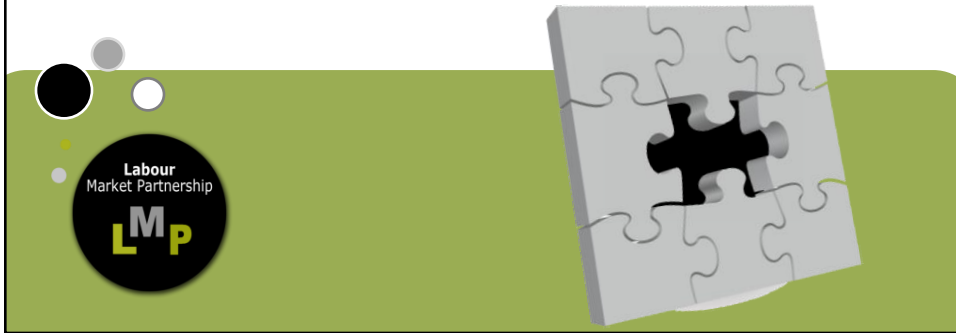


# Strategies for Engaging Young Single Males and Experienced Workers with Low Literacy Skills

LMP Webinar Series  
December 9, 2013

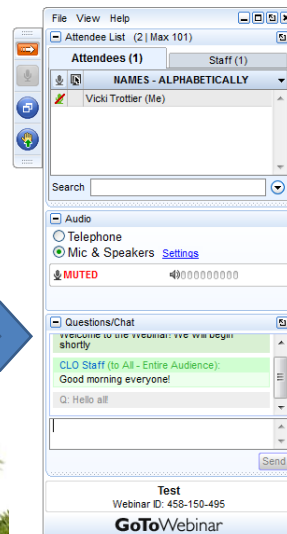


www.llsc.on.ca



## Welcome!

- Who's online?
- This webinar is being recorded
- Slides decks = emailed out
- Questions at end
- Please post comments in text chat



## About this project



- Literacy Link South Central Labour Market Partnership (LMP) project
- 7 Literacy Networks in Ontario
- 10 Strategies that were “designed to bring lower-skilled and marginalized clients closer to employment”
- An Employment Ontario project, funded by the Ontario government



## About this webinar

Literacy and the Young Single Male  
(Anne Marie Curtin)



Targeted Employment Support for Job Seekers  
with Low Literacy Skills (Summer Burton)



Webinar hosting and technical assistance  
(Community of Literacy of Ontario)

Questions





# Literacy and the Young Single Male

Anne Marie Curtin

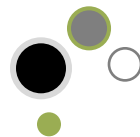


## Literacy and the Young Single Male

### What was the need?

(Since 2007) Increasing number of single males between 18 and 29 who are accessing Ontario Works (OW)

Est. 2000 young men in London Ontario on OW have been on the caseload for longer than 12 months and/or who have less than Gr. 12 education

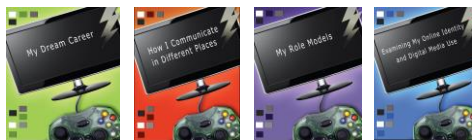


## The Lost Boys



## Why LLSC?

- Fits the work of a literacy network
- Identified as a potential literacy gap in our community
- Builds on 2012-2013 project, “Targeted Literacy Programming for Young Single Males on Ontario Works”



## Target Population

- Youth (18- 29 years of age)
- Male
- London area

When possible:

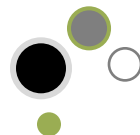
- On Ontario Works
- Single (no partner, no children)



## Who was involved?

### **Advisory Group**

- Employment counsellor (Goodwill, Fanshawe College)
- Youth employment counsellor (YOU)
- OW caseworker (City of London)
- Executive Director (LLSC)
- Executive Director (Workforce Planning and Development Board)
- Literacy Practitioner (London District Catholic School Board)
- Consultant “of lived experiences” (London ON)



## Challenge

### Taming the Beast



## Assumptions

- Males leave home earlier than females
- No child, less motivation
- Comfort on OW
- Generational poverty
- Many have criminal records
- Technology is causing lack of socialization

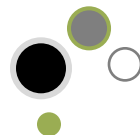
## Assumptions continued...

- Not interested in education
- Employers don't hire youth
- Employers hire females first
- Media and labour market reports cause youth apathy



## Challenge the Assumptions

- Resources and literature
- Employment service providers
- Literacy and Basic Skills programs
- Focus groups (youth engaged in programs) and individual interviews
- Conversations at the street level (not engaged)



## Digital Natives vs. Digital Immigrant

Marc Prensky 2001

Students absorb and process information differently than those that have gone before them.

“Our students have changed radically. Today’s students are no longer the people our educational system was designed to teach.”

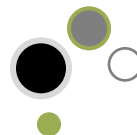


## Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants II

Marc Prensky 2001

Youth today have short attention spans, but only for old ways of thinking.

“As a result of their experiences Digital Natives crave interactivity—an immediate response to their each and every action. Traditional schooling provides very little of this compared to the rest of their world.”





## What if? Technology in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Classroom

(Ontario Public School Board 2009)

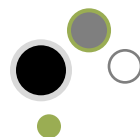
“Many students feel, however, that when they come into school they have to “power down” to fit into an environment that offers fewer options for learning than are available in the life they live outside of the school.”



## Good Video Games and Good Learning

(James Paul Gee 2007)

“Lots of young people pay lots of money to engage in an activity that is hard, long, and complex. As an educator, I realized that this was just the problem our schools face — how do you get someone to learn something long, hard, and complex, and yet still enjoy it? “



## High School Dropouts Returning to School

(Melanie Raymond for Statistics Canada 2008)

“Young men cited wanting to work as a reason to leave school more often than young women.”

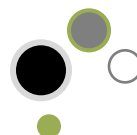
Young men with children are more inclined to work than to return to their education.



## Clearer Sightlines to Employment

What Works for Job –Seekers with Low Educational Attainment  
(ESO, 2012)

“An ‘education-first’ approach is often far too removed from employment for the vast majority of adults for whom high school was not the ‘right fit’ in the first place.”



## “Canadian youth facing unprecedented challenges finding quality employment” (CIBC 2013)

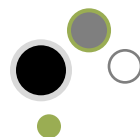
“...one in five youth aged 15-24 not working today has never held a job ...Statistics show that youth who gain work experience and receive on the job training while studying are much more likely to find suitable and sustainable employment.”




## Our Voice: Literacy + OW

Best Practices for Serving Ontario Works Clients (CLO, 2013)


- Find ways to provide positive reinforcement EVERY day
- Make this positive reinforcement INTENTIONAL and PLANNED
- Structure learning activities so that OW clients feel an ongoing sense of accomplishment and moving forward.



## **Ah ha! Employment Services Survey**

- Youth are not aware of the education and skills they need for the jobs they are pursuing
  - Unsure if having children is a variable for motivation
  - Very little participation by this target population in literacy programs
  - Large percentage of male youth participants have criminal records - "The more desperate the circumstances the less likely 'right and wrong' will enter into the equation."
  - Need mentors
  - Easily discouraged with the long road to education and careers
- 

## **Ah ha! Literacy Program Survey**

- Many youth attended LBS programs because they were required to through Ontario Works, then leave after required visit
  - Inability to see literacy as part of their future success
  - Having children or not didn't influence engagement or performance
  - Inability to communicate for the purposes of job searching
- 

## **Ah ha! Youth Focus Groups**

- Must see that school is useful
- Need to earn money before going back to school
- “Returning to high school takes too long.”
- Left school because it was dull and uninteresting
- Being on OW is depressing (they hide it)

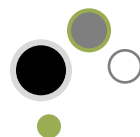
Who can you count on?



## **Ah ha! Word on the Street**

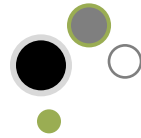
Over one week in October met with est. 80 youth

- the Food Bank
- Daily Meals (provided by a church)
- the parking lot at Labour Ready (temp agency) during the early morning registration period
- the men’s shelter
- outside the library



## **Ah ha! Word on the Street**

- Youth are unaware of the literacy and employment services that are available to them.
- They only do things that their friends will do.
- They lost interest in school but are interested in learning through a hands-on approach.
- The youth are not easily approachable and are not very trusting of people they don't know.
- These youth have low self-esteem and feel like "just a number" especially since they might belong to several "systems."



## **Going Forward**

Meet them where they are



Bring them to us



## Going Forward

### Degrees of Cultural Awareness

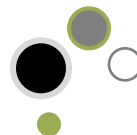
My way is the only way.  
I know their way but my way is best.  
My way and their way.  
Our way.



Meet them where they are

### Marketing and Outreach

- Messages
- Strategic placement (Kijiji posting, web postings, promote cross posting through EO system)
- Videos for Youth Service Providers (why literacy?) and Youth (need to show strong connections between LBS and work)
- Peer “Ambassadors” - Successful LBS learners doing outreach (also provides leadership development for ambassadors)



Meet them where they are

## Program Design

- Gamification
- Real Voices
- Learn and Earn (co-op)
- Mentorship



Meet them where they are

## Program Design

- Learning environment
- Process
- Expectations
- Facilitation





## Anticipated Challenge

The Beast will become wild again.



## Anticipated Challenge

Engaging the non-engaged.





### Target Population: Experienced Job Seekers with Low Literacy Skills

Our target client base have a solid history of working but are being passed over for employment as a result of the minimum OSSD or GED standards on job applications. Often in crisis, these job seekers need to return to work quickly rather than waiting the years it may take to achieve either of those certifications.






## Advisory Committee

Nokee Kwe Native Education Centre  
 Goodwill Industries Career Centre  
 Employment Sector Council of London Middlesex  
 ATN Access for Persons with Disabilities  
 Hutton House  
 London Employment Help Centre




## Take One



**Original Hypothesis:**

Working with Employment Services job developers and Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) practitioners, we will explore ways to connect lower-skilled literacy learners with the Wage Subsidies offered through Employment Services to more quickly connect them with meaningful, long-term employment.

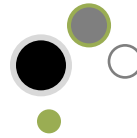


## Take Two



### Revised Project Outline:

Working with Employment Services job developers and Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) practitioners, we will explore ways to bring unemployed low-literacy learners with a history of working, but who have a significant amount of time to put in to do before they could attain a GED equivalency, to employment more quickly.



## The Face-to-Face Approach

With a new focus on research and relationship building, project staff began a face-to-face outreach campaign. Initial conversations:

- Centre for Lifelong Learning
- March of Dimes
- Goodwill Industries Career Centre



## LBS Client Profile Survey

Number of LBS agencies that responded to the survey – 9

Estimated percentage of LBS learners within those 9 agencies that could be considered experienced workers with low literacy skills – 42.8%

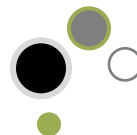
Estimated percentage of those above learners who are currently connected to Employment Services as well as to their LBS program – 29.22%




## LBS Client Profile Survey

Work backgrounds:

- Factory (100%)
- Construction (77.8%)
- Food Service (77.8%)
- Manufacturing (55.6%)
- The Farm / Agriculture, Mechanical / Automotive, and Customer Service fields were all represented as well (44.4%)






## LBS Client Profile Survey

Barriers:


- Other factors are a priority to resolve before accessing ES (ex. shelter, mental health, etc.) – 77.8%
- The client doesn't want to go through the various stages of ES - they “just want a job” – 77.8%
- The client doesn't think they can handle LBS & ES at the same time – 66.7%
- The client is waiting to complete their upgrading before accessing ES – 55.6%



## LBS Client Profile Survey

Brainstorming support solutions:

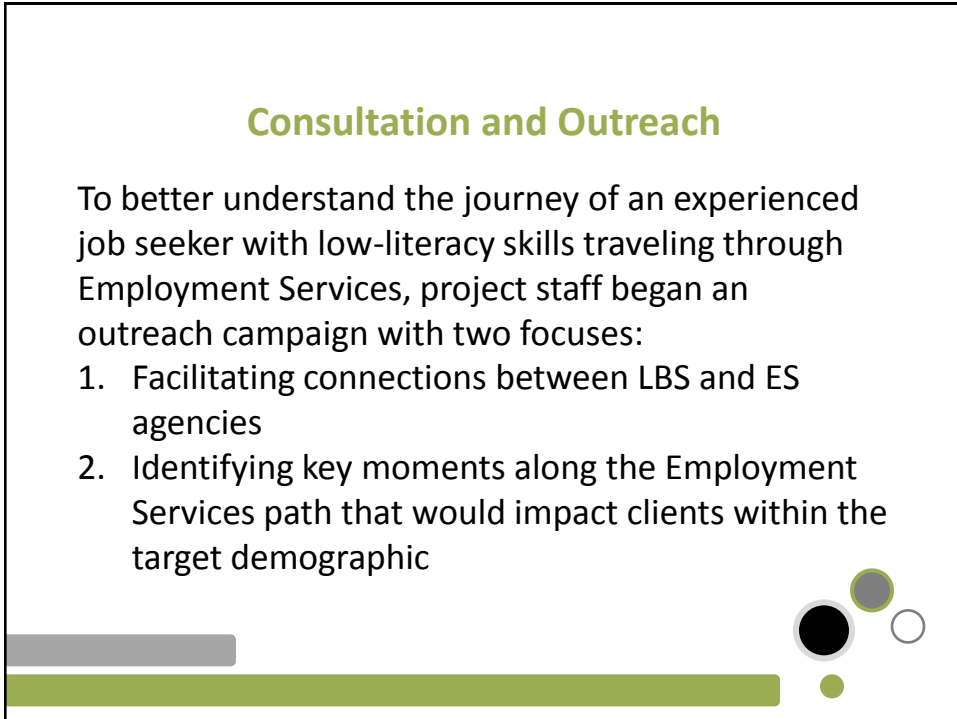
- Flexible programming options
- Flexible hours
- Early identification of Literacy issues
- Increasing partnerships between ES & LBS
- Cross-training LBS clients on ES processes



## Consultation and Outreach

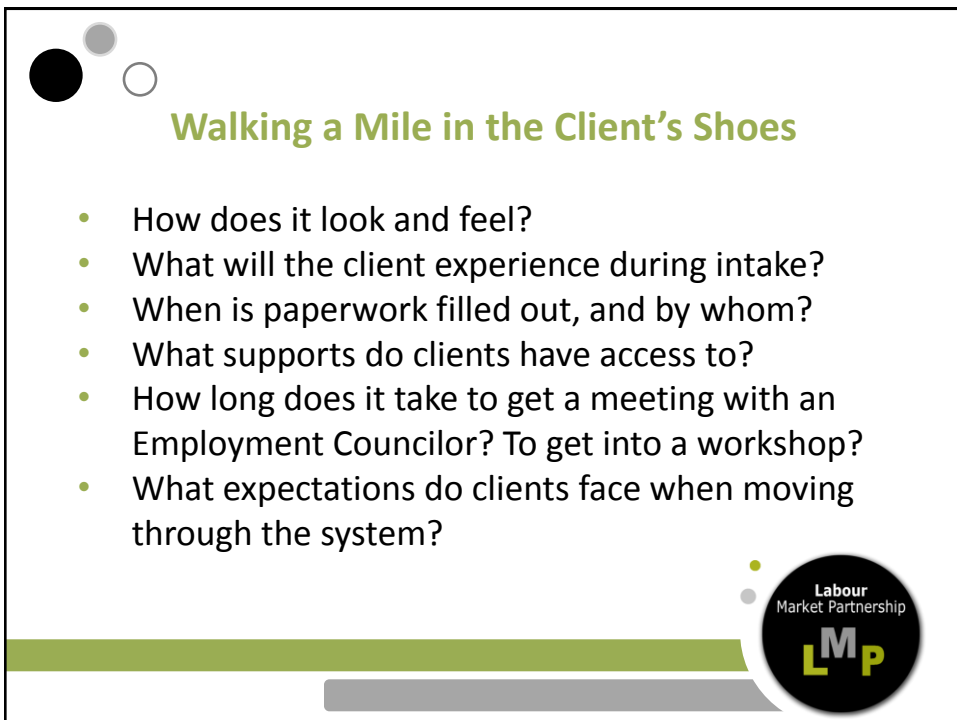
To better understand the journey of an experienced job seeker with low-literacy skills traveling through Employment Services, project staff began an outreach campaign with two focuses:

1. Facilitating connections between LBS and ES agencies
2. Identifying key moments along the Employment Services path that would impact clients within the target demographic



## Walking a Mile in the Client's Shoes

- How does it look and feel?
- What will the client experience during intake?
- When is paperwork filled out, and by whom?
- What supports do clients have access to?
- How long does it take to get a meeting with an Employment Councilor? To get into a workshop?
- What expectations do clients face when moving through the system?



## How Can We Support ES Right Now?

- Clarifying the differences between Literacy Programs in our area
- Distributing LLSC's Information and Referral Chart
- Offering programming information and advice by phone and email



## 14 Outreach Meetings

Nadine Lalonde, Job Developer at Collège Boréal

Goodwill intake specialists Julie Watson and Tricia Andary

Susan Crane, Job Developer at the London Employment Help Centre


Alison Sims, Career Counsellor/Facilitator at Nokee Kwe

John Griffiths, the Director of Workforce Development, Employment and Training Services, Goodwill Industries, Ontario Great Lakes

Brian Malott, Resource & Information Officer at Community Employment Services – Fanshawe


Katya Noel, Employment Counsellor at Collège Boréal





## 14 Outreach Meetings

Jerry Colwell, Director of Client Services Pathways Skill Development & Placement Centre	Connie Hoffman - Intake Worker & Administrative Assistant, ATN Access for Persons with Disabilities
Grant Whatford, Employment Services Manager, London Training Centre	Louissa Regier, Employment Services Program Manager at the Ontario March of Dimes (via teleconference)
Crystal Taylor, Administrative Support at Youth Opportunities Unlimited	Kim Neable, Intake Specialist, Hutton House Learning Centre
Lisa Rusal, Client Services Manager, WIL Employment Connections	



## 3 Group Intake Sessions

1. Goodwill Employment Centre's Community Training Service group intake session for OW clients
2. Goodwill Employment Centre's "Discover Your Options" group intake session for EOS clients
3. The London Training Centre Orientation Session for new ES clients



## Key Learning

1. The client experience /path is different from Employment Agency to Employment Agency
2. The process to complete paperwork is different from agency to agency, even those reporting to the same funder
3. There are gaps in understanding at both ES and LBS agencies regarding what is available to support clients in the target demographic at each other's agencies



## Key Learning

4. ES and LBS staff are open to partnering not only to share program information, but to look at new ways of supporting this client demographic
5. Co-located LBS and ES programs feel they are better equipped to support experienced job seekers with low literacy skills
6. There is a need for a shortened turn-around time for clients in our target demographic



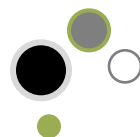
## Recommendations


1. Create an Information and Referral Chart containing information about ES agencies
2. Supply referral support tools to and cultivate a stronger relationship with wider range of organizations outside the EO umbrella
3. An unbiased ES organization assisting with referral questions from Literacy and other agencies



## Recommendations


4. Clear Writing workshops and editing support for Employment Agencies
5. Training for Literacy learners that outlines the ES experience. *Kick it up a notch*: similar workshops for a broader audience in our target demographic, outlining ES, LBS, and other support organization experiences





## Recommendations


6. Continued outreach sessions. *Kick it up a notch:* the creation of a Literacy and Employment Advocate position
7. Coordinating program support and classroom hours of operation. *Kick it up a notch:* offer an incentive program for learners to remain in Literacy programming even if they obtain employment



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## Project Outcomes

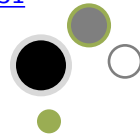
- an increase in understanding of the opportunities, supports, challenges and changes required to best support this client group
- a strengthening of relationships and understanding between Employment Services and Literacy Service providers, focused specifically on how clients in this target group are supported by Employment Services



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## LMP Webinar Series

1. **Strategies for Engaging Young Single Males and Experienced Workers with Low Literacy Skills** (December 9, 2013)
2. **Mastering the Puzzle Pieces – Relationship Building** (Dec. 11, 2013)  
Register: <https://www4.gotomeeting.com/register/118999143>
3. **Industry and Employment Programs: Working Together in Dufferin County** (December 13, 2013) Register:  
<https://www4.gotomeeting.com/register/576647135>
4. **Labour Adjustment and Literacy Activities** (December 16, 2013)  
Register: <https://www4.gotomeeting.com/register/330377063>
5. **LBS Practitioners in Linking Learners to Employment** (Dec. 17, 2013)  
Register: <https://www4.gotomeeting.com/register/445230631>



## Conclusion

- Thank you
- Evaluation
- Copy of Presentation
- For more information on this project, please contact us at:

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[www.llsc.on.ca](http://www.llsc.on.ca)

