

STRATEGIES FOR LEARNER RECRUITMENT

There is a critical need to share learner recruitment challenges, strategies and new approaches amongst Ontario's Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) programs. This is due to the negative impacts of COVID-19 on community programming, changing trends in marketing, the impact of new media as well as other factors. The ability of LBS programs to successfully recruit learners is critical to support communities and adults seeking to upgrade their skills.

To assist LBS agencies with this important issue, Community Literacy of Ontario (CLO) created a research report and three accompanying factsheets.

CLO's Learner Recruitment Factsheets cover the following topics:

01

Learner
Recruitment
Challenges

02

Learner
Recruitment
Strategies

03

New Approaches
to Learner
Recruitment

“

Know your target
for marketing and
tailor the messaging
to them. Don't use a
scatter-gun approach.”

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INTRODUCTION

CLO's research uncovered many successful approaches to learner recruitment. We are sharing the highlights of some of these approaches in this factsheet, but be sure to also download our [Learner Recruitment Challenges and Strategies Report](#) to learn many more!

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Community-based LBS educators indicated that recruiting learners via referrals from and linkages with community agencies and partners was a very effective strategy. Agencies were actively engaged in linking with a diverse variety of community partners. The most common sources of referrals were Ontario Works, the Ontario Disability Support Program and Employment Services.

“**Building community partnerships with potential referral agencies has historically been the best performing strategy for us.**”
(Quote from an LBS Educator)

SOCIAL MEDIA

Recruiting learners via social media is a very popular strategy with community-based LBS agencies. Overwhelmingly, practitioners mentioned that posting marketing information on their agency's Facebook page is the most effective. Many find that Facebook is the social media platform most commonly used by learners. Other platforms such as Instagram and Twitter are also used.



EXISTING CAMPAIGNS

Some literacy educators build learner recruitment strategies around materials or campaigns created by others. Examples of this include: Community Literacy of Ontario's [Literacy: Why it Matters](#), ABC Life Literacy Canada's [Family Literacy Day](#) and UNESCO's [International Literacy Day](#).

WORD OF MOUTH

Despite technology and the many changes to our society, in the world of adult literacy, educators noted that word of mouth is still one of the most effective methods of recruiting learners. For vulnerable and marginalized groups, a referral from a trusted friend, family member or staff person often is the most powerful tool of all.

“**More than half of our referrals come from learners. This was true in the past, and is still true now.**”
(Quote from an LBS Educator)

LEARNER STORIES

In a world full of marketing noise, profiling learner stories and pictures was identified by literacy educators as an impactful strategy. Learner stories are shared with community stakeholders in many different ways, including via social media, websites, presentations, promotional material, local media and more.

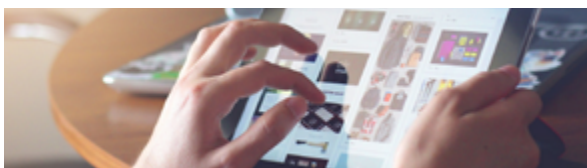


Our community definitely responds best when they hear stories of how literacy has improved the lives of our learners.”

(Quote from an LBS Educator)

DIGITAL LITERACY

Given the ever-increasing importance of digital literacy, promoting LBS programming in this area works well as a recruitment strategy. Whether for adult upgrading, accessing community services, helping children with their schooling or accessing critical information about health, employment and income support, it's a digital world. During the pandemic, most LBS agencies have further developed their digital literacy programming, and these programs are popular. The programming offered is very diverse – everything from teaching basic computer classes, to learning how to use cell phones and tablets, to using Google tools, and much, much more.



SHORT, SPECIFIC LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Offering short, specific, targeted training opportunities to learners or to the community at large was an excellent recruitment strategy for some LBS agencies. These types of learning opportunities could be focused on a variety of learner goals such as apprenticeship, employment, or independence.



We had not been not getting referrals from Ontario Works since the pandemic started. We improved the situation by making strong efforts to educate OW staff about the value of literacy and how LBS fits into their life stabilization framework.”

(Quote from an LBS Educator)

REDUCING STIGMA & REBRANDING

Some literacy educators mentioned the importance of rebranding the word literacy and LBS terminology in order to reduce the stigma. This involved using skills based terms to promote their programs and services. For example, adult learning, essential skills development, adult upgrading, and lifelong learning are all terms that are used.



We find that using general LBS terms does not get as much traction as using workforce or skills based terms.”

(Quote from an LBS Educator)

WORKFORCE-RELATED CURRICULUM

LBS agencies noted that promoting the opportunity for learners to upgrade their skills using workforce-related curriculum on topics linked to their future career interests is a helpful recruitment strategy. Curriculum examples include: Digital literacy, Landscaping and Grounds Maintenance, Kitchen Helper, Clerical Assistant, Warehouse Worker, Exploring Construction Trades and much more.



TRADITIONAL MEDIA

Some LBS agencies still use traditional media to recruit learners and this is typically done in concert with other approaches. With some learners, print media and radio still work well. The use of traditional media included linking with the local radio station and/or newspaper to promote learner stories, LBS events and other agency news. In a few cases, flyers were used in grocery stores, and at other local organizations and businesses.

“We send press releases with photos and learner success stories to local newspapers. The newspaper shares our stories verbatim so it’s a very easy way to get coverage. It’s a win-win for both us and the newspaper.”
(Quote from an LBS Educator)

CONCLUSION

The **Learner Recruitment Factsheets** were researched and written by Community Literacy of Ontario. CLO is a provincial network of community-based Literacy and Basic Skills agencies. We are located in Barrie, Ontario. You can learn more about our organization by visiting our [website](#) and by following us on Facebook and Twitter.

We sincerely hope that the strategies, promising practices & overview of the challenges shared in our three **Learner Recruitment Factsheets** will offer ideas and inspiration to help your LBS program to recruit and engage learners. Our factsheets can be freely downloaded from CLO’s website at: <https://www.communityliteracyofontario.ca>

As well, in 2021/2022, CLO conducted province-wide research and wrote a report called **Learner Recruitment Challenges and Strategies**. Download our report to learn more about this important topic: www.communityliteracyofontario.ca/wp/wp-content/uploads/Learner-Recruitment-Report-March-2022-FINAL.pdf

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