



Better Jobs Ontario (BJO) – Community of Practice (CoP) Committee – 2022-2023 Committee Summary and Performance Measure Roll-Up Data

June 13, 2023

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Overview of the Better Jobs Ontario - Community of Practice Group

This committee was comprised of learning networks participating in the Better Jobs Ontario initiative through the Skills for Success project. 3 meetings took place between November 2022 and February 2023 with a wrap-up meeting for all network initiatives at the end of March 2023.

The goal of the committee was to

- create a communication strategy for regional networks and Provincial Support Organizations for Literacy (PSOL) to ensure transparency, collaboration and avoid duplication
- share tools and best practices when working with stakeholders (for example, Ontario Works and Employment Services)
- create a common roll-up strategy to respond to the performance measures for the Better Jobs Ontario deliverable

Regional networks varied in their prior experience delivering centralized assessment services ahead of this deliverable. Networks with a background in centralized assessment provided support, guidance and resources to assist partner networks. A variety of local models of centralized assessment were adopted to serve individual communities.

Meeting 1 – November 10, 2022

During this meeting the group reviewed and discussed

- the specific deliverables attached to this initiative
- group communication
- assessment tools and models of centralized assessment processes
- a workplan to achieve the deliverable performance measures

Meeting 2 – December 8, 2022

During this meeting the group reviewed and discussed

- follow-up action items from meeting 1
- client and partner tracking (draft for discussion)
- individual network updates on progress, opportunities and challenges
- review of the workplan

Meeting 3 – February 9, 2023

During this meeting the group reviewed and discussed

- follow-up action items from meeting 2
- finalized client/partner tracking items
- best practices for sharing report results with referral partners
- individual network updates
- marketing strategies and resources created
- supporting service delivery pilots in year 2

Collation of Network Activity

During the Community of Practice meetings we discussed whether there was interest and the capacity to create common tracking tools for both client and community partner engagement.

The group agreed and this was discussed at each meeting. ABEA used the prompts agreed on to create an online roll-up survey to capture network activity for the Better Jobs Ontario initiative.

This was sent to all participating networks early in April 2023.

Summary of Roll-Up Data from Learning Networks of Ontario that Participated

Number of Network Responses	12
Number of Participating Networks	15
Response Rate	80%

Number of Better Jobs Ontario Assessments Completed

11 Networks (1 network was not contracted to complete assessments in Year 1)
606 assessments completed
650 assessments contracted
93% completion rate

Performance Measures

% of referral and next step stakeholders that participate in the initiative activities indicate that the processes and services are relevant to their clients and meet their needs.

96% (median average - 9 answered)

% of learners, referral and next step stakeholders that participate in the initiative activities indicate that the assessments meet their needs.

95% (median average – 9 answered)

Total # of Partners Engaged – 266 (12 answered)

This could be referral partners or partners that networks contacted, offered outreach, meetings attended to discuss the initiative, etc. Partners could include Employment Services and Ontario Works but also other community partners, LBS service providers, etc.

% of Partners that Want to Continue a Referral Relationship for BJO Assessments

96% (median average – 11 answered)

% of Clients that Would Benefit from LBS to Prepare for BJO or Other Goals

73% (median average - 10 answered)

Tools Used to Complete Assessments

- a. Educational Planning Assessment Tool (EPAT) – developed by ABEA with tasks from Measure Up (SkillPlan)
- b. Customized Educational Interviews (5)
- c. [Ontario Skills Inventory Tool \(OSIT\)](#) - CESBA
- d. Locally developed task-based assessment (2)
- e. Locally developed assessments for Skills for Success
- f. Skills for Success self-assessments (2)
- g. [Skills Marker](#) – College Sector Committee (2)
- h. [Northstar Digital Literacy Assessment](#)
- i. [Upskill for Work](#) – ABC Life Literacy Canada
- j. [Communications and Math Employment Readiness Assessment](#) (CAMERA) – PTP
- k. [MTML Screening Tool](#)

Key Opportunities

For Clients

- a. Offer support to clients to ensure they are prepared and have the support they need for their training goal – prevent them from falling through the cracks
- b. Help clients be more successful in their BJO training and lead to better employment outcomes
- c. Develop wrap-around case management for clients
- d. Coordinate support for clients
- e. Help clients better understand the career paths they currently have available to them and the upskilling required for paths they may prefer
- f. Provide 1:1 coaching support throughout the application process and training program if client enters LBS – clients would have a consistent point of contact through the process

- g. Use screening tools help determine if a client would benefit from a literacy assessment and used by a broader range of EO clients

For Service Coordination with Community Partners

- a. Increase referral relationships with community partners (2)
- b. Increase referrals to LBS and the continuum of adult education programs in our community
- c. Build reciprocal relationships with Employment Services (ES) to support their clients
- d. Create closer connections with a greater variety and number of community partners
- e. Streamline processes
- f. Increase efficiency for ES providers - assessments and related upskilling are meant to ensure clients are prepared and ready to complete their BJO applications, reducing the amount of assistance and the length of time it may take to work with a client on a BJO application

For Networks

- a. Renew connections with all ES agencies – build on established relationships, increased opportunity for awareness and marketing
- b. Provide assessment and educational counselling services to Ontario Works
- c. Build new relationships with community partners, particularly Employment Services
- d. Include more ES agencies in projects
- e. Engage partners in the research portion of the project
- f. Bring assessment into the conversation with partners
- g. Promote centralized assessment using positive feedback we've received
- h. Build capacity for LBS service providers to become more integrated into workforce programs
- i. Increase awareness of BJO as an option
- j. Build potential partnerships for the upcoming year

- k. Work with partners to understand the reasons for low uptake to BJO and formulate a strategy that supports better integration
- l. Become a resource/expert for external stakeholders
- m. Explore varied models of centralized assessment that work in individual communities
- n. Showcase LBS to other MLITSD programs
- o. Learn about other tools used by other networks
- p. Evaluate centralized assessment processes
- q. Increase our understanding of the needs and barriers of clients interesting in upgrading their skills to successfully participate in BJO

For LBS Service Providers

- a. Lay the foundation for local BJO pilots in 23-24
- b. Work collaboratively to develop assessment tools used to determine the skills needs of learners/clients potentially interested in BJO
- c. Work collaboratively with community partners to refine protocols
- d. Increase understanding of LBS which will hopefully result in increased integration of programs
- e. Find new learners
- f. Training opportunity for LBS service providers to better understand the employment landscape (like National Occupation Classification codes and essential skills profiles)
- g. Increase program capacity to administer assessments

Key Challenges

BJO Program

- a. Low uptake for BJO (3)
- b. Not a lot of knowledge for the BJO program (2)
- c. No marketing (2)
- d. BJO is often not considered the right fit for clients - in particular those working with service providers who are trying to ensure they find the fastest route to jobs

- e. Length of training allowed for BJO – up to one year – limits the kind of training/occupation a client can pursue through BJO
- f. Funding provided is often not enough for clients to live on
- g. Significant changes and the approval process have made BJO less attractive than Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP) or a personal loan
- h. Rural areas don't have as many applicants because people need to move to attend training or have the digital skills to take online training or even awareness of their options

Community Partners and Service Coordination

- a. May create competing targets between employment placement/retention and training goals
- b. Very low referrals from Ontario Works (OW) - many clients have been referred into Employment Services (ES) and those that haven't been referred typically have multiple barriers to education and employment (focused on basic needs)
- c. Need consistent messaging that will engage clients
- d. The fact that the Nov-March timeframe for this initiative didn't coincide with the start dates for BJO programming made it that much more difficult to get referrals from community partners to pilot the assessment
- e. Extraordinary effort needed to engage meaningfully with ES in their changing landscape

Networks

- a. Time to develop the tools, conduct the training with participating LBS service providers, conduct outreach and then implement was a mammoth task in such a short amount of time (noted several times)
- b. Not enough time to properly design and implement a well thought out service especially when there were so many other moving parts in the overall employment / training system
- c. Timelines too short to capture impacts

- d. Convincing clients to buy in to the assessment process and upgrading— many do not want to take the time, regardless of the benefit they might garner
- e. Lack of clarity about future plans for this service make it difficult to invest fully
- f. BJO assessments had to take place at the same time as the business planning process and the year-end adjustments/push to fulfill contractual obligations
- g. Many networks are also involved in Employment Service transformation
- h. Not enough time to generate referrals
- i. Lack of referrals from traditional Employment Service (ES) agencies due to reported very low uptake of BJO applications and turmoil within the sector due to staff turnover and Service System Manager (SSM) transition (2)
- j. Had to meet with stakeholders numerous times before they understood the intent of the assessments
- k. Difficulty engaging Employment Services in the consultation and testing process

LBS Service Providers

- a. Preparation required for service providers to refer - service providers need to have a strong understanding of the pilot process, all partners involved, how to work with all clients, and the BJO program itself - the additional time required to prepare for the pilot could serve as an additional barrier to service providers participating in the pilot
- b. Programs were also overwhelmed by everything that was going on in LBS in the last 6 months of the year, including the increased demands on their time from support organizations (like resource development), and requests from regional networks to provide feedback and input into the work they were doing on the 4 Skills for Success initiatives (2)

About Partners

Who Networks Engaged

- a. Ontario Works
- b. Employment Services

- c. Ontario Employment Assisted Services
- d. LBS as referral partner and for assessment delivery
- e. Other community partners (varied)
- f. Apprenticeship programs and unions
- g. Networking groups
- h. Local BJO steering committees
- i. Service System Manager
- j. Various departments at the community college
- k. Workforce planning board (advisory role)

How They Were Engaged

- a. Invited an ES manager to participate on the project team – this was critical
- b. Sent out formal calls for ES to join as pilot partners for the assessment service
- c. Interviewed ES practitioners responsible for BJO to get a frontline perspective
- d. Leveraged LBS agencies that also have Employment Services
- e. Hosted 1:1 meetings (in-person and virtual)
- f. Attended community networking groups
- g. Hosted workshops to consult with community partners on the process and best way to offer the service
- h. Posted in newsletters, social media feeds, on websites, etc.
- i. Utilized LBS service providers normal outreach/communication to raise awareness of the service
- j. Engaged clients by offering info sessions to potential BJO clients through referral partners
- k. Attended ES BJO info sessions
- l. Designed and shared a benefits document with ES – benefits for clients and for practitioners
- m. Interviewed trainers

Engagement/Outreach Models/Comments

- a. Clients – Partnered with ES to offer an outreach presentation to each cohort of clients (for example, within the Power of Possible workshop series) – then we'd follow-up with any interested clients for an assessment
- b. The number of partners engaged is not the number of meetings and attempts to contact – this is significantly higher.

“We feel this has strengthened our relationships.”

“These were all existing partners, but resulted in new ways of partnering.”

Feedback from an LBS practitioner - "I really like how it takes each skill, names the level necessary for the position and example tasks and then names the learner's level. I found it very interesting the digital skills that would be helpful."

“Each of the partners we engaged have a goal of employment for their clients. BJO was not well known/promoted because of its limitations such as financial support for 1 year only. Many clients were receptive to BJO during the time of the assessment, but faced barriers such as housing insecurity, childcare, or skills upgrading needs before they were ready for BJO and employment. The report they received after the assessment outlined the steps needed to become employment ready, including determining BJO eligibility if that met their need.”

“We believe this service will certainly identify individuals who would have difficulty achieving success in a post-secondary environment. We also believe that there is a strong reason to use this skills check-in/educational interview with those seeking employment as we have integrated information and tools related to soft skills. In working with a skilled trades union, we were able to encourage reflection and support individuals with next steps.”

About Clients – Key Observations

- a. Overall, learners responded positively to the assessment and appreciated having next steps identified
- b. They were able to identify their strengths and the skills they need to develop to prepare for training
- c. Many clients were potential Better Jobs Ontario (BJO) clients
- d. Many clients were 'early stage' pre-BJO clients – meaning they weren't aware of BJO or seriously contemplating BJO but saw the assessments as away to gain information about themselves and a chance to talk about next steps in training
- e. Client demographics were varied and client training and employment goals were varied
- f. LBS was recommended even for those with a Grade 12 diploma – this confirms that Grade 12 does not always indicate readiness for training
- g. Clients had varying degrees of educational barriers – for example, some clients had their Grade 12 diploma but lacked digital or math skills, others had clear training goals but didn't fit within BJO
- h. Clients appreciated getting more information and also having a chance to discuss and think about their existing learning challenges, job pathways and training needs

“Many clients considering a BJO application have been out of formal education for many years and may have skill gaps that they need to succeed in the training they've chosen. This service provides clients with current information about their skills and the specific skills they'll need during the training. This allows us to create a pathway plan with them so they have the support they need to succeed.”

One participant responded, “The Interviewer was very informative and helpful. She walked me through the Better Job Ontario opportunities.”

“The majority said the assessment and the corresponding feedback from the practitioners was very helpful.”

"[We'll] be reviewing and taking into consideration all feedback/suggestions from both learners and practitioners on the assessment tool prior to Phase 2."

"... some clients were quite hesitant about the length of the assessment (up to 2 hours), but this became less of an issue during the assessment. Clients were relaxed and engaged because of the nature and variety of the activities. The new piece (Skills for Success assessment tool) received a lot of praise for how it was conducted and what the client learned while doing it. Clients were very interested in seeing how their skills compared to the skills needed for their chosen career goal."

Feedback from Clients

"The assessment was uplifting and made me think about what I'm good at."

"This helped with thinking about next steps for college."

"It has been very interesting and helpful, learning about the different opportunities and trades."

"I gained a better understanding of what I need to work on to find a job. It is overwhelming to change careers and start looking for positions when I don't know what skills I have and need."

"It put my strengths into perspective and what I need to do regarding training."

"It helped me to understand some of the tasks required of me in the position I am seeking."

"Identified my skills I already possess and where my areas need to improve."

"I can take a direct route to retrain and that makes planning how to take my steps forward easier."