in place. These shortfalls might represent a nuisance or temporary challenge to someone with strong personal supports. However, people who are already missing some personal supports may be more vulnerable to shortfalls in resources and supports in various programs and services or in their dealings with employers. Additionally, this category of external barriers includes discrimination that individuals may face for one reason or another. Discrimination is the ultimate lack of support, where an individual is excluded based upon a perception of being socially unacceptable.

Section 5: Supports

While interview participants mentioned more than 1,700 barriers to employment, they also named more than 1,000 existing supports that assisted people experiencing barriers to employment to find and keep work. As with the barriers, within this large number, many of the supports were very similar to one another.

Putting supports in a broader context

Employers and clients who were interviewed were asked to comment on what supports had assisted them to either hire and retain a person experiencing barriers to employment (in the case of employers) or find and keep work (in the case of clients). Employers and clients were encouraged to consider the following sources of support:

- Community service providing agencies;
- Employers;
- Clients;
- Families and community, and;
- Government.

The interviewers asked participants to consider these five different sources of support in order to be able to examine employer supports within the broader context of supports that a person experiencing barriers might access. For the purposes of this report, only the employer supports were analysed in detail.

Employer Supports

More than 350 Employer Supports were mentioned by participants. These were grouped into the following 13 types of support.

1. Changed business practices to remove barrier

Employers supported employees by changing a standard operating practice that was creating a barrier for an individual. For example, one employer developed a process of writing down tasks for an employee with memory problems. This support is different than no. 4 (matching the job to a person's capacity) because, with this type of support, the person is still expected to do the same job, but structural changes are made to accommodate that individual.

2. Implemented flexible scheduling

Employers supported employees by adjusting their work schedules to accommodate employee's barrier. For example, one employer gave an employee time off to cope with health issues and provided only as many hours as the employee could work.

There has to be some way for me to be flexible and make sure that [my employee's] children's needs are met so that she is happy. At the same time, I can get the work done here.
employer participant

3. Made physical or structural changes to the work place

Employers supported employees by changing the work place to accommodate a barrier. For example, one employer purchased a special phone for an employee who was hard of hearing.

4. Matched job to employee's capacity

Employers supported employees by changing or reducing the job description to accommodate a person's barrier. For example, one employer had an employee with a literacy barrier and would ask other staff to fill in forms and take over the parts of the job the employee could not do. This support is different than changing business practices (no. 1) because the employer, in this instance, accommodates the barrier by changing the actual job.

5. Paid costs for employee

Employers supported employees by paying for goods and services a person would normally pay for themselves. For example, one employer, knowing his employee was homeless, would periodically buy him lunch to ensure he had a good meal.

6. Provided financing

Employers supported employees by loaning employees the money they need to purchase goods and services a person would normally pay for themselves. For example, one employer loaned an employee money to buy a car and let the employee pay back the money over a number of pay periods. Occasionally, when the employee was low on cash, the employer let him skip a payment.

7. Provided goods and services

Employers supported employees by giving employees goods and services a person would normally purchase for themselves. For example, one employer keeps a range of sizes of work boots on hand that employees can use.

8. Sought assistance to help accommodate

Employers supported employees by seeking help outside the workplace to address a work-related barrier. For example, one employer had an employee with autism who was having a hard time getting along with the rest of the staff. The employer brought in someone with expertise in autism to help staff understand the employee's behaviour.

9. Provided peer mentoring

Employers supported employees by providing someone on the work site (usually another employee) who can mentor the person. For example, one employer paired up an employee with no experience with a more experienced staff person and let the new employee shadow the more experienced one for a time.

10. Provided training

Employers supported employees by providing training on the job. For example, one employer hired a person with no experience and skills and trained them to do the job, including providing them with some training in basic life and work skills.

11. Paid decent/liveable wage

Employers supported employees by paying a higher than average wage. For example, one employer with a homeless employee made a conscious effort to pay a decent wage.

12. Was positive and supportive

Employers supported employees by developing good relationships, providing encouragement and working on good communications. For example, one employer makes a practice of being positive to his employees and always makes sure to pass on compliments from customers.

13. Advocated for an employee

Employers supported an employee by helping them with an issue external to work that was creating a barrier to work. For example, one employer helped an employee find safe housing for her and her children and assisted the employee with the move.

Different supports for different barriers

The vast majority of employer supports were put into place to deal with employees' personal barriers. This is not surprising since employers would be less likely to be aware of the external barriers faced by employees.

Employers reported implementing different types of support for different kinds of personal barriers to employment.

Financial barriers

Within the category of financial barriers, the most often mentioned employer support was providing goods and services that an individual would usually purchase for themselves.

Health barriers

Within the category of health barriers, the most often mentioned employer supports were changing business practices to remove a barrier and matching a job to an employee's capacity.

Education and Training barriers

Within the category of education and training barriers, the most often mentioned employer support was being positive and supportive, followed closely by providing training.

Social Inclusion barriers

Within the category of social inclusion barriers, the most often mentioned employer support was being positive and supportive.

Section 6: Current Gaps and Needs, and Ideas for Addressing

In the interviews with 60 employers⁴ and 42 clients, participants were asked to identify gaps in current services available or needs arising from the changing labour market. They were also asked to share their ideas for addressing these gaps and needs. Interestingly, both employers and clients named similar gaps and needs. For this reason and because the project is focused on employers' needs, only the gaps and needs identified by employers are listed here.

Gaps and Needs

The gaps/needs that were identified by employers include the following themes:

Accessing the Labour Market

Issues raised in this area related to difficulties employers experienced finding employees. Employers also raised the issue of their lack of knowledge in accessing specific labour pools, such as older workers and youth. Employer noted that lack of certification for foreign professionals was another barrier they saw affecting employees.

When you have a business you have so little down time because you are always on. You want to have good staff and you don't want to have to worry when you are away that things are being well taken care of

employer participant

Building Knowledge of the Labour Market

Employers did not have a clear sense of how to hire people experiencing barriers to employment. They also expressed frustration with not understanding what people expect from a job. Specifically, employers wanted to gain more knowledge of:

- the benefits of hiring certain groups;
- better hiring techniques (including assessing what qualifications are needed);
- financial incentives for employers, and;
- how to find the skills in employees that the employer needs;

Developing Retention Strategies

Employers did not have a clear sense of how to retain people experiencing barriers to employment. Specifically, employers wanted to gain more knowledge of:

- ensuring employees have basic life skills ("soft" skills);

⁴ A few employers who completed the electronic survey also offered comments on existing gaps and needs. This data was included in the consideration of gaps and needs.

- how to incorporate greater flexibility into the workplace;
- mentoring on the job;
- information on liability issues, and;
- improving communications and relationships with employees;

Ideas for Addressing

Employers, clients and agencies named a number of ideas for addressing gaps and needs. Altogether, approximately 200 suggestions of how to address current gaps and needs were made by the interview participants. A selection of those ideas with the potential to support employers is provided here:

Accessing the Labour Market

- explore how to help small business do a better job of advertising their available jobs to people with barriers to employment, and;
- research how agencies can help more employers become more aware of their job placement programs.

Building Knowledge of the Labour Market

- help employers connect with service providers and employment agencies;
- research feasibility of assisting new immigrants with interviews and first-day(s)-of-work orientation;
- explore barriers built into employers' hiring practices;
- research supports for people transitioning back into the workforce or entering it for the first time;
- help employers determine the accessibility of their entry level jobs;
- develop education tools for employers about the advantages of hiring new Canadians, and;
- raise awareness for employers about the myths, stigma and fears around hiring drug addicted people and people leaving the sex trade.

Developing Retention Strategies

- develop employer awareness about barriers to employment;
- gather information on various barriers and how those barriers may affect a person's work schedule, then raise awareness of how employers can accommodate employee barriers through creative scheduling;
- research child care in the workplace;
- research in-house mentoring programs for employers;
- develop a workshop for employers on literacy and language, and;
- help employers create an open work climate.

The current gaps and needs and the ideas for addressing them were considered in the research design for Phase Two of the project.

Section 7: Analysis

This section analyzes the data provided by participants in the Phase One community consultation. The analysis is intended to help address the question of how best to support employers to hire and retain people with barriers to employment. Each part of this section includes an interpretation of the data and comments on the implications for assisting employers.

Awareness of Barriers to Work

Employers need first to know what barriers people face and understand those barriers.

Employers interviewed in Phase I mentioned, on average, nine barriers each. Clients mentioned on average 18 barriers each. The different averages suggest that employers are not as aware as clients of the range of issues that can create a barrier to work. This is hardly surprising, since clients are the ones experiencing the barriers first hand. Indeed, the tone of conversations with employer made it clear that employers tended to be more aware of employee's behaviours than they were of the barrier causing the behaviour. For example, a number of employers mentioned having hired an employee, the employee showing up for a few days to a few weeks, and then disappearing and not contacting the employer again. The employers reported on the behaviour of disappearing but had no sense of the barrier that caused the disappearance (which could range from child care issues, health-related appointments, transportation issues, stress at re-entering the workforce to dealing with an addiction).

So what?

In order for employers to successfully hire and retain people experiencing barriers to employment, employers may need to know more about the existence of a variety of barriers to work. They also need information about what supports and services in the community may help them hire and retain people experiencing barriers. However, employers also have to be mindful of privacy laws which limit the kinds of personal information they can ask of employees or job applicants.

Possible solutions include:

- Awareness-raising interventions for employers regarding the nature of barriers to employment, and;
- Suggestions for proactive employer interventions that respect employees' privacy while creating a climate in which employees do not feel that quitting a job is the only solution to the barriers they are facing.

Not One But Many Barriers

The Phase I data suggests that clients are facing complex, interrelated and compounding barriers. 100% of clients mentioned barriers in at least two of the personal categories and 50% of clients mentioned barriers in all four personal categories. It is not the case, therefore, that participants were struggling to get into the work force simply because they were short on cash and their phone had been cut off or because they were missing one critical training course but were otherwise completely prepared to enter the workforce. The way that participants reported barriers showed that they were coping with multiple barriers on different fronts. For example, a person recovering from a debilitating injury might also be struggling with financial concerns (because of having to be out of work) and may be at risk of losing their home as a result.

She could have managed the mountain if somebody could have got the damned foothills out of the way. It's the little things that keep coming up first that are so difficult.

community service provider,
referring to a client
experiencing barriers to
employment.

Half of all participants in the community consultation mentioned external barriers to employment alongside personal barriers. While external barriers were reported less often by participants than personal barriers, they represent a significant portion of the barriers mentioned. A factor to keep in mind is that many of the personal barriers that were reported could have their root cause or have been exacerbated originally by external barriers. For example, if a youth at risk was in foster care and did not receive adequate supports growing up, that person may experience greater personal hurdles to entering the workforce as an adult. While the adult issues might be considered personal barriers, they would have been created in part by external challenges within the foster care system. While the information gathered in Phase I is not sufficient to make any conclusions on this front, it's worth keeping in mind not only that the personal barriers are complex and interrelated but that there may also be a complex relationship with a person's external barriers.

So what?

Employers need to be aware that the issues their employees face that become evident in the work place may be only the "tip of the iceberg" and that long-term satisfactory resolutions to these barriers may be a matter of considerable challenge and frustration for their employees. While keeping in mind their employee's right to privacy, employers may find it more effective to discuss a potential support with their employee rather than simply implement a support that addresses the apparent need but which may not address hidden, "off work" needs.

Possible solutions include:

- Solutions that lead to resolving multiple barriers.

The "Soft" Barriers – Social Inclusion

Social Inclusion barriers may be termed "soft" barriers. They are barriers that indicate a gap in a person's social development or inclusion into mainstream Canadian culture. 90% of all participants mentioned Social Inclusion barriers.

Barrier Category	% of all participants mentioning
Social Inclusion	90%
Education and Training	83%
Financial	73%
Health	72%
Rules and Practices	50%
Resources/Support	27%

So what?

The fact that participants in the community consultation mentioned social inclusion barriers more than any other kind of barrier has several implications for the kinds of supports employers may need to implement in order to address these types of barriers.

Employers may need to consider longer timelines when putting in place a support to address a social inclusion barrier. Many of the social inclusion barriers seem to involve a relationship component that has been missing for an individual. For example, a person who has grown up in a family where none of the adult role models have ever worked may not feel well grounded in Canadian work culture.

We think the actual path from 'I am ready to do something new' to 'I am healed and moving on,' even with all sorts of luck, is probably ten years long and they have to travel most of that path by themselves.

community service provider,
speaking about the path from
leaving a dysfunctional lifestyle to
being securely rooted in
mainstream society

Social Inclusion barriers, however, go far deeper than simply understanding work place culture. They include missing the relational supports that would help an individual know how to put in place and maintain the social structures that adults are expected to have. Because the skills and competencies to put these social structures in place are largely developed in relationship, it may be that they require supportive relationships for an individual to gain these skills as an adult.

This argument is supported by the observations of one service provider in the community consultation who pointed out that, because people are expected to be part of mainstream society, it is embarrassing for individuals to admit that they don't know how to speak appropriately to co-workers or how to set up a bank account or to have pointed out that their level of hygiene is socially unacceptable. As a result, people will tend to deny they need help in this area and resist blatant attempts to address their apparent social shortcomings.

The service provider commented that the best way, in his experience, to effectively help a person gain social competency is within a supportive relationship that exists for another purpose (such as within the context of a work training program).

Employers may find, therefore, that social inclusion barriers are easiest to address within the context of a supportive relationship. Because relationships take time to develop, supports for inclusion barriers may take longer to implement.

Possible solutions include:

- Support employers to develop social inclusion supports in the work place;
- Building communications skills for employers, and;
- Building relationship skills for employers.

The Silo Effect

Employers participating in the community consultation were asked to explain what supports already existed for their employees experiencing barriers to employment. They were asked to consider a number of sources of support, including community service providing agencies, themselves as employers, the individual experiencing the barrier, the individual's family and community and government.

Employers mentioned on average five supports they had put in place for every two supports the agency put in place and one support the individual had put in place. The support of an employee's family and community and of government was mentioned very infrequently by employers. This result is not surprising given that employers were reflecting on barriers and supports within their workplace and many of the employers who took part in the community consultation had hired clients directly from agencies' employment programs. However, there was still a large gap between how many supports an employer mentioned that they put in place and how many supports the agency through which they hired put in place.

Employers – average of mentioned supports from various sources	
Agencies	2
Employer	5
Individual	1
Family & Community	0
Government	0

By way of contrast, on average clients mentioned four supports an agency had put in place for them for every three supports they had put in place for themselves, and every two supports their employer had put in place for them. Clients, in other words, had a more rounded sense than employers of the range of supports operating in the community to assist them to overcome their employment barriers.

Clients – average of mentioned supports from various sources	
Agencies	4
Employer	2
Individual	3
Family & Community	1
Government	1

So what?

These results suggest the possibility that employers are not very aware of the range of supports available in the community to assist them to hire and retain people experiencing barriers to employment. The employer community may experience a kind of "silo" effect where employers are well aware of the services provided by the business community but are not well connected to the wider community and to the supports that the wider community has to offer. This

tentative finding is supported by anecdotal evidence from the community consultation, in which employers reported, for example, knowing of only “one or two” employment agencies in BC’s Capital Region and expressing the sentiment that they would like to access more resources for their employees but did not know what services existed and where to find them.

With respect to government supports, the community consultation results suggest that government programs may be geared more to the individual experiencing barriers to employment directly and less to employers hiring and retaining such individuals.

Possible solutions include:

- Building awareness for employers of the services of existing community service providing agencies and other community supports.

Harder to Keep Work than to Find it

Barriers to employment in the community consultation interviews were analysed within a framework of five different stages of employment. These are:

- Pre-employment (an individual is not ready for work but is getting ready);
- Job search (an individual is looking for work);
- On the job (the individual is working);
- Future planning (the individual is ready to move ahead in their career)
- All (the barrier mentioned affects all stages of employment)

On the job barriers to employment were mentioned by employers more than barriers at any other stage. This is not surprising considering that the employers interviewed had more knowledge of barriers experienced by employees while on the job than before they had gotten the job. However, clients also mentioned more barriers on-the-job than barriers for any other stage of employment.

It's tough for me. I am still looking for a permanent job. The tough part about that is you can't spend the time looking for work because you are working and if you don't you don't have any money.

client participant

So what?

Considering clients were asked to talk about both their experiences getting work and keeping work, the fact that more on-the-job barriers were mentioned by clients than pre-employment and job search barriers may be meaningful. It may be the

case that, in the current job climate, people experiencing barriers to employment are able to get work but are still having a hard time keeping work. This finding is anecdotally supported by the comments of service providing agencies in the community consultation interviews. Service providers noted that, for some clients, they saw a pattern of clients moving in and out of jobs and struggling to keep a given job over the long term.

Of all the existing supports named by all participants, the greatest number mentioned were for on-the-job barriers. This fact coupled with the fact that the most barriers mentioned were on-the-job barriers may mean that there is a gap

between the existing available supports for individuals experiencing barriers to employment to keep work and the existing need. Employers may therefore wish to consider putting more energy into supports that will help them retain current employees than into strategies for recruitment of new employees.

Possible solutions include:

- Focusing on retention issues more than recruitment, and;
- Developing employer awareness of existing agency supports for on-the-job issues in the first two to three months.

Who is Helping... and At What Point?

Within the five stages of employment readiness listed above, participants in the community consultation interviews mentioned that support for employment barriers at each of those stages came primarily from different sources. In terms of dealing with pre-employment and job search barriers to employment, community service providing agencies were mentioned most often as providing supports to help overcome barriers at those stages. Once on the job, however, employers were the primary source of support for assisting employees to overcome barriers.

So what?

The data suggests that different groups in the community play a role in addressing barriers to employment at different point along an individual’s path. Given this, employers may need to consider how they can enlist a broader range of groups in supporting employees experiencing on-going barriers on the job. For example, in addition to increasing their awareness of services provided by agencies (discussed above), employers may wish to explore strategies that encourage employees to take a more active role in naming and creating the supports they need, drawing in employees’ family and friends, and communicating with government about the needs employers are seeing for supports within the work place.

Possible solutions include:

- Generating solutions for employers that address employees as part of the support system instead of just focusing on what employers can do. (e.g. tips for employees on the job to increase their odds of retaining work), and;
- Exploring the potential for agencies, employee’s friends and family, government, and other community groups to provide employers/employees with more on the job supports.

Primary and secondary sources of support for each stage of employment		
Stage	Primary Support	Secondary Support
Pre-employment	Agencies	Government
Job search	Agencies	Employers
On the job	Employers	Agencies/ Individuals
Future planning	Individuals	Agencies
All	Agencies	Individuals

Who is Responsible for Addressing Barriers?

In the community consultation interviews, less than half of employers interviewed (47%) mentioned both personal and external barriers to employment. By contrast, 88% of clients mentioned experiencing barriers that were both personal and external.

Moreover, of the 47% of employers mentioning both external and personal barriers in their interviews, these employers, on average, named nine personal barriers for every one external barrier. By contrast, of the 88% of clients mentioning both personal and external barriers, these clients, on average, named 12 personal barriers for every 5 external barriers.

Note: in terms of interpreting the data, it is important at this point to remind the reader that the designations "personal" and "external" are ones that have been imposed on the data by the researcher and do not necessarily reflect the perspective of the individuals interviewed.

So what?

These results suggest that employers are much less aware than clients that, first of all, clients simply face external barriers to employment over which they have no control. This finding is not surprising given that clients naturally have a much more intimate knowledge of their life circumstances than would employers. However, even where employers are aware that both personal and external barriers exist, they named many more barriers that might be considered the responsibility of the individual than something outside an individual's control.

These findings suggest that an area of tension may exist between clients and employers and suggests that clients may, to a greater extent than employers, see themselves as disempowered by factors outside their control. The difference is important because if employers (and this was not explored in the community consultation) feel that individuals should be able to address personal barriers on their own, they may be less willing to implement supports to assist individuals to overcome their barriers.

Possible solutions include:

- Building awareness with employers regarding systemic external issues faced by clients;
- Helping employers explore how their own rules and practices may unintentionally create barriers to employment, and;
- Developing strategies in which employers can be advocates for their employees facing barriers to help address external barriers.

How to Support Employees with Barriers

Of the 1,000 existing supports for barriers to employment that were mentioned by participants in the community consultation, over 350 were supports put in place by employers. Of these, the vast majority were put into place to deal with personal barriers. This is not surprising since employers would be less likely to be able to be aware of the external barriers faced by employees. Of the employer supports mentioned for both personal and external barriers, however, the main support named was that employers were positive and supportive.

Top 3 types of support offered by employers	
Type of employer support	% of all employer supports mentioned
was positive and supportive	26%
changed business practices to remove barrier	21%
matched job to employee's capacity	10%

The second and third most frequently mentioned types of employer support were changing business practices to remove a barrier and matching a job to an employee's capacity. These two supports differ in that the first does not change what is expected of an individual in a job but changes the practices surrounding that job (such as removing the requirement to undergo a formal interview before getting the job, for example). The second adjusts the job itself to what the individual is capable of (such as taking a simplified piece of a more complex job to provide work for someone with a serious mental health issue, for example).

So what?

These findings suggest, first, that simply being encouraging, open and positive with employees who are struggling with barriers is in itself a quite significant support. While this employer support may seem somewhat "soft," its prevalence may reflect the importance of employers being willing to create a positive relationship with their employees. Given that social inclusion barriers are the largest category of any barriers named by all participants and that social inclusion barriers tend to be helped by positive relationships, being a positive and supportive employer may be a very powerful support to individuals struggling with social inclusion barriers.

The next two most common employer supports were changing their business practices to remove barriers and matching a job to an employee's capacity. This suggests that, for employers wishing to better accommodate employees with barriers, examining how the structures of their business may be creating barriers and evaluating the opportunities to shift those structures and job descriptions may be a fruitful exercise.

Possible solutions include:

- Building relationship skills for employers, and;
- Exploring employers' business practices and job descriptions to remove barriers and create opportunities.

Section 8: Conclusion

The Labour Market Research Design project was undertaken as a first phase of the Labour Market Dialogues, a research project to explore how employers in BC's Capital Region could be better supported to hire and retain people experiencing barriers to employment.

The research design phase of the project was intended to:

1. determine the interest level in research on how employers can be better supported to hire and retain people experiencing barriers to employment, and;
2. design a research methodology for carrying out research on how employers can be better supported to hire and retain people experiencing barriers to employment.

Interest in Research

Phase I of the project showed that all community stakeholders consulted (employers, service providing agencies and people experiencing barriers to employment) had a high level of interest in seeing research into this topic undertaken.

Employers reported wanting to meet with other employers, service providers and people experiencing barriers to employment as their preferred means of participating in the research. Clients preferred doing a second interview to participating in a group meeting. However, more than half of the clients interviewed were open to taking part in a group meeting and, of those willing to be part of a group meeting, clients overwhelmingly preferred to meet with other clients, employers and service providers altogether.

Phase II of the Labour Market Dialogues has consequently been designed so as to engage community stakeholders in group settings and one-on-one interviews throughout.

Research Design

Phase I of the project showed that research into supports for employers to hire and retain people experiencing barriers to employment should look at topics which will:

1. help employers access the labour market;
2. build employer knowledge of the labour market, and;
3. help employers develop retention strategies.

Analysis of the community consultation interviews suggest that this last point, developing retention strategies, is a more critical issue in the community right now than recruitment.

In particular, the research in Phase II should address the following needs:

- raising employer awareness of the issues around barriers;

- assisting employers to develop their skills with respect to employees experiencing barriers to employment, and;
- developing effective work place interventions for employees experiencing barriers to employment.

•
 Within awareness raising, the key areas where employers need support are:

- awareness of the existence of barriers to employment, particularly social inclusion barriers and external barriers;
- awareness of the multi-faceted and complex nature of barriers to employment;
- awareness of existing services and programs addressing barriers, and;
- awareness of how the employer may unintentionally be creating barriers in their rules and practices as a business.

Within developing skills, the key areas where employers need support are:

- developing their communication skills, and;
- developing their relationship skills.

Within developing effective work place interventions, the key areas where employers need support are:

- creating an open, positive climate for employees experiencing barriers;
- developing interventions that focus on social inclusion barriers;
- developing interventions that address the multi-faceted and complex nature of barriers;
- developing interventions that include the employee and the broader community;
- advocating on behalf of employees experiencing barriers to employment, and;
- removing unintentional barriers created by work place rules and practices.

In March 2007, Community Council staff, in collaboration with partners in the community, began Phase II of the Labour Market Dialogues. The goal of Phase II is to research topics and potential solutions raised by participants in Phase I with the potential to support employers to hire and retain people experiencing barriers to employment. The research will incorporate the knowledge gained in Phase I of how best to engage stakeholders in the community and of the existing barriers, supports, and gaps that people are experiencing in trying to access the labour market. The findings will be shared widely in the community.

Appendix A: Employer Interview Guide



Community Council Labour Market Research Design Employer Interview Guide

Introduction

- introduce topic and why the interviewee was referred to the project
- note two parts to interview:
 - explore interviewee's experience hiring employees with barriers to employment
 - explore interviewee's thoughts on participating in further phase of research
- go over Project Summary with interviewee
- interviewee and interviewer sign both copies of Release of Information form and each keep a copy
- check in

Part 1

Question 1: Tell me about your business. What kind of business do you run?

- How many employees?
- How many entry level positions?
- How many years in business?
- Rate of turnover? Attitude toward cost of employee replacement?
- How many outlets?
- Ownership model?
- HR Department?
- What business associations belong to?

Question 2A: Tell me about your experience hiring people with persistent barriers to employment.

- What has been the best thing about this experience for you?
- What supports assisted you with hiring people with barriers to employment? (community services, government programs or incentives, other)
- Do you think there were particular things you did to assist the process? (how you looked for employees, how you conducted the interview, how you oriented the employees)
- Do you think there were particular things the employee did to assist the process?

Question 2B: Tell me about your experience retaining people with barriers to employment

- Agency help? (mentoring, follow up, check in)
- Employer help? (first day of work, orientation, training, benefits, wages, communication, flexibility, support)
- Employee help? (attitudes they brought? Special skills or knowledge) – What did the employee bring to the job that was an asset for you? What about their background was particularly helpful?
- Family and Community help? (support, flexibility, adjusting to new schedule)
- Government support? (programs)

Question 3A: If you could set up the process of hiring people with barriers to employment to work ideally, what would that look like?

- Agency supports (what more could they have done? Done differently?)
- Employer supports (what more could you have done? Done differently?)
- Employee supports (what more could they have done? Done differently?)
- Family and Community supports (what more could they have done? Done differently?)
- Government supports (what more could they have done? Done differently?)

Question 3B: What would be ideal for you in your in terms of retaining employees who have struggled to enter the workforce over the long term?

- Agency supports (what more could they do? Do differently?)
- Employer supports (what more could you do? Do differently?)
- Employee supports (what more could they have done? Done differently?)
- Family and Community supports (what more could they do? Do differently?)
- Government supports (what more could they do? Do differently?)

Part 2

- next phase of project - hoping to have more conversations with service agencies, employers and people looking for work about how to support employers to help people get into job market
- second part of this interview - are you interested in taking part, your thoughts on how to involve people

Question 1: Would you be interested in being part of this further research, depending on the form it takes? If your answer is no, that's no problem.

- Would it make a difference if child care costs were covered or if the event was child friendly?
- Would the time of day or week make a difference to you? If yes, what times of the day or week would be better for you?

Question 2: How would be you prefer to be involved in further research?

- Come to a meeting with other people to discuss these issues?
- Meet one-on-one for a further in-depth interview?
- Review and respond in writing to written materials?

- If yes to meetings, would you prefer
 - A one-of meeting?
 - A short series (1-3 meetings)?
 - A longer series (4-6 meetings)?

- If yes to meetings, would you be comfortable
 - Participating in a group exercise to explore these issues?
 - Giving feedback on people's ideas?
 - Hearing feedback on your own ideas?
 - Standing up at a meeting and talking about your experiences?

- If yes to a meeting, what would be better for you
 - A small group (6-8 people), or
 - A large group (8-15 people)?

 - A meeting of only people who have had similar experiences to you, or
 - A meeting with people with barriers to employment there as well, or
 - A meeting with service providers there as well, or
 - A meeting with employers, service providers and people with barriers to employment?

- If yes to a meeting, is there a specific topic you would be particularly interested in? What is that topic? _____

- If yes to a one-on-one interview, is there a specific topic you would be particularly interested in giving more feedback on? What is that topic?

- If yes to responding in writing, would you be willing to
 - Review a list of things job seekers think would help people enter the job market, or
 - Review a list provided by a service provider?
 - Write a short story about your experiences?
 - Be willing to share your story with the media?

- If yes to responding in writing, is there a specific topic you would be particularly interested in giving more feedback on? What is that topic?

Question 4: In your opinion, of the options listed above:

- what is the best way to gather information from employers?
- what is the best way to provide information to employers?
- What is the best way to build better community relationships?

Question 5: Do you think there are better ways to engage employers than the ones mentioned above? If yes, what are they?

- In terms of gathering information from employers?
- In terms of providing information to employers?
- In terms of building better community relationships?

Appendix B: Client Interview Guide



Community Council Labour Market Research Design Client Interview Guide

Introduction

- introduce topic and why the interviewee was referred to the project
- note two parts to interview
 - explore interviewee's experience entering the workforce
 - explore interviewee's thoughts on participating in further phase of research
- go over Project Summary with interviewee
- interviewee and interviewer sign both copies of Release of Information form and each keep a copy
- check in

Part 1

Question 1A: Tell me about your job. What do you do?

- What's the best thing about your job?
- Does that thing help you get to or through work on tough days?
- How is that different than other jobs you've held in the past?
- What are some other things that make you want to come to work?

Question 1B: How did you find your job? Walk me through the experience (agency program, job posting, preparing to work, interview).

- What was the most positive thing about the process of finding this job?
- How was this experience different from other job search experiences?
- How was it moving from not working to working? What made that easier?

Question 2A: What were some of the things that helped you get this job?

- Agency help? (resume, job coaching, etc)
- Employer help? (job posting, interview, first day of work)
- Things you did to help yourself? (ideas you had about improving your chances, choices, decisions you made, resources you found on your own)
- Family and Community help? (reaction, clothing, transportation, child care, support)
- Government help?(programs – earnings exemptions, child care subsidy, EI, clothing grants, etc)

Question 2B: What are some of the things that have helped you as you have stayed with this job?

- What's different this time with this job?
- Agency help? (mentoring, follow up, check in)
- Employer help? (first day of work, orientation, training, benefits, wages, communication, flexibility, support)
- Things you are doing differently? (internal changes)
- Family and Community help? (support, flexibility, adjusting to new schedule)
- Government support? (programs – earnings exemptions, child care subsidy, extended benefits)

Question 3A: If you could set up the job search process to work ideally for someone who was in the same place you were at the start of your job search, what would that look like?

- Agency supports (what more could they have done? Done differently?)
- Employer supports (what more could they have done? Done differently?)
- Things you would have done? Done differently?
- Family and Community supports (what more could they have done? Done differently?)
- Government supports (what more could they have done? Done differently?)

Question 3B: What would be ideal for you in your current job in terms of making this job really work for you?

- Agency supports (what more could they do? Do differently?)
- Employer supports (what more could they do? Do differently?)
- What more could you do? Do differently?
- Family and Community supports (what more could they do? Do differently?)
- Government supports (what more could they do? Do differently?)

Question 3C: What is your dream for yourself, in terms of work, looking down the road?

- What do you have in place right now that is helping you toward that dream?
- What are some areas that you can see you will need to work on or get help with before you can realize your dreams? Who will help you?

Part 2 - Questionnaire

- next phase of project - hoping to have more conversations with service agencies, employers and people looking for work about how to support employers to help people get into job market
- second part of this interview - are you interested in taking part, your thoughts on how to involve people
- we will be offering an honorarium again as well as help with the cost of transportation to participants

Question 1: Would you be interested in being part of this further research, depending on the form it takes? If your answer is no, that's no problem.

- Would it make a difference if child care costs were covered or if the event was child friendly?
- Would the time of day or week make a difference to you? If yes, what times of the day or week would be better for you?

Question 2: How would you prefer to be involved in further research?

- Come to a meeting with other people to discuss these issues?
- Meet one-on-one for a further in-depth interview?
- Review and respond in writing to written materials?

- If yes to meetings, would you be comfortable
 - Participating in a group exercise to explore these issues?
 - Giving feedback on people's ideas?
 - Hearing feedback on your own ideas?
 - Standing up at a meeting and talking about your experiences?
- If yes to a meeting, what would be better for you
 - A small group (6-8 people), or
 - A large group (8-15 people)?

 - A meeting of only people who have had similar experiences to you, or
 - A meeting with employers there as well, or
 - A meeting with service providers there as well, or
 - A meeting with employers, service providers and past job seekers?
- If yes to a meeting, is there a specific topic you would be particularly interested in? What is that topic?

- If yes to a one-on-one interview, is there a specific topic you would be particularly interested in giving more feedback on? What is that topic?

- If yes to responding in writing, would you be willing to
 - Review a list of things employers think would help people enter the job market, or
 - Review a list provided by a service provider?

 - Write a short story about your experiences?
 - Be willing to share your story with the media?
- If yes to responding in writing, is there a specific topic you would be particularly interested in giving more feedback on? What is that topic?

Appendix C: Online Survey Questionnaire

Introduction

The Community Council is researching how employers can be supported to hire and retain people who have struggled to enter the workforce and who may have barriers to employment. These barriers can include things like childcare, illiteracy, English fluency, homelessness, basic work skills, and poverty, among others.

Many people who face barriers to employment want and are able to work. This goal of this project is to explore how employers can be better supported to hire and retain people with barriers to employment.

The goal of the survey is to collect data on:

1. Employers' ex of hiring people with barriers to employment;
2. How to best engage employers in this research

Questions

1. Have you ever hired someone with barriers to employment (ranging from childcare, illiteracy, English fluency, homelessness, basic work skills, poverty, etc)

- Yes
- No

2. If you have hired people that have barriers to employment:

- What were the challenges you faced?
- What has been the most positive thing about this experience?

3. How would you prefer to be involved?

- Come to a meeting with other people to discuss these issues?
- Meet one-on-one with the researcher?
- Review and respond in writing to written materials?
- Other (please specify)

4. If yes to a meeting, would you like to be involved by attending (check all that apply):

- A one-off meeting?
- A short series (1-3 meetings)?
- A longer series (4-6 meeting)?
- Other (please specify)

5. If yes to a meeting, what would be better for you? (check all that apply)

- A small group (6-8 people)?
- A large group (8-15 people)?
- Other (please specify)

6. If yes to a meeting, who would you like to see be part of the meeting? (check all that apply)

Only employers?

- Employers and people with barriers to employment?
- Employers and community social service providers?
- Employers, community social service providers and people with barriers to employment?
- Other individuals or groups you would like to see involved? (please specify)

7. If yes to a meeting, is there a specific topic or topics you would be particularly interested in? (please specify)

8. If yes to a one-on-one interview with the researcher, is there a specific topic or topics you would be particularly interested in? (please specify)

9. If YES to responding in writing to written materials, would you be willing to (check all that apply):

- Review a list of things job seekers think would help people enter the job market?
- Review a list provided by a service provider?
- Write a short story about your experiences?
- Share your story with the media?
- Other (please specify)

10. If YES to responding in writing to written materials, is there a specific topic or topics you would be particularly interested in? (please specify)

11. Given the options outlined above, would you be interested in being part of this research?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe (please specify)

12. Would you be willing to do a 45 minute interview with a researcher about your experiences hiring and retaining people with barriers to employment?

- Yes (Please ensure you fill out your contact information, below)
- No

13. What industry are you in?

14. Approximately how many employees (full time and part time) do you have?:

- No employees
- Less than 5
- 5 to 50
- More than 50

15. Approximately how many employees (full time and part time) are entry level?:

- None
- 1 -20%

- 20 - 40%
- 40 - 60%
- 60 - 80%
- 80 - 100%

16. Are you part of any business associations? (Check all that apply)

- Better Business Bureau
- Chamber of Commerce
- Value Based Business Network
- Women's Business Network
- VIATeC
- BC Human Resource Management Association
- Other (please specify)