Accessible Services for Specialized Populations in One-stop Employment Models: Learning from Other Jurisdictions


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1. Introduction

The BC Centre for Employment Excellence presented a webinar on May 21, 2014 on Accessibility for Specialized Populations in One-stop Employment Centres: Best Practices from the UK, US and Australia. This reference document provides additional information and resources to accompany the free webinar, and is organized as follows after the introduction:

- Key features of the one-stop systems in the United States, Australia and United Kingdom
- Best practices along the client pathway to employment
- Things that make a difference—factors that influence service delivery and the client experience

In April of 2012, the route to finding a job in British Columbia (BC) changed significantly. A range of provincial and federal employment programs intended to serve job seekers was replaced with an integrated approach designed to provide consistent services across all communities in the province. This new program, the Employment Program of BC (EPBC), provides comprehensive employment services and supports to all unemployed British Columbians regardless of whether they are receiving EI benefits, attempting to move from income assistance to paid employment, lacking work experience or language skills, or are facing employment barriers such as physical, emotional, health or cultural challenges. The model represents a “one-stop” comprehensive approach to serving all unemployed British Columbians looking for work.

EPBC means that job seekers, regardless of their unique needs, can access services through the one umbrella — EPBC — delivered in 85 WorkBC Employment Service Centres found in 73 catchment areas across the province. The program is being delivered under contract with 47 lead organizations that have formed partnerships with other local service providers (sub-contractors) for the delivery of specialized programming and services.

The Ministry has identified eight “specialized populations” that will be provided additional supports as necessary to gain an attachment to the labour market: aboriginal peoples, Francophones, immigrants, persons with disabilities, rural and remote, multi-barriered, survivors of violence or abuse, and youth. These populations are the focus for the Ministry’s Expert Advisory Panel on Specialized Populations (Panel).¹

The program has been in place for almost two years, time enough to work out many early implementation issues and to recognize areas that need improvement. Of particular interest are ways to ensure that these job seekers experience the system as one that is accessible, that welcomes them, where they engage and feel optimistic proceeding along a pathway to work.

As we will see in this report, accessibility is not just about physical accommodations, but also includes ensuring that services are accessible, that information is presented in forms and language easily

¹ The Expert Advisory Panel on Specialized Populations provides information and advice to the Ministry to assist in ensuring the EPBC meets the employment service needs of Specialized Populations.
understandable, and that those with employment barriers are made to feel welcome and treated in an inclusive, respectful manner.

Accessibility in this report includes the following:

- Physical facilities and resources, including assistive technology, which facilitates access.
- Services and programs relevant to needs and goals.
- Marketing and messaging that is inclusive, offers opportunity for feedback and a variety of access options.
- Treatment that is respectful and helpful.

Concurrent with the Panel’s concern are those expressed by providers, as stated in the report, “Skill Requirements for BC Career Development Practitioners: An Exploratory Study,” commissioned by the BC Centre for Employment Excellence. Practitioners surveyed for this study indicate that they lack familiarity with specialized populations and that increased capacity is needed to support their practice. They wanted to learn about the kinds of things that would help improve their practice.

There is interest in learning the following kinds of things to support disadvantaged job seekers:

- Ways to ensure that job seekers are aware of employment supports.
- Ways to improve collaboration and cooperation both at the level of inter-agency partnerships and with community based organizations.
- Strategies to level the playing field, that is, to develop more universal standards of service delivery across the province.
- Practices to support the development of organizational capacity, that is, things like leadership and business practices.

The Expert Advisory Panel on Specialized Populations approached the Centre expressing interest in gaining information about best practices on accessibility for specialized populations. The BC Centre for Employment Excellence has responded to this request with the following synthesis of best practices from jurisdictions taking the same, or similar, one-stop approach to employment services. Specifically these are the United States, United Kingdom and Australia — all jurisdictions with a longer history of one-stop approaches than BC. What is the experience for clients and providers within these frameworks? What are the factors most likely to spell “success,” in terms of supporting specialized populations to find and retain jobs?

It is hoped that this survey of best practices from other jurisdictions can be used as a resource for providers and practitioners in the EPBC. Moreover, it will facilitate dialogue in WorkBC Centres about innovative approaches and to identify, adapt or create strategies appropriate for their Centre to improve access for job seekers in specialized populations.
Methodology

This study of best practices began with the thought of learning what is working well in other jurisdictions through contacting high performing sites and asking them what worked best for them. It quickly became apparent that this approach was beyond the scope of this study. For one thing, contacting high performing sites presupposes that such a list exists. In the end we were fortunate to discover that a recent study in Australia did exactly that and were able to draw liberally from that learning but otherwise, this survey relied upon existing lists of best practices thoughtfully compiled by advocacy organizations, upon evaluations of various initiatives and systems, and the views of various researchers, providers, and provider associations.

Preliminary Research

A round of preliminary research included discussions to clarify questions of interest with members of the Corporate Program Advisory Committee (CPAC) Working Group on Specialized Populations, and the Expert Advisory Panel on Specialized Populations as well as the following:

- Discussions to clarify EPBC service delivery process with two EPBC career practitioners.
- Review of literature and website information regarding the EPBC system elements.

Other elements included in this study were a literature review, key informant interviews and a scan of case studies illustrating innovative practices, backed by evidence.

Literature Review

Given that the one-stop approach has been in existence since the late 1990s, there is a large volume of available data. Many informative studies were conducted in the earlier years, that is, in the early 2000s but, given the volume, this scan has tended to focus on more recent research and commentary. This has included the following:

- Literature pertinent to understanding the rationale and evolution of one-stop employment service systems per se, and systems specific to the three jurisdictions of interest for this report.
- Studies evaluating various initiatives and what worked best about those approaches for job seekers.
- A review of works compiling best practices.
- A review of information provided on government and professional association websites.

Key Informant Interviews

Interviewees were recruited using a snowball approach. The literature includes several evaluative studies conducted by researchers specializing in employment and commissioned by the relevant

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2 Of note is a 347-page document providing a transcript of submissions to a hearing on Innovations and Best Practices under the Workforce Investment Act, held in Washington in 2009. There does not seem to be a summary or other kind of breakouts from these submissions.
government departments. Reasoning that these researchers would lead us to key informants who could speak to policy and program implementation, the initial interviews began with researchers.

In-depth interviews were conducted, by telephone or Skype with the following groups of informants:

- Researchers working with independent research organizations and with government evaluation departments.
- Senior staff with national provider associations.
- Providers responsible for implementing specific initiatives that exemplify good practices or strategies.
- Providers who could speak to one-stop operations.

All key informant interviews were transcribed and coded using HyperResearch, a qualitative data analysis software.
2. One-stop Employment Systems in the United States, United Kingdom and Australia

This section provides an overview of the structural approach taken in the United States, United Kingdom and Australia. Each share broadly similar systems, with in-country variations.

All three systems share the following goals:

- Improving service delivery (easier to access, higher quality).
- Improving outcomes for clients.
- Improving system efficiencies (eliminate silos and fragmentation).
- Supporting social inclusion and workforce participation.
- Providing several levels of support intensity from self-managed to intensive support.

In all countries, the move to a one-stop system was part of responding to citizen pressure to modernize the public service by dismantling existing service “silos,” as well as attending to economic pressures by supporting more people on benefits into work. But there are many differences.

There are differences in the populations and the barriers faced. For example, Australia has a large indigenous population living in a vast remote area. Homelessness is also a major problem in Australia, as is providing services for many refugees. In the United States there are many programs and funding streams particularly targeted to veterans. Many job seekers are African Americans and many are Latinos.

All systems share universal access and a goal of “no back door,” to services. But otherwise, there is considerable variation in what falls under each jurisdiction’s one-stop employment services.

United States: One-stop career centers

One-stop career centres have existed in the United States for nearly 15 years. The 1998 Workforce Investment Act (WIA) mandated that every state integrate services into “One-Stop Centers.” All states were required to provide a range of services that offered a set of core services for all job seekers, complemented by a set of more intensive supports to dislocated workers, low income individuals, and other eligible job seekers who are unable to secure employment without additional programming.

One-stop career centers must be universally accessible, meaning that, depending on need, any individual can access the three service levels offered — core, intensive, and training. Individuals with special needs including those with disabilities, non-English speaking persons, or those who lack computer skills, are to be accommodated so that they can access all services offered for which they are eligible. Services range from basic job search assistance, skills assessments and labour market information to more intensive services such as career planning assistance, case management, counseling, and job search planning. There are also training programs that offer occupational skills
training, on-the-job training, and work experience opportunities available only to job seekers through referrals. There can be outsourcing of more intense supports.

WIA established state and local workforce investment boards (WIBs) as part of the governance structure for programs that form the workforce development system under WIA. There is a strong role for local boards whose membership must comprise business representatives (majority) as well as representatives from education, labour, community based organizations, economic development entities, and all one-stop partners. Although the Act provided substantial flexibility to states, all one-stop career centres must work with the following mandated partners: 

- Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Activities
- Employment Service
- Adult Education
- Postsecondary Vocational Education
- Vocational Rehabilitation
- Welfare-to-Work
- Title V of the Older Americans Act
- Trade Adjustment Assistance
- NAFTA Transitional Adjustment Assistance
- Veterans Employment and Training Programs
- Community Services Block Grant
- Employment and training activities carried out by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
- Unemployment Insurance

A one-stop operator is designated to manage the day-to-day functioning of the local one-stop system. A wide range of organizations and entities, such as postsecondary educational institutions, local Employment Service offices, community-based organizations, private for-profit entities, or government agencies, can be designated as a one-stop operator.

There are performance indicators but they do not specify specialized populations beyond “program participants,” and it is up to individual states to determine the proportion of those that would fall under higher need populations. According to David H. Bradley, a specialist in labour economics, while DOLETA (Department of Labour, Employment and Training Administration) encourages states to serve “at-risk” populations — including those who are low income and have multiple barriers to employment — and to account for the effect that at-risk populations might have on performance outcomes, it is

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ultimately at the discretion of the state to choose the populations it will serve and the adjustments that will be made on the basis of the populations served.4

In reality, although there are many funding streams built into the system to support the “harder to employ,” there remains a large disparity between employment outcomes for those with disabilities and outcomes for those without similar disabilities as evidenced by a study tracking employment outcomes for youth with cognitive disabilities over the eight year period, 2004 to 2011. Looking at both national and state data in the American Community Survey, while both population groups showed declines in employment rates over the period, the mean employment rate for those with cognitive disabilities was 24 per cent compared to 42 per cent for those without.5

Below are two examples of how WIA translates at the state and local level.

How WIA works in New York City

There are 10 one-stop “Workforce1 Career Centers” in New York City (NYC), including some which are smaller “expansion” sites. While operated and staffed primarily by non-profit organizations, such as a Community College, the system is overseen by the NYC Small Business Services, in coordination with the New York State Department of Labor.

Workforce1 Career Centers in NYC offer mainstream job seekers a full array of employment services and access, of course, to the mandated partners.

According to David Berman, Director of Program Management and Policy, NYC Center for Economic Opportunity, the centers themselves provide a light touch intervention, things like basic coaching, access to computers, help with job search, resume preparation, and general orientations for job readiness. There is also access to occupational hard skills training, but this service is only for a small percentage of job seekers. Job seekers with more substantial employment barriers end up in a separate track, serviced by an array of social service agencies and community-based organizations.

New York City has a rich environment of community-based organizations. Those CBOs are really serving a lot of special populations, for example, people with a criminal justice history. We have several agencies that focus just on the needs of young adults. These programs are funded through a range of government and private philanthropic funds.

(David Berman, Director of Program Management and policy, NYC Center for Economic Opportunity)

Job seekers accessing a Workforce1 Career Center who have need for non-vocational as well as more basic job readiness support would be referred to one of these entities.

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How WIA works in WorkSource Skagit (Washington State)\(^6\)

In Washington State, the one-stops are called WorkSource Career Centers and operate much in the same way as those in New York City in the sense that they offer basic employment support for mainstream job seekers, making referrals when appropriate to the mandated partners. Mandated partners are not co-located in the same building but WorkSource is the gateway venue. For example, job seekers with disabilities would likely be referred to Vocational Rehabilitation which, in turn, pays sub-contractors for certain elements like job coaching, supported employment and for diagnostic vocational assessments.

Of note is that, according to Skagit Administrator, Brian K. Humphrey, while any job seeker assessed for support from a particular mandated partner is to be referred to that partner, it is a “loose arrangement.” Humphrey says being mandated is interpreted as "made available or accessible to” and frequently, especially in more rural areas, there is no mandated partner locally situated. In these kinds of cases, making that service available can mean facilitating a phone call or even making information available through a website or brochure. According to Humphrey, “You can contact or get information about the service, but that doesn’t mean you can get the service.”

Of note as well is that the system, including the mandated partners, is not one that addresses non-vocational as well as vocational needs. Non-vocational needs must be met through community-based organizations and there are informal arrangements, such as memorandums of understanding, with several of these.

*For example if the person has a mental health issue, or issues with drug and alcohol — these are things that are more social barriers not our world, so we might refer people to those services. Those community-based providers might also send people to us as well but after they’ve had their concerns, problems and identified issues addressed. Because those kinds of issues — drugs, mental health, domestic violence — those get in the way of their readiness.* (Brian K. Humphrey, Administrator for the Skagit and Island Counties WorkSource One-stop Centers)

The Northwest Workforce Council is the governing board for WorkSource Skagit and the other one-stop career centers in Washington State. According to Humphrey, advocacy organizations on the Council speak to employment service needs for job seekers facing employment barriers.

**Australia: Centrelink/Job Services Australia (JSA)**

Australia began experimenting with contracting out employment services as far back as the 1970s when the government of the day began outsourcing some of the support for specialist “cohorts.” However, the large share of employment services continued to be delivered through the government employment service until the 1990s when the need to address high unemployment levels led to an expansion of private contracting.

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\(^6\) Information provided by Brian K. Humphrey, Administrator for the Skagit and Island Counties WorkSource One-stop Centers.
When it became clear that non-governmental organizations were providing a bigger return on investment, the decision was made to contract out all employment services. The Job Network of private employers was established in 1998 setting the practice of outcome-based contracts that gave providers flexibility to personalize service provision. At its best, the approach stimulated innovation, with case managers able to tailor services to specific participants and come up with a range of effective job support and post-placement measures. Payment by outcomes also focused providers and staff on ways to support job seekers to gain sustained employment rather than “simply managing inputs and program commencements.” However, when it was seen that some providers were manipulating the system by “parking” harder-to-place job seekers, there began a series of further contractual iterations with the most recent occurring in 2008 with the establishment of Job Services Australia (JSA), falling under the jurisdiction of the Department of Employment.

Under JSA, when someone needs income support of any kind, they apply for benefits through an entity called Centrelink. Centrelink delivers a range of government payments and services for a diverse range of clients. If considered eligible, a claim is made and that person is then directed to connect with a non-governmental employment service provider to begin a job search within 48 hours. The job seeker can choose their provider but participation is mandatory: no participation, no benefit.

The job seeker will be assessed as belonging to one of four streams of work readiness.

- **Stream 1** job seekers are those who are considered to be work ready
- **Stream 2** job seekers are those with relatively moderate barriers to employment
- **Stream 3** job seekers are those with relatively significant barriers to employment
- **Stream 4** job seekers are the most disadvantaged job seekers in our community and require integrated, intensive assistance to overcome multiple vocational and non-vocational barriers to employment.

As in EPBC, the streamed approach provides recognition that job seekers experiencing disadvantage require additional services, support, time and flexibility in order to find and maintain employment, especially those in Stream 4. It is understood that specialist providers are able to provide for particular cohorts of job seekers and have significant experience in working with and achieving outcomes for disadvantaged job seekers who fall into the following cohorts:

- Young people
- People experiencing homelessness
- People from diverse language backgrounds

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8. On 18 September 2013 the Department of Education and the Department of Employment was created out of the former Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. (from Australia government website)

Accessible Services for Specialized Populations in One-stop Employment Models: Learning from Other Jurisdictions

- People with mental illness
- People from Indigenous backgrounds, and
- People with a disability.

There are roughly 100 organizations delivering 650 contracts in 116 Employment Service Areas across Australia. Each Employment Service Area will have between two and four providers. In addition to the profit providers, the non-profit sector plays a major role in service delivery rounding out necessary service provision.

It is up to the contracted provider to decide how to organize services to meet client need. For example of four agencies located in an area, three of those might be generalists; one a disability specialist, but the generalist might have as many disability specialists on their staff as the specialist. According to Sally Sinclair, CEO of the National Employment Services Association (NESA), the peak body representing providers in Australia:

> You might have one provider that is a generalist who has someone on their staff who is a disability specialist, but the other provider might have everyone being multi-tasked to work across all streams and all cohorts. Another provider might say, “We work across all cohorts but we have different specialists for different streams.” It’s a real mix. It’s highly innovative.

There is a reason behind contracting with at least two service providers in each Employment service Area, which has to do with ensuring competition. JSA marks two very broad significant departures: 1) the designation of job seekers into four streams of need and, 2) the Star Rating System which has, effectively, put a stop to the practices of “parking” and “creaming.”

The Job Services Australia Star Rating System

The JSA Star Ratings are used by three groups: job seekers to assess comparative performance of providers in their local area; providers to measure their contractual performance, and the government to drive improved performance and allocate business share among providers.

Key Performance Indicators (KPI) currently relate to the proportion of employment outcomes that a provider achieves and the speed at which they are achieved. These measures contribute to a provider’s overall star rating. Without a good star rating, providers are at risk of losing business both from individual job seekers selecting higher rated providers and from the DEEWR business reallocation processes.

The ratings measure the relative performance of providers against two contractual Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) over the most recent three-year period:

- KPI1 Efficiency – the average time taken by providers in comparison with other providers to assist relevant participants into employment.

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10 DEEWR is the acronym for the former Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. It is now just called the Department of Employment.
KPI2 Effectiveness – the proportions of relevant participants for whom placements and outcomes are achieved, including social outcomes for Stream 4 participants.

Using statistical regression analysis, the Star Ratings model calculates a performance score for each site across Australia. From these scores, a national average performance score is calculated. Individual site performance scores are then compared to the national average with one to five stars awarded the site based on the percentage above the national average. For example, five stars would mean the site is 40 per cent or more above the national average.

A third KPI has been progressively introduced into the contract, which relates to engagement with job seekers. This is measured through the speed of contact with the job seeker and at which an Employment Pathway Plan is developed, the detail contained in the plan and the frequency of contact with the job seeker. This KPI does not contribute to star ratings however, it is being considered in future allocations of business.

At this time, according to Sally Sinclair, CEO of NESA, the Star Rating system acts like a floating benchmark. Midway through the contracting period the agency’s performance is assessed and if the performance rating is low, their business can be reallocated. 

_If they don’t get the outcomes, they don’t get the contract. Also it’s got a whole lot of checks and balances designed to prevent creaming and parking in the system. You get your most points for keeping people in work for six months and the more disadvantaged they are, the higher weighting you get._

However, this model only applies in what is known as non-remote Australia. In July of 2013, the government replaced the existing JSA system in remote Australia with the Remote Jobs and Communities Program (RJCP) to address the very different challenges presented by this huge geographical area.

Remote Australia: Remote Jobs and Communities Programs

Indigenous people make up roughly 85 per cent of job seekers and communities in the 60 regions of remote Australia. The area was served by the JSA system in the past but replaced with the current “prime plus subs” model when it became clear that mainstream providers were not achieving desired outcomes, and when research showed that Indigenous job seekers were much more likely to be engaged when working with local staff.

Under RJCP, a single contractor in each region subcontracts other agencies, working with a local elected board. The program integrates employment and community development services with a requirement that providers work with communities to develop a Community Action Plan of strategies to overcome barriers to employment and participation.

This program is undergoing capacity building challenges that are discussed in Section 4 of this report.

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United Kingdom: Jobcentre Plus/Work Programme

The Work Programme is a major new, integrated welfare-to-work measure introduced nationally in June 2011, under the Department of Work and Pensions. It is targeted at longer-term unemployed people, and provides support for two years to help them into sustainable work. The programme is delivered through a network of prime contractors and subcontractors, operating under a payment-by-results regime, with increased freedom to develop provision for the individuals they support.

Under the Work Programme, roughly 18 prime contractors hold 40 contracts for service delivery in 18 Contract Package Areas (CPAs) in England, Scotland and Wales. Each CPA has either two or three prime contractors depending on the density of the population and perceived needs of a particular geography. London, for example, is split into two CPAs, with three prime contractors in each CPA. Multiple prime contractors are intended to promote competition and drive up performance, with job seekers randomly referred to each prime.

Under each Prime is a supply chain of organizations recruited to provide geographical coverage, for a total of some 800 organizations, many providing specialist support. It is a distributed service approach in which co-location with primes is rare if not non-existent.

Jobcentre Plus one-stop centres remain the gateway to the one-stops, staffed by public service employees. All job seekers enter the system through the Jobcentre Plus office or online. The vast majority of benefit claimants are back to work within months, after working with a job adviser who helps them search for a job and provides benefit information. More complex clients, that is, those still on benefit after 12 months, are mandated to the Work Programme.

The benefit that more defines the harder-to-help is the Employment Support Allowance (ESA). This benefit is for people who may have a disability or could have multiple health conditions. This group can actually be referred out earlier into the Work Programme, say at six to nine months and the amount of money available to help them is potentially much higher if the provider is able to keep them in work for up to a year.

UK one-stop evolution

The United Kingdom was one of the first to experiment with one-stop approaches, piloting an approach they called a single work focus gateway, later shortened to "One." The One system was an attempt to combine employment services, income assistance, and housing benefits, each remaining as part of its own system but sharing the same venue. In the end, this semi integration broke down when it became clear that the agencies did not share objectives and values.

> People tended to go in and the discussion with the Personal Adviser was more about their benefits, “What is my payment and why isn’t it being paid on time?” than “How do I get a job?” or “What are my barriers to work?” (Bruce Stafford, Professor of Public Policy and Director of the Nottingham Policy Centre, University of Nottingham)

Although benefit delivery remained part of the Jobcentre Plus system, the decision was made to move benefit claims “down the hall,” so to speak. Jobcentre Plus, implemented in 2000, was the result — a single organization combining different functions but with a shared goal of supporting job seekers to
move to employment. Benefit administration was increasingly done by IT, including telephone services as well as online. Since that time, the UK one-stop system has undergone many changes, implementing various reforms, trying different ways of addressing the challenge of supporting the more disadvantaged clients/customers\textsuperscript{12} into work with the most recent reform occurring in 2011 with the implementation of the Work Programme.

The Work Programme replaces much of the complex range of employment support previously on offer, including the New Deals, Employment Zones and Pathways to Work — all of which were included under the government run, Jobcentre Plus system. 2006 saw the emergence of a prime plus sub-contractors model with a focus on outcomes rather than process, a precursor of the current model. The Programme signals three primary changes from previous incarnations:

1) it shifts support for job seekers with more complex barriers to the private sector,
2) it expands and deepens the base of those receiving benefits who are now expected to work, and
3) it changes the nature of the pay for performance system placing a greater emphasis upon outcomes.

**Outcome-based funding**

The Work Programme operates on a payment by results basis. Prime providers have complete flexibility to innovate and to design the support that addresses the needs of the individual and the local labour market, rather than following a one-size-fits all, activity funded approach.

Work Programme providers are paid primarily for supporting claimants into sustained employment. There is currently a small attachment payment when the person enters work, and then no other payment until they complete either the 6-month (regular JC+) or 3-month (harder-to-help) sustainment requirement. Once that outcome is achieved, then there are smaller payments for every few weeks that the person remains in work. With dollars saved from benefits no longer received, the provider is able to provide in-work supports to help keep the person in employment. After April of 2014, the attachment fee disappears and the provider is paid only for sustainment.

*So the maximum payment a provider could get would be if they get someone into paid work on the first day they deal with them, and they remain there continuously for the whole two-year period.* (Mike Daly, Central Analysis Division, Analysis Directorate, Dept. of Work and Pensions)

This incentive approach is designed to further support flexibility and innovations in service delivery. Providers are told they have a “black box” to come up with innovative solutions. But so far, implementation has yielded unsatisfactory results. According to informants, there has been little innovation and no real differences in outcomes. According to a recent evaluation of the “Jobcentre Plus Offer,” the system has not been well suited to assisting those with a disability, or facing complex or multiple needs.

\textsuperscript{12} The term customers was often used to describe clients or job seekers.
Early results show that only roughly 1/6th of those who could achieve a job outcome actually did, and that a large proportion, roughly 1/5th, had returned to Jobcentre Plus after a year.\textsuperscript{13}

Amongst claimants with complex or multiple needs there was a widespread perception that their requirements were not properly identified, and that the support they were offered was not tailored to their personal needs and circumstances. Such claimants felt that it was more important to deal with the immediate barrier they were facing – whether homelessness, having a criminal record, or health constraints – rather than embarking on support measures aimed at moving them into work. At the same time, many reported that advisers did not address the limited information and communications technology (ICT), basic literacy and numeracy skills and lack of work experience associated with these barriers. On average, those with a disadvantage were less likely to transition into work, with large proportions still claiming the same benefit a year later.

And, at the provider end, not only were they not receiving referrals for the more disadvantaged, the criticism is that they were “parking” those that they did receive because it was harder to get them to employment. Many of these cases ended up being referred back to Jobcentre Plus at the end of the mandated time. The practice of “parking” and “creaming” has been referred to as a “moral hazard” of this system.

ERSA points to a lag in referrals for the more disadvantaged clients in part because they fell under a benefit group that received a comparatively generous benefit so there was not a perceived urgency in referring them on, and partly because of a bottleneck in outsourced “Work Capability Assessments.” There was also confusion about exactly what was included in the “black box.”\textsuperscript{14} For all these reasons volumes were nowhere near as expected in the first 18 months of the program.

Mike Daly, of the Department of Work and Pensions, speculates that the less than hoped for outcomes may be a combination of several things including providers not being fully “geared up” to deal with complex job seekers, claimants not used to this kind of work expectation and resisting the mandatory nature of the process, and “possibly something to do with the fact that while we’re paying more (to support the harder-to-help job seekers), we’re maybe not paying quite enough to induce a change in behaviour.”

Roger Horne, of ERSA, would agree that the commercial nature of the contracts has, in some sense, driven behaviour. “As a provider to ensure you keep your contract you will almost subliminally concentrate your own and your supply chain on those customer groups.”

Fixing the issue is not simple. In Australia, when lead contractors underperform, their contracts will not be renewed. In the UK, while the random assignment system facilitates identifying performance levels, with only 18 prime providers, the choices are limited. As Mike Daly says, “In Australia they have hundreds of providers so knocking a few of those off every now and then doesn’t disrupt operations quite so much.”


\textsuperscript{14} Lane, P. et al. (2013) Work Programme Evaluation: Procurement, supply chains and implementation of the commissioning model, p. 36.
In the UK contract, if provider A is doing significantly worse than Provider B, the government can shift business away from A and give it to Provider B but this has not proven an effective means of redress to date as rather than motivating performance; this approach seems to have the opposite effect.
3. Learning From Experience: Best Practices Along the Pathway to Employment and Beyond

EPBC services are delivered through WorkBC Centres across BC. Services that are available in the WorkBC centres include self-serve job search services, as well as client needs assessment, case management and other employment service options for those needing more individualized services in their search for sustainable employment.

The “client experience” is formed at many steps along the pathway to employment from first awareness to finding and keeping a job and is dependent upon such things as whether those who are harder-to-employ are aware of services, whether they feel welcome and comfortable in the WorkBC centre, whether they feel staff are in tune with their needs, whether the services are appropriate and whether the available work fits and offers sustainability. This is known as the “career decision-making process.”

Figure 1 delineates the framework we used to organize best practices in steps along the pathway to employment used in this study. We have identified best practices in each of these steps from recently compiled reports and in discussion with our key informants.

Practice is evolving in all jurisdictions with only Australia having conducted a system-wide evaluation to determine emerging best practices. The information presented here draws heavily upon that learning as well as learning from specific evaluations and advocacy lists.

Figure 1 The Client Experience
Information sources

Of note are the following primary sources accessed for best practices in this report:15

- A guide providing strategies and practices developed by the National Center on Workforce and Disability, based at the Institute for Community Inclusion (University of Massachusetts, Boston).16
- A paper on universal strategies published in the journal, The Institute Brief, for the Institute for Community Inclusion (noted above).17
- An evaluation of “Good Practice in Job Services Australia” (2012) that identified high performing sites and best practices performed by those sites.18 High performing sites are defined by meeting performance outcome measures set by the Star Rating System, and ratings according to job seekers on the quality measures: provider capability, service delivery, client experience, and engagement.
- A series of best practice guides based on strategies used, and lessons learned, by providers delivering services to the most disadvantaged workers (Stream 4) in 20 Job Services Australia Demonstration Pilots. This is an ongoing project but early indications, such as very high attendance rates, are indicating that the measures tried are having success. At the time of the interim evaluation (September 2012), job placements under the pilots were double that of a comparable group of non-pilot participants. This trend has continued. As of May 2013, job placements were still more than double and 13 week and 26 week outcomes were also higher than in the comparison group.19
- Other best practices described in evaluation studies of various initiatives and by the key informant and case study interviews conducted for this report, as well as best practice stories included on the CfEE website in the “Learning From Practice” series.

15 Only examples of practices of particular interest for this study have been included here. For more comprehensive and detailed descriptions, the reader should consult the documents listed.
16 This Guide “Strategies and Practices for Effectively Serving All One-Stop Customers — A Framework for Systems Change” is a comprehensive listing of universal strategies and best practices designed to respond to support staff in one-stop centres who are having to support an increasingly complex client base. Practices range from those guiding start-ups to issues like grievance procedures and staff certification. More information can be found at the National Center on Workforce and Disability website: http://www.onestops.info/website.php?page=ud_strategy.
18 Providers were sorted into “high,” “medium,” and “low” performers with assessments made using Department of Employment Star Ratings, as well as participant experience measures, and data drawn from several other department sources.
The best practices included here are taken from recently compiled reports, and reflect what has worked best to support clients with complex needs along the accessibility path, from first awareness to job retention. For example, practices taken from the guide mentioned above reflect the findings of several U.S. Department of Labor initiatives designed to improve employment opportunities for persons with disabilities. The strategies and practices included in the Guide have been demonstrated to be effective in meeting the needs of clients with disabilities. While often the strategy or practice refers to a specific kind of disability, most have universal applicability.

These strategies and practices are offered as suggestions only, a way to see what others are doing and consider whether this is something that might work, or even be necessary, within the EPBC context. Some, if not many of the practices below, may already be commonly used by some, if not all, of the sites.

Job seekers profile

Front line practitioners in the EPBC work mostly with job seekers who fall into either Tier 3 or 4 in terms of identified employment barriers.

Generally speaking these job seekers have the following characteristics:

- Long term unemployed (greater than 12 months).
- Limited work skills.
- Little or no work experience or education.
- Low engagement including low levels of self-esteem, motivation and confidence in their competence/abilities and in a positive outcome for effort.
- Significant employment barriers including those associated with health conditions, disabilities (cognitive and physical), substance use, criminal backgrounds, age, homelessness, disadvantaged youth.

The learnings, strategies and best practices included below are organized according to steps along the client pathway to work. Figure 1 delineates this client pathway to work. When participant research was available and relevant recommendations developed from these enquiries, those recommendations have also been included.

Research conducted with job seekers with disabilities in several locations in Kansas, and later confirmed in national forums, suggest several areas of concern with regard to accessibility, and with

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20 These DOL initiatives include the Disability Program Navigator Initiative and Work Incentive Grants supported by ETA and the customized employment Grants supported by ODEP.
Accessible Services for Specialized Populations in One-stop Employment Models: Learning from Other Jurisdictions

staff attitudes and disability awareness. Relevant recommendations from that study are also included below, as are practices emerging from an evaluation of one-stop centres in Job Services Australia.

All participant quotations appearing in the section below are taken from the report on those forums or from the Kansas report.

Outreach/Marketing

Outreach is intended to ensure that members of various populations that are frequently underserved (such as people who face multiple barriers to employment) are made aware of the services and supports provided by the One-Stop Center.

Because the WorkBC centres serve all job seekers, getting the word out about what WorkBC offers, and how to access the services, means targeting venues or channels that reach a broad range of potential clients.

One way to reach out is to take advantage of existing employment related events like job fairs, where youth, dislocated workers, and other more job ready seekers will gather. This has turned out to be an opportunity for Vancouver’s five contract holders to take advantage of their common interest and share responsibility for representing WorkBC at the event.

In systems where participation in employment services is mandatory, outreach may be less of a priority. In EPBC, while some participation is mandated, much is voluntary.

There seems general agreement that the most effective method of reaching out to the harder-to-reach population is through community-based organizations such as civic organizations, advocacy groups, faith-based and community-based entities, and neighborhood associations.

In addition to linking with community-based organizations are approaches that actually take services to the clients.

We do compare the composition of the population using our facility against the composition in the community. So say it’s five per cent of people with disabilities and we only serve two per cent, well that leads us to question if we need to do more targeting and more communication/marketing of that specific population.

(Brian K. Humphrey, WorkSource Skagit)

Once I am there, they can show me postings, they can show me resources, they can help me revamp my resume. But if I’m not there because I’m too anxious to go, they can’t help me.

(Peer support worker, Gastown Vocational Services, “Learning from Practice” web series)

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21 Parker, Kathy. “One-Stop career centers and job seekers with disabilities: insights from Kansas.” The Journal of Rehabilitation. October 1, 2005. Opinions gathered in this study came from focus groups in which disabled participants recalled experiences in several one-stops in Kansas, followed by contemporary direct experience reported by “mystery customers.”

22 (What you Told Us, p. 11) In 2010 the Department of Human Services ran a series of community forums with people across Australia to further inform the development of new service offers under the Australian Government’s Service Delivery Reform (SDR) agenda. The forums — part of our ongoing research to better understand people’s thoughts and ideas on service delivery — provide an important first step towards using co-design to help improve our future service delivery arrangements.
There are other reasons for reaching out to clients in community settings. For example, if clients have mobility limitations and the one-stop centre does not allow for clear mobility passage, and online communication such as Skype is insufficient or inappropriate, then it may be necessary to consider co-locating at a community-based organization serving these clients.

Similarly, if the clients are located in a geographically isolated area with major transportation barriers, it may be more reasonable for the career practitioner to bring services to that location. An example of this is given in the video story, “Supporting Community Through Outreach” featured in the Learning From Practice series on the BC Centre for Employment Excellence website (http://www.cfeebc.org/news_item/learning-from-practice-working-around-the-barriers/). In that case, a case manager from the Sto:lo Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training made regular visits to meet with job seekers in the small community of Spuzzum because there was no public transit system available and the closest WorkBC office was 50 kilometers away.

In summary, three forms of outreach are recommended:

- Through job fairs and other public career related events (taking advantage of inter-agency common interest to share presentations and responsibility).
- Reaching job seekers through linkages with community groups and agencies
- Bringing services to clients.

The following case study describes an example of taking advantage of community linkages to connect with harder to reach job seekers.

**CASE STUDY: Community Partners, NYC**

Community Partners is a program that connects New York City employment services with community-based organizations. It is designed to reach and serve underemployed citizens (mostly African-Americans) in the City’s most disadvantaged neighbourhoods by giving them “facilitated access” to job placement services through the Workforce1 Career Centers.

Individuals are referred into the program based on work readiness, personal preferences, and geographic proximity to various Career Center locations within the City.

Community Partners was an initiative of the NYC Center for Economic Opportunity, part of the Mayor’s office that pilots innovative new anti-poverty strategies. According to David Berman, the Center’s Director of Program Management and Policy, Community Partners uses a process in which centres send job blasts to the community-based organizations about jobs available through the one-stops. People receiving services at the CBO, 23

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who show interest in an opening and are considered job-ready, can then be referred to the centre and fast-tracked into interviews for those specific job openings.

Participants in the Community Partners pilot were placed at higher rates than comparable job seekers served by the Workforce1 Career Centers, with a referral-to-hire ratio of 3:1. However, participants were placed in jobs that, on average, offered lower hourly wages.24

Overall, the program was deemed to be successful and, according to David Berman, has now been expanded to all the one-stops in New York City.

Accessible Information

A job search begins with the need or desire to look for work so if the information and access channels are inaccessible, or the language used is overly complicated, or the messaging is inappropriate or otherwise off-putting or lacks clarity, the job seekers are unlikely to get past this initial barrier.

According to the feedback clients in Australia gave prior to their reforms, “In general, communications were often described as not being customer friendly, that is, they use a lot of jargon and are not easily accessible.” Participants called for simplified processes and forms for easier access to information and services. People’s greatest frustration in this area was that they did not know what questions they needed to ask or where to start looking, with many choosing to ask friends or family before approaching any official channels showing a lack of trust in their own ability to interpret the information.25

Many found it difficult to navigate the system and therefore find useful and relevant information. Access to and use of the internet was also found to vary considerably between the different cohorts, particularly for those with disabilities, and families of children with a disability, as well as some seniors.

Clients want relevant, accurate and clear information and they need a variety of options for accessing information about services. In the Accessing Jobcentre Plus study, clients reported the following problems using main access channels provided, including the Jobcentre Plus website:26

- Lack of awareness.
- Service not accommodate client’s physical or mental health needs.
- Not knowing how to use the channel (and/or not need to use it).
- Lack of access to computer (in case of the website).

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24 While the percentage of job seekers with disabilities was very small (less than 4%), they were more likely to work fewer hours. The reason for this is not clear.


In the UK, although private providers assume responsibility for job seekers with more intense need for employment support, access to services is always through the public one-stop system of Jobcentre Plus. New benefit claims must be phoned in with follow up enquiries usually through a website. Job seekers can also access services at the one-stop and job seekers with more complex needs will likely have face-to-face support.

Importantly, there must be multiple options for connecting to the one-stop centre.

Many people rely heavily on their personal contacts to initially source information and help; many also claim to use the internet. This was most likely to be the case for working people and families of children with disability, and to a lesser extent older workers. Indeed, many claimed that Google is now used as their primary information source – having replaced the Yellow Pages, the telephone directory (government services section), and/or other hard copy information products, such as a local services directory produced by local councils.

If online, job seekers want a single access point that will connect them to the information they need. Site navigation must be uncluttered and unambiguous.

All jurisdictions are working to improve their portal access. During the period of time this report was being prepared, the US Career Center’s portal had moved from the beta stage to online and now provides much clearer information for job seekers with specialized needs (http://www.dol.gov/)

The Australian website (http://employment.gov.au/job-services-australia-jsa) leads to much information but nothing jumps out about finding a job. A good feature, however, is that there are a series of links for specific specialized populations, although they’re very small (located just under the title “Job Services Australia”).

The design should be easy to understand and materials should be able to communicate necessary information regardless of ambient conditions or the user’s sensory ability, experience, knowledge, language skills, or current concentration level.

Overall, strategies and practices found to be effective include the following:

- Simplified processes and forms for easier access to information and services.
- Multi channel options.
- A single major access point in the form of a website portal.
Eliminate any unnecessary complexity. In printed materials, use concrete, basic language that is easy to understand. Reword existing materials that are abstract or require a higher educational level to understand. Use plain language.

Supplement text with illustrative graphics e.g., a labeled diagram of a cover letter and its various components.

Print page numbers on all documents. This allows instructors to refer to specific sections of the handout, which can help people who have trouble following all the information.

Use at least 12-point size font on all calendars and handouts, with 16-point font preferred.

Consider having as many of the basic materials as possible (such as orientation materials, basic job seeking guides, etc.) translated into languages spoken in the local service area.

Use touch screens with graphics for inputting on a computer or in a kiosk.

Consider using different transmission modes, e.g. pictorial, verbal or tactile to communicate the same information. For instance, during training or workshops or in the resource room, present information verbally and in writing, and use graphics and pictures with text. Consider things like making notices of job listings in one colour.

Provide all information both verbally and in writing as a general practice in every aspect of One-Stop service delivery.

**Accessible Facility**

When a job seeker decides to visit a WorkBC centre, they must first consider how to get there and, if they don’t have a car, it will be important that the centre be located along a public transportation corridor.

The centre itself needs to be an accessible physical place, inside and out. Parking and drop-off areas must be closest to the accessible entrance, and indicated with the appropriate symbol. If there are stairs at the entrance, there must also be a ramp access or a lift. Within the building, care needs to be taken to mitigate fatigue and opportunities for error. Recommended principles and practices include the following:

- Provide adjustable chairs, desks and tables for workstations and classrooms.
- Set up macros on computers for standard cover letter and resume text.
- Try to arrange elements to minimize hazards and errors that someone might inadvertently make, and provide warnings of possible hazards.
- Configure public use computers so that individuals can’t inadvertently change settings, and that features automatic document backups.
- Offer computers with accommodation features with more flexible configurations to access these features.
- Provide a clear line of sight to important elements for any seated or standing user.
Ensure a clear path of travel e.g. does not require stairs, is firm and slip-resistant, is at least 36 inches wide.

Ramps longer than six feet must have railings on both sides and the railings must be sturdy and between 34 and 38 inches high. The ramps must be non-slip.

The entrance door must have at least 32 inches clear opening, and the entrance should provide direct access to the main floor, lobby, or elevator.

Elevators should be able to be used without assistance.

All aisles and pathways in the building must be at least 36 inches wide (including between chairs and tables) and there must be sufficient space to be able to turn a wheelchair. Carpeting must allow for easy wheelchair maneuverability and must be securely attached at the edges.

There must be space for wheelchair seating.

All washrooms and exits must be clearly marked. There must be one washroom that is wheelchair accessible and stalls must be able to be opened with a closed fist.

Intake and Orientation

When a client enters the WorkBC office, the first thing they usually see is the front desk and the staff behind the desk. If an open area, they may also see other work areas with computers and printers, and other equipment necessary for a job search such as faxes or telephones.

The following practices are recommended for staff at the front desk and in the resource area.

Greeting

The greeting should be welcoming and respectful to everyone, no one more or less than another, and the person at the front desk should be physically seated in a way that allows for clear communication between staff and client. Other aspects of this initial greeting include the following:

- If the intake process involves completing a registration form, let the job seeker know that assistance with completing the registration form is available. Staff should make this offer to everyone, not just people they feel may need help. Clients may have a variety of reasons that they need or want help in reading the form or providing the necessary information.

- Display clear, visible signs that direct clients to the location of resources, including staff that can answer questions, as well as books, computer programs, telephones, and the like. Signs should use a combination of symbols and text whenever possible.

- Display signs that clearly indicate the availability of assistive technology and accommodations.

- Maintain electronic files of standard orientation and intake materials, as well as materials provided in various workshops. Provide them to clients ahead of time on CD-ROM/disk or via e-mail as requested.

We try get the message out that everyone, no matter what their circumstance or special characteristics, is part of the general public.

(Brian K. Humphrey, WorkSource Skagit)
Provide the option of registering and/or signing up for an orientation, workshops, and classes online or by telephone ahead of time so that orientation can be accomplished upon the first visit. Completing activities through the phone or web reduces unnecessary trips for clients who use specialized transportation services, and is also just good client service for all.

Post a staff listing that includes photographs of staff members. Individuals may forget the names of staff they worked with, and this visual reminder will allow them to connect with the person they have worked with before.

Have all staff, regardless of their partner affiliation, wear a “WorkBC” name tag because it can be confusing for the person coming through the door to sort out the various agencies, and to reinforce that all staff are working toward one end.27

Provide a pad of paper and pen at the front desk along with a sign indicating that clients who are deaf or hard of hearing can write down instructions for the receptionist.

A problem can arise if the person seeking information cannot speak English, and language difficulties prevent communication. If the individual’s language is recognizable and there are staff translators, then this problem is easily fixed. But what happens if the greeter does not recognize the language?

At WorkSource Skagit they are used to recognizing several languages and arranging translation for those, but new immigration patterns have made it more difficult to recognize languages. They found a solution by having a chart near the front door that includes depictions of all flags in the world. The visitor can point to their flag, indicating their country of origin and language spoken. WorkSource Skagit then calls the AT&T Translation Line or another translation service to continue the conversation.

Triage (Assessing at Intake)

The term “triage” is used here because assessment at this point most resembles an initial sorting to ensure the visitor is directed to the most appropriate information level rather than the more intense assessment necessary to determine an actual employment plan. In this case, the “greeter” needs to determine whether the person can be directed to the resource area for an independent job search using available tools, information and equipment, or whether they are likely to need a higher level of personal support. If the latter, the front desk staff will advise the client that they should meet with a case manager and, prior to that, register for an orientation.

Triage can also take place in the resource room where resource room managers watch for job seekers who need extra help, or who do not seem to be catching on to systems or information. The resource room manager may then also suggest that the person attend an orientation and see a case manager.

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27 Practice offered by Open Door Group in article about EPBC featured on C/EEEBC website.

You don’t want them being trained as psychiatrists to deal with it but what you need for them to have sufficient training to spot it.

(Bruce Stafford, Head, School of Sociology and Social Policy, University of Nottingham)
Problems come when these initial assessments fail to spot “hidden vulnerabilities.” Some clients may not know their specific disability and some disabilities are not obvious, including such things as asthma, depression, bipolar disorder, ADHD and learning disabilities. For example, feedback provided in a major qualitative evaluation of a UK initiative intended to streamline access into the Jobcentre Plus system revealed that even very experienced greeting staff could miss hidden impairments and health conditions. It was also found that staff interpretation of priority need varied substantially across offices and that some staff felt they were not sufficiently trained to identify any but more obvious cases nor to provide appropriate services for all vulnerable clients.

The initial triage assessment can be crucial for what happens for the job seeker down the line. Job seekers with undetected vulnerabilities who are referred to a resource room for a self-directed search can become discouraged and give up. And even though there is a second opportunity to triage in the resource room, that may not happen in a timely manner and can lead to time wasted and increasing frustration for the job seeker.

Best practice suggestions include awareness training to gain sufficient training to spot “hidden vulnerabilities” at intake.

WorkSource Skagit has taken a slightly different approach. There, qualified staff take turns “manning” the front desk. In this way, there is less chance of missing someone with an invisible disability.

Two recommendations to increase capacity for a more informed triage at intake are:

- Awareness training to spot hidden vulnerabilities
- Have trained staff share the task of manning the front desk.

Resource Room

Although job seekers first using the one-stop centre may likely be referred to a case manager and an orientation session before being directed to the resource area, at some point it’s likely they will find themselves making use of available resources. Although the resource room is intended as a self-serving area, many job-seekers require some level of assistance, and those with specialized conditions will likely have a need for more intense assistance. According to one US study of self-service use, this is especially true when it comes to computer skills. Many clients are intimidated by computers and resistant to using them without assistance. Job seekers with limited English skills, need extra help understanding written materials and in resume preparation.

Importantly, as in all stages along the path to employment, staff in the resource room need to treat job-seekers in a friendly and positive way, to take time to listen to them as a way of building their confidence to find a new job, and to, generally, create an environment where people feel comfortable and confident.

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Some specific recommendations include the following:

- Provide clear, color-coded signs for each area and piece of equipment or assistive technology.
- In the Resource Room, clearly post signage regarding the availability of assistive technology (e.g., alternative keyboards and mouses, specialized software) and how to access/obtain them.
- Ensure that Resource Room staff is aware of the various assistive technology devices available, and how to use them.
- Ensure that the Resource Room staff is aware of the various pre-installed accessibility features on all computers (e.g., sticky keys, filter keys, toggle keys, mouse keys, screen enlargement, pointer enlarger, etc.), and how these can be used to meet individual client needs. Both Windows and Mac operating systems now have a wide variety of pre-installed accessibility features.
- Install speech output software in as many workstations as possible, and include headphones with each workstation. (Voice output software is now standard in newer computer operating systems.)
- Provide clearly posted instructions regarding how each workstation can be customized to individual user needs and preferences, including the details of any assistive technology installed on the machine. In addition to written instructions, offer demonstrations of how to use the equipment.
- Include images of computer graphics and picture icons in the written instructions for computer programs and functions. This will help individuals match the text with what they are seeing on the screen.
- Ensure that videos have closed captioning. Closed captioning benefits people who cannot hear as well as those who have limited English proficiency. Some people benefit from the combination of spoken and written words.
- Use a color-coding system to make it easier for clients to find resource materials. For example, the One-Stop could locate all resume development materials in red binders and interview guidelines in green binders.
- Compile a “low-tech” toolkit for the resource room that clients can use to help them organize their materials. Include rulers, color dots, post-it notes of various colors, and pen grips.

**Orientation**

In general, orientation is where job seekers learn about the various programs and services available that might be relevant for their needs. They get an understanding of what they will be expected to do and how to best use the resources available at the one-stop centre. They learn about staff roles and who they can expect to see along their pathway. Orientation also includes a tour of the resource room.
Recommendations for orientations sensitive to people with various specialized needs include the following:

- Host orientations in a room with ample seating, allowing space for wheelchair mobility.
- Have the speaker sit or stand in an area visible to all participants. The speaker should speak loudly and clearly to aid people who supplement hearing with lip-reading.
- Give an overview of the facility at the start of orientation, including the location of restrooms, water, and emergency exits.
- Provide a written and oral overview of the orientation, including the time frame, what topics will be covered, and when questions should be asked.
- Provide a comprehensive overview of all services available (core, intensive, and training), with clear and specific information on how to access these services, and eligibility criteria. Provide a written summary of this information. A menu and/or chart of services with information in a standard format, can be useful in helping clients understand the services available.
- Specify what steps clients must take in order to access the services discussed. Examples: when clients must “register for classes early,” how, where, and when do they register? How do people determine if they are eligible for additional services beyond the core services available to all clients?
- If disability-specific services are available, consistently provide this information verbally and in writing to all clients. Let people know how to access these resources. While discussing these services, indicate that while people with disabilities may find them helpful, there is no requirement that they use any services specifically for people with disabilities (including public Vocational Rehabilitation). Clarify that they can still use any other One-Stop services for which they are eligible, whether or not they use services targeted to people with disabilities.
- Any forms or materials that contain personal information about individual clients should be kept concealed during orientation so that attendees cannot see them. This includes applications and forms that have been completed and collected during orientation.
- If the orientation facilitator observes any missing information on applications and forms, he/she should discuss the matter privately with the individual afterwards, not in front of the group. Explaining why specific questions are being asked may help clients to feel comfortable with revealing such information.
- Provide a list of assistive technology available at the one-stop, both verbally and in writing.
- Present information about the policy and procedure for requesting help or reasonable accommodations, both verbally and in writing.
- Ask participants periodically if they have any questions or would like information clarified.
- Provide a tour at the end of the orientation that includes one-stop facilities and available equipment (e.g., computers, fax machine, phones, and copy machine). Point out any assistive technology available to all participants in the tour.
Consider creating an audio or videotaped version of the orientation and other workshops given at the one-stop. This can be helpful for people who need to review the material periodically or go through it at their own pace.

- Develop a plan for addressing support personnel (for example, a family member or job coach) during orientation. This is necessary since support personnel will not be completing intake forms for themselves; to ensure confidentiality the orientation leader should not draw attention to that fact.

- Provide an extensive, private, orientation to the one-stop if a client prefers one. Communicate to all clients that such an option is available.

After orientation, the next step for most job seekers needing extra assistance with their job search is to meet with a case manager. Just as that initial contact at the front desk had to be positive, so must this contact. Engaging job seekers at this point in their employment journey, especially those who are mandated or feel less hopeful of a positive outcome, is crucial.

Engaging with job seekers

It begins with the first meeting, a critical time for establishing the client-staff relationship and setting the tone for upcoming activities.

According to the Australian study, "Best Practices in Job Services Australia," high performing sites connect with job seekers more quickly and engage more frequently than medium and low performing sites. This is especially the case with high performers in the Stream 4 demonstration pilots where the case manager might meet with the job seeker on a weekly basis. In addition to keeping the employment goal front and center, this approach provides a sense of structure for Stream 4 job seekers who often have no routine or structure in their home life.30

Practitioners also tend to report spending more time on average on the initial contact and assessment, spending between 30 minutes to over an hour with Stream 4, the most disadvantaged, job seekers. Taking longer gives the job seekers more time to open up in this meeting and time for the provider to make sure the job seeker knows what is involved in this relationship including information about compliance and assessments.

Building rapport early on in the relationship, ideally at the first meeting, is considered crucial, as is maintaining that rapport and providing consistently high quality service throughout the pathway.31

Key elements for engaging with job seekers include:

- Connect quickly and frequently.
- Spend more time with job seeker when needed.

31 Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (2012), Good Practice in Job Services Australia, p. 5.
From the job seeker’s perspective

Job seekers generally prefer to work with the same staff person throughout (assuming area of expertise) and changing “consultants” can be upsetting. Having to tell their story all over again can be discouraging and emotionally difficult with the result that the job seeker can disengage. Staff turnover is inevitable but high performing sites address this by having procedures in place to transfer job seeker information avoiding disruption as much as possible.

In a UK study conducted, primarily, with Jobcentre Plus ethnic minority “customers,” positive experiences of accessing and using Jobcentre Plus services were frequently linked to face-to-face contact with their personal adviser, preferably consistently the same adviser. And, more than other clients, ethnic minority job seekers place a high value on friendliness and politeness. Those most dissatisfied with service felt their interactions with the personal advisers were process-driven, ruled by standards, rather than being more client-focused and personalized. Importantly, the personal adviser (in EPBC, the case manager) was key to a sense of satisfaction and accessibility.

Job seekers with disabilities, whether obvious or invisible, want staff that will spend time getting to know them, who are empathetic, and who are proactive in supporting their goals. They want an individualized approach that takes account of their specific needs rather than being expected to fit into prescribed rules and procedures.

And overall, job seekers most value employment practitioners with the following attributes:

- Ready for their initial appointment.
- Prepared to spend time and effort with them.
- Seeks to understand their individual circumstances.
- Adds value to their own job search efforts, for instance with detailed knowledge about the local labour market or other government programs.

Site managers/providers in high performing sites (Australia) did their part by:

- Attempting to match the employment “consultant” to the job seeker in terms of things like age, sex and cultural background.
- Employing consultants able to adjust their personal style to suit a range of job seekers.
- Finding ways to support frequent and extended contact with more disadvantaged job seekers by reducing the case manager’s caseload and/or sharing the load among a case management team.


Good Practice in Job Services Australia, p. 7.
- Ensuring the physical environment is warm and professional and allows for privacy when needed.
- Having procedures in place to lessen disruptions when there is staff turnover.

**Interviewing Skills**

Importantly, staff must have good interviewing skills in order to get needed information while maintaining an atmosphere of trust. Good interviewing skills include the following:

- Ask the kinds of questions (open-ended) that require more than a “yes” or “no” answer. Think of using words like “describe” or “explain” or “how.”
- Ask follow-up questions, probing for more information. If the question asked, does lead to a “yes” or “no” answer, ask a follow-up question asking for an explanation of the “yes” or “no” response.
- Be non-judgmental. Period. Nothing makes a person shut down faster than a judgmental response, whether verbal or non-verbal.
- Be sensitive to body language. Look for things like eye contact and how the person is sitting. For example, are they facing away? Are they looking down?
- And finally, be open to learning about new interviewing approaches.

An example of the last point would be the relatively new approach known as “Motivational Interviewing,” a promising practice for engaging and enhancing motivation that has been found to be particularly helpful when working with clients who resist change.35

**Compliance**

Like other jurisdictions, many of the clients in the EPBC system are “Employment Obligated,” that is, they are referred from Income Assistance and are mandated to find work.36

No provider wants to have to enforce a compliance rule. High performance providers in Australia try to find ways to get the compliance message delivered in a way that is not alienating such as sending out heads-up messages through SMS messaging, email, or personal visits.37

This is especially so in rural communities where everyone knows each other. According to Matt Clarke, managing the capacity building for the Remote Jobs and Communities Program, providers in remote Australia say they worry about applying penalties because of the potential for violence and push back. Matt and his trainers advise against proceeding with a “penalize model.” They

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35 Some useful information about the Motivational Interviewing approach can be found at [http://www.motivationalinterview.org/index.html](http://www.motivationalinterview.org/index.html).
36 In reality, it is unlikely that clients falling in Tiers 3 and 4 will lose their benefits for noncompliance.
37 In fact, according to the study authors, high performing sites are less likely to undertake compliance action indicating that they are more effective in maintaining job seeker engagement.
encourage using an “incentivized model” instead, an approach that shows job seekers how participation will benefit them, including leading them to employment.

Overall, best results come when staff:

- Truly understand what motivates the client to do well, that is their core values and dreams, and use these to keep the client focused and feeling positive about their progress.
- Focus on strengths and successes, rather than weaknesses and failures.
- Help the client see themselves as a positive force in their progress.
- Provide tangible rewards to motivate clients to continue on in their employment path.
- Use incentives rather than sticks to gain compliance.
- Have frequent, high quality, contact with clients.
- Include significant input from the job seeker and relevant experts.
- Address both vocational and non-vocational barriers.

Case Management

Clients with specialized needs don’t have to meet with a case manager if they feel they can direct their own search, but typically most need some support to meet their employment goal.

Case managers, also referred to as career specialists, or employment counselors or career development practitioners, play a critical role in supporting the job seeker along their employment path. Their support can include helping with resume preparation, providing information about local job vacancies, and providing general advice and assistance but, at a more intense level, they work with the job seeker to develop an employment action plan that will set goals and guide activities along the path. This plan may involve various forms of employment support and training so case managers need to have a good sense of the kinds of services and directions that will best help the job seekers. Importantly, their work with the job seeker can involve non-vocational as well as vocational support. For example, in cases where there may be an onset of mental illness or the individual is facing a personal crisis, these social barriers may need to be addressed before the person can turn their energy toward job finding. At the same time, higher performing sites are more likely to report that “non-vocational barriers often sort themselves out when a job seeker has employment.”

To be effective guides, coaches, and mentors, case managers must employ a wide range of skills and tools, all of which must be supported by administrative practices and policies.38

Developing the action plan requires the client and case manager to review skills and ambitions, necessary financial and/or social supports, and to discuss the various steps that will be needed to gain employment, and tasks that will need to be completed along the way.

Assessing Service Need

In EPBC case managers use an assessment tool designed to capture basic demographic information as well as identifying whether the job seeker fits any of the eight specialized populations. Spotting whether someone may have complexities beyond those captured by the assessment form takes special awareness and experience.39

Good case planning — finding a good fit — relies upon a solid understanding of who the client is and the barriers they face.

A wide range of assessment tools are available from informal interviews to standardized, nationally recognized tests. The tools are designed to address the following kinds of areas:40

- Preliminary/intake assessments
- Structured and unstructured interviews
- Mental and physical ability tests
- Aptitude/abilities assessments
- Work and personal values measures
- Personality inventories
- Occupation-specific assessments

Using supplemental assessments will enhance the case manager’s understanding of the client and their employment barriers but further assessment may be needed. For example, the assessments, or ongoing behaviour, may suggest the presence of a more serious disability. In this case, the client could be referred for a formal, diagnostic assessment.

According to reports from Australian employment consultants in the demonstration pilots, job seekers appreciate having the assessments, giving them a sense that their needs are being addressed and often providing greater clarity about their personal situation and employment barriers.

Finally, think of screening for a possible non-apparent barrier to employment not as a single event or tool, but as a process. It can occur more than once and at any point during the client’s participation in the program, from intake on.

39 Staff is also free to draw upon other assessment tools but information in those tools may not be accommodated by the Integrated Case Management system (ICM).

40 Laird & Holcomb (2011).
Good assessment practices include:

- Use good assessment tools; supplement as needed.
- Ensure the client has given consent to administer the assessment.
- Allow the job seeker to complete the assessment in a quiet environment, avoiding high areas of high traffic and/or other distractions.
- Use professional assessors for clients with more complex needs.
- Think of assessment as an ongoing process.

Specialists vs. Generalists, and More

A topic of much discussion is whether or not provider organizations need to have specialist staff and/or to what degree they should call on expertise provided by community-based organizations. In EPBC, contracts are awarded to a lead agency that then sub-contracts partners with specialized knowledge but clients and advocacy groups would go a step further, suggesting that it can be helpful to have staff with personal knowledge of the specialized barrier.41

This view is echoed by Jobs Australia, the national peak body for non-profit organizations that help unemployed and disadvantaged job seekers find work. These specialist providers feel they bring a more specific understanding of the barriers faced by particular population groups. For example, local indigenous staff would have a better understanding of the family situation and cultural worldview of indigenous clients.42

In one of the few major studies of the participant experience, job seekers with disabilities in Kansas provided both retrospective and exit views on their experience with staff in one-stops. Opinions varied regarding how much knowledge one-stop staff needed to have regarding disabling conditions and related work issues. Those with invisible disabilities were more concerned that staff understand the complexities of disability and how, even when not apparent, disabilities can affect the job seeker’s ability to find and keep a job. Many participants, however, thought that if there were more staff members with evident disabilities, this could increase disability awareness for all employees.

In Australia, providers employ a range of staffing models — some providers are generalists and outsource more specialized job support; others combine specialist expertise. Much depends on caseloads and local employment markets. Of interest are the following models that include various kinds of specialist approaches:

42 Flentje et al. (2010). Achieving sustainable outcomes for disadvantaged job seekers: Challenges for specialist providers under the current Job Services Australia contract, p. 9.
Stream specialists – staff dedicated to job seekers in a particular Stream.

Function specialists – staff dedicated to a function or co-ordination role within the site, such as work experience coordinator, activities coordinator, job placement specialist or post placement support specialist.

Job seeker or employer specialist – staff who deal only with job seekers and staff who build relationships with employers, including reverse marketing specialists (reverse marketing will be described later).

Administration specialists.

Specialists in certain groups of job seekers, such as older job seekers or youth.

Specialist professional staff, such as counselors and social workers.

In fact, several one-stops in the US have taken on “Disability Program Navigators,” a position funded by the Department of Labour, Employment and Training Administration (ETA), and intended to assist one-stop staff with serving clients with disabilities by providing awareness training, and information and resources specific to client needs. Similarly, ETA has awarded Aging Worker Initiative grants to several local Workforce Investment Boards and nonprofit agencies that have applied the Program Navigator approach to specialists working on behalf of older populations.43

Within EPBC, Gastown Vocational Services (GVS) is an example of an agency that specializes in end-to-end support for a particular specialized population — job seekers with mental health issues. Featured earlier on the CfEEBC, “Learning From Practice” series (http://www.cfeebo.org/news_item/learning-from-practice-natures-physician/), GVS’s staff includes people with mental health expertise, occupational therapists, a computer instructor, vocational case managers, job developers, and peer support workers.

The following case study provides an example of an approach that recognizes the need to work with a specialist community organization in order to support job seekers with highly complex employment barriers.

**CASE STUDY: Using an IPS Model for job seekers with mental health issues**44

The Individual Placement and Support (IPS) Model used with clients with severe mental health issues developed out of the practice of supported employment. It’s probably one of the most studied approaches going, with over 15 randomized trials since it was introduced in 1996. The case study reported here was implemented by the ORS Group, a nationally based one-stop provider in Australia.

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43 Laird & Holcomb, p. 6.
44 Bond et al., p. 281.
Typically delivered by employment teams co-located in a community mental health agency, the core principles of this model are (1) a focus on competitive employment, (2) eligibility based on consumer choice, (3) rapid job search, (4) integration of mental health and employment services, (5) attention to consumer preference in the job search, (6) individualized job supports and (7) personalized benefits counseling.

The employment counselor may support a maximum of 20 clients with mental health issues, providing end-to-end support. The client makes the decisions — they set their own employment goals and decide whether the employment consultant will speak to the employer on their behalf. Moving between jobs is part of the normal process. According to Vanessa Parlatta, Chief Operations Officer for the ORS Group, and the person who oversaw the Australia project:

*We start job seeking immediately. Before they go through training or any of those activities, we start trying to find them a job in an area they can get to straight away. We talk to the employers and explain what we’re trying to do and see if they’ve got opportunities.*

All employment must be competitive; no social enterprise work, no specially subsidized positions. Pre-employment support is considered if available, timely, and directly related to the desired job, but the focus is on employment first. Before and after placement, it's important to ensure there are multiple points of contact.

*If they’re starting to show some symptoms, we’re able to get a professional in there immediately to help them through whatever is needed to get them back on track.*

The outcomes are impressive.

According to a meta-analysis of 11 randomized trials of this approach, the competitive employment rate in all studies was significantly higher for the IPS condition than for controls. Averaging the rates across studies, the competitive employment rate was 61% (Median = 64%) for IPS compared to 23% (Median = 27%) for controls.45

*"Important elements are making sure you do job search early, that you keep the motivation up, and that you focus on their preferences as opposed to ours, and we’re not judging them as to whether or not they’re going to be successful in that area straight away which is very demotivating for clients. Finally they say, “Okay I’ll do this,” and then we say “oh no you can’t do that, and you haven’t got skills for this.” And then they’re back where they were before.”*

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Parlatta strongly advocates the need to collect client information during case management that distinguishes between kinds of disabilities so that differences in outcomes can be compared across comparable groups. This is both for the sake of good research and so that clients will not be comparing themselves to others who don’t share their particular

Case Planning

Career planning with the job seeker involves discussing skills, interests, ambitions, and interests with the job seeker, as well as using assessment results. It requires a knowledge of current labour market information and discussing, with the job seeker, where they see their own best “fit” in that market.

Importantly, it should be developed and viewed as a joint plan, a contract between these two people — the provider and the client — each understanding and agreeing to the terms of the contract. Just as the provider has a responsibility to identify the client’s needs and to support them along the path to employment, the client is obligated to keep up their side of the bargain — to complete the tasks and participate in services when registered for these.

High performing sites tend to treat the plan as a living document, visiting it frequently with the job seeker where the document becomes a framework for discussion, a way to track progress, achievements, and motivate further action. And importantly, the job seeker needs to feel ownership for the plan; needs to feel the plan reflects their goals and personal strengths.

Career development practitioners (case managers/job developers) in the EPBC serve primarily clients assessed at Tiers 3 and 4. By definition, these are clients with more complex employment barriers but their needs can differ greatly. For example, new immigrant professionals are relatively job-ready but may need language training, Canadian workplace experience and foreign credential recognition to get the kind of job that matches their work credentials. Someone with mental health issues may need peer mentoring and work accommodations. Someone with developmental disabilities may need a customized employment plan that includes considerable post-placement support.

It’s good to be able to present the job seeker with a variety of strategies for career exploration, including informational interviews, job shadowing opportunities, short-term job tryouts, and group discovery classes. Other strategies might include the following:

- Create a team of people from the job seeker’s professional and personal networks to be a part of joint employment planning and service delivery.
- Assist job seekers to create high-quality materials for employers. These might include portfolios, resumes, and letters of recommendation or referrals.
- Provide training opportunities for job seekers to gain skills in representing themselves with an employer, including negotiation skills and discussing elements of the job or work expectations.

They asked for a copy of my resume and any licenses and certificates I had, what I’d been doing, what I wanted to do. They didn’t want to waste their time finding me something I’m not going to like and stick with. They asked about my personal situation and they want to sort through all of that so that I can be stable enough to get a job and to stick with that.

(Job seeker, New South Wales)
The case manager plays an important role in coordinating access to training and work experience activities that a client may need to achieve his or her employment objectives. Higher performing sites spend, on average, a higher proportion of allocated funds than low and medium performing sites but they spend the funds on things very directly related to the employment goal. Courses are geared to recognized, in-demand qualifications.

Training first or work first?

Although current thinking about employment support has shifted the emphasis on getting more people into work faster, and to focus on outcomes rather than procedural interventions, the jury is still out regarding when it’s better to take a work first approach and when pre-employment training promises better job finding and sustainability.

To some degree, this may be a matter of semantics. There seems general agreement that a focus on outcomes over process is advised but that, especially for job seekers with more complex barriers, some level or kinds of vocational training produce better outcomes (sometimes called a “ladder” approach). Additionally that pre-employment supports work best when it is tied to specific employment needs, and when there are definitely jobs at the other end. Otherwise, as Brian Humphrey, the administrator for the Skagit and Island County WorkSource Centres, says, “You spend a lot of money getting them all dressed up and then there’s nowhere for them to go.”

Humphrey feels that credentials are good but keeping the job is going to depend most on how the person does on the job site. Do they show up on time? Can they follow directions? Do they get along with their fellow employees? They might only get a marginal job but once they’re in it, they’re attached to the labour market, to the employer and their earnings will grow as their skills and potential will grow, either with that employer or, having more value now, they can go across the street and say “I’ve been working. I have these skills, and now I just need a better employment situation.”

David Berman, Director of Program Management and Policy for the Center for Employment Opportunity (CEO) in New York City, argues “fast into work is not necessarily the best outcome for low skilled individuals.” Berman says evaluations undertaken by the Center have continually reinforced that “When we compare the people that got the training to the people that didn’t, the people that got the skills training really did better.” Many CEO programs, particularly those for young adults, 18 to 24, with limited work experience, couple educational interventions with paid internship opportunities to help participants get a foothold in the labour market and gain some job skills and experience.

It is instructive that when employers were surveyed in Australia in 2010, they identified reliability, willingness to work, and relevant work skills as the three qualities most important for any job applicant.

It is the case manager’s job to make sure that the client gets the kind of support they need and this means ensuring an accurate assessment of the client’s specific needs and barriers, making sure that employment services are integrated with other community supports when necessary.

Knowing when and where to refer on

Sometimes, the most useful outcome of case planning may be referring the job seeker on to another service, or counselor offered by a partner agency. It is important that there be inter-agency awareness and collaboration.

However, even with a diversity of partner agencies, hidden vulnerabilities can be missed and/or the job seeker may require support not offered by partner agencies, such as drug or alcohol services.

Earlier this report included a description of Community Partners in NYC, an initiative designed to bring in “harder to reach” populations to take advantage of services and support offered at the one-stop through linking with community-based organizations. But the reverse can also be useful, that is, reaching out to community-based organizations for service support.

All jurisdictions rely not only on their partner relationships but on having the opportunity to reach out to organizations in the community for targeted support and/or for providing a way to form a bridge between those harder to reach in the community and employment support services. In many cases, the CBO may have had a prior relationship with the client. Often the CBO provides needed social support and, when the client is ready to move to employment, sends that client back to the employment provider.

Learning from the “Best Practices In Job Services Australia” study suggests that establishing linkages with community-based organizations should be a priority for service providers operating one-stop employment services centres.

There are many ways to do this. For example, WorkSource Skagit holds monthly open houses inviting CBO service providers to come for an orientation and discuss how they might work together:

*We do a staff training. Here’s what we do. What do they do? How do we work together? How do we make referrals? When is it time to make a referral? What kinds of populations do you serve? What are your eligibility criteria?* (Brian Humphrey, WorkSource Skagit)

Conducting roundtable discussions for the local service providers, meeting in person with staff from community-based organizations, and assigning a worker specifically to network and work with other agencies are all possible ways to develop effective working relationships. For example, with the aim of advancing disability employment, some one-stop career centres in the US have connected with disability organizations to increase disability awareness among centre staff and train them how to use assistive technology.
Post-referral

According to Brian K. Humphrey (WorkSource Skagit), providing client support doesn’t end with the decision to refer because, with some clients, “When you just send them out the door and say good luck, the likelihood that they’re going to make it sometimes literally across the street for services can get diminished.” This may be because of low self-esteem or other issues of “low capacity.”

*They’ve got all their energy up just to come through your door, and they weren’t sure how to navigate that system, and you’re just going to say go over there, which to them may be a more complex system or one they’ve experienced before negatively. "Why would I go back there if it wasn’t a good experience the last time I tried it."

If the job seeker needs to go to another location, Humphrey says they make sure that the person knows where they need to go and facilitate the connection by calling the next provider and explaining the situation.

Job seekers surveyed in the Stream 4 demonstration pilots in Australia said they particularly appreciated it when the “employment case worker” was able to accompany them to other agencies, helping them “navigate the confusing pathways to accessing resources and assistance.” Having the staff person there to help them deal with external organizations was very reassuring. It is interesting to note that in these pilot projects, what has been found to work well is having one staff member focus on recruitment tasks like resume preparation while another coordinates specialist interventions that address non-vocational barriers.47

Finding the Job

In EPBC, when a client is considered “job-ready” they often begin to work with staff known as job developers. Job developers pave the way for job opportunities by developing relationships with “friendly” employers. Some refer to this as a shift between the “client-facing” staff to the “employer-facing” staff.

The two roles are highly inter-dependent. The job developer relies on case notes and assessment results as well as any training or other services the job seeker has completed to become job ready. Knowing that job sustainability is far more likely when the job is in alignment with the job seeker’s skills and motivations, the job developer aims for a good job “fit.” In other jurisdictions, these practitioners are sometimes called “job brokers.”

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47 For example, in one of the pilots a clinical case-worker with mental health expertise works alongside the employment practitioner. (Better Practice Guide 4 — Case Management)
Focus on meeting employer needs

The term “employer-facing,” indicates a marked shift in employment support thinking from one that relied on responding to job postings to one that proactively cultivates relationships with employers. Employer-facing staff, the job developers, spend much of their time meeting with employers, letting them know about available incentives and supports but also learning more about employer work environments and workplace needs. With diverse caseloads, job developers can be responsive to those needs without a specific population in mind but can use this information to match employer needs with job seeker attributes and work goals. In fact, there are times this works so well, that the demand for workers exceeds the supply of job seekers.

High performing sites in the Best Practices in JSA study report that they network with other providers if they do not have sufficient caseload to meet employer needs, or to meet the minimum number of participants for training courses or activities. Such a network exists in British Columbia — the Job Developers’ Resource Network, or JDRN. The JDRN, featured in the CfEEBC’s website series, Learning From Practice, offers many benefits for members including sharing “tricks of the trade,” and gaining information about different programs and how the industry works.

Best practices associated with employer-facing activities include the following:

- Reverse marketing, which involves working with employers to identify and address challenges/unmet needs in their workplace, and help address these through job creation. It involves marketing individual job-seekers to these employers. It becomes very beneficial because we can find out ideas or postings or whatever it might be that other service providers might be using say for disabilities or immigrants that kind of thing so that part of it is extremely useful. (Job Developer, JDRN Network)

- Working with employers and employer groups (such as the Chamber of Commerce) to understand the value of flexibility and otherwise customizing employment in recruiting and retention of a diverse workforce and its usefulness as a tool to maximize productivity.

- Offering customized training resources for employers in the specific skills needed by employees.

- Identifying individuals with skill sets who can perform specific tasks for employers rather than exclusively responding to work orders.

- Ensuring that job seeker’s skills and motivations are aligned with the job.

Other innovative strategies to improve job finding and retention that are working or recommended in other jurisdictions include the following:

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48 High performing sites are more likely to use this strategy than medium or low performing sites (88% vs. 68% for low performing sites), and to use it as part of a broader strategy of developing and maintaining employer relationships. They use what they know about the employer, the industry, the local labour market, etc. to know when a job seeker could be a benefit, being careful not to “oversell” the job seeker.
Vacancy Boards. The use of online vacancy boards where providers will use proprietary software to scrape jobs from a variety of sources and present them in a smart way, i.e. targeted by linking skills required for a particular role to key words in an applicant’s CV.  

IT. Using social media to reach younger job seekers through such things as email blasts to sites like Twitter or Facebook informing clients of new job openings or relevant workforce programs and services.  

Social Media. Sector focused employment services. This approach focuses exclusively on developing in-depth knowledge of sector needs, including training needs, and build strong relationships with employers in that sector. It involves dividing the business services team by industry in order to allow staff members to develop sector-based services have been tested by the Center for Employment Opportunity in New York City, with results showing higher rates of job placement, and higher wages than participants served by the traditional model. NYC now has five Workforce1 Career Centers that are sector focused.  

Social enterprise job creation. While competitive jobs are desired, there may be times when the best route to job creation is through social enterprise, that is, work opportunities that are supported by government or by non-profits. For example EARN, the Employer Assistance and Resource Network located in the US, argues there needs to be hiring initiatives in place to support the employment of job seekers with disabilities into state and/or municipal employment. This approach would see government as an employer of choice and an important part of employer-facing activities.  

Keeping the Job — Post Placement Practices  
As systems have moved to measuring performance by outcomes, job retention has become a huge focus. There are many examples of initiatives aimed at supporting workers once in employment through things like wage subsidies, subsidizing personal protective equipment and/or transit and/or work clothing, post-employment job coaching or income supplements. And depending upon the job seeker and their need for support, post placement staff support can range from simply checking in with clients to see how they’re doing, to more intensive on-site job coaching.

49 Interview with Roger Horne, ERSA.  
50 As an example, Workforce Solutions in Greater Dallas, Texas, keeps a Facebook page in which WIA Youth staff members stay in touch with their youth participants and keep them up to date on things like employment workshops and job search tips. Laird & Holcombe, p. 7.  
52 Krepcio & Barnett (2013).
Accessible Services for Specialized Populations in One-stop Employment Models: Learning from Other Jurisdictions

High performing sites use a higher proportion of their allocated funding for wage subsidies than do low or medium performing sites but they focus on selling the job seeker, not the subsidy, using the wage subsidies only as a final selling point to secure the employment and/or to negotiate for longer hours or retention.

While all sites spend most on training, high performing sites spend proportionately more on wage subsidies, reverse marketing, clothing and presentation.

The Stream 4 demonstration pilots are looking at ways of improving post-placement support for up to 26 weeks including such things as out-of-hours support for job seekers that could include informal meetings at a coffee house. In some cases, sites are providing extended support, up to 52 weeks, based on the expectation of extended need for these job seekers, many of whom have an undiagnosed or unstable disability or medical condition and face significant non-vocational barriers.

These demonstrations are in progress but early learning suggests that one benefit of the intensive post-placement support is that providers are able to identify and address emerging issues before the job is in jeopardy. Early data from one pilot shows that after nine months in employment, 75% of job seekers in the pilot had remained “off-benefit,” compared to 43% in the control group.

Good post-placement practices include:

- Wage subsidies, but not to “sell” the job seeker.
- Supports to improve skills and education while working.
- Financial work supports to help with things like childcare and housing; medical and dental benefits.
- Support that is tailored to the job seeker both before and after they start employment.
- Ensure the employer clearly understands what post-placement support will be available to both the worker and the employer.
- Monitor the placement for problems and address these quickly when they arise.

**CASE STUDY: Advance at Work, NYC**

Advance at Work, an initiative intended to test an in-work support, was piloted by the Center for Economic Opportunity in New York City. In this project, the subjects were workers 18 and older who had been continuously employed for six months but earning only $14 or less/hour, and working a minimum of 14 hours/week. These workers were offered services in career coaching, as well as education, training and employment services including basic education, referrals to GED, specialized ESL programs, and tutoring. Participants were also offered skills training in a variety of growth industries. A senior job developer works on job placements and referrals. Participants learned about how to go about earning promotions, negotiating a pay raise, and changing careers; they learned about

We used to monitor our vendors in terms of the services they provided and outputs but over the past six to seven years, we’ve driven much more to focusing on outcomes and tracking based on job placements, wages, retention things like that. We’ve done that system wide to be more focused on making sure that populations are achieving what we hope they’re achieving.

(David Berman, Dir. Program Management and Policy, NYC Center for Economic Activity)
long-term career planning and gaining transferable skills. They also had access to financial work supports e.g., child and dependent care tax credit, housing vouchers, food stamps, Medicaid, and others. In the end, participants had higher participant placement rates, higher hourly wages, and more weekly hours worked than individuals in the comparison group at the City's one-stop centers.\textsuperscript{53}

Advance at Work provided the groundwork for a current major national study on sector based approaches called Work Advance.

The study, Good Practice in Job Services Australia, sums up the attributes of high performing sites in terms of engaging with job seekers and engaging employers in the following ways:

- Emphasizing the importance of building rapport with job seekers and spending time doing it, including paying attention to personal relationships and the physical comfort of the job seeker.
- Treating job seekers as individuals and with respect.
- Using job seekers' Employment Pathway Plans (EPPs) effectively, as a service planning tool and to encourage job seekers to set and achieve their goals.
- Addressing job seekers' vocational and non-vocational barriers together, rather than focusing exclusively on either non-vocational barriers or a strictly 'work first' approach.
- Using funds for expenditures directly related to employment, such as wage subsidies and reverse marketing.
- Using local labour market information effectively to target training and work experience activities for job seekers.
- Using a range of strategies to encourage job seeker compliance.
- Building strong linkages with employers, other providers, and other government, community and other services.
- Building productive working relationships with many organizations such as: community organizations, schools, training organizations, employer associations, rehabilitative and counselling services, and other providers in the area.
- Cross-training to learn what partner agencies do and how they can support the client.
- Supporting referrals to other agencies/organizations.
- Consider joint-staff arrangements to address different aspects of the pre-employment path.

\textsuperscript{53} Henderson et al. (2010).
4. Things that make a difference

Several factors influence service delivery and the client experience, most having to do with aspects of organizational capacity. These things include the following:

- Business practices: Ability to meet budget and contractual requirements.
- A positive work environment.
- Coordination and flow between sub-contracted partners.
- Establishing linkages with community organizations.
- Staff capacity to deliver services.

For a variety of reasons, sites vary greatly in their organizational details, the environment they operate in, and in how they approach the task of assisting job seekers. Some have more organizational capacity than others. This is so in all jurisdictions and for a variety of reasons. For example new contractual arrangements in remote Australia have resulted in many established providers losing contracts to new, locally-based and more culturally appropriate providers. In some cases, those established providers are sub-contracted to the new provider. Flow through does not always work well. Values are not always identical.

Of note are comments having to do with organizational capacity included in the study of Best Practices in Job Services Australia in which, after assessing various rating criteria, high performing sites were identified. As this study states:

*There is no fixed formula of characteristics or practices that mark out high performing sites. Instead, a combination of many factors tends to contribute to good practice, depending on each service provider's caseload, environment and business model.*

However this study notes several characteristics of high performing sites such as the following: high performers are more likely to have a positive, problem-solving attitude, find innovative solutions to the problems they encounter, and make full use of the resources available to them, such as from other Government programs and the resources available in their community.

More specifically, best practices associated with healthy organizations include the following:

- A positive, problem-solving attitude.
- A work culture that encourages innovation and supports learning.

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54 Concern about meeting contractual and organizational expectations in all these areas was also expressed by providers at the supervisor and managerial level in the Skills Report with disconnects between perceived importance and self-assessment rating in areas including diversity acumen, but also in planning and time management skills, in service evaluation, and in providing feedback.

- An internal governance structure that provides opportunity for partner agency voice.
- Lead agency governs with transparency and equity.
- Provider makes use of available resources in government and in the community.
- Provider supports the development of staff capacity including inter-agency cross-training and training to better understand client needs.

A positive work culture

Having a positive and welcoming attitude toward clients has been discussed earlier in this report, as has the importance of creating a warm and comfortable physical atmosphere in the one-stop centre. However, these things do not happen in a vacuum. It goes up the line. Staff must feel they are valued and supported. When management projects a positive and supportive atmosphere that is, in turn, passed on to clients. This is especially important when staff is inexperienced, as Judi Huta recounted about her time learning to become a case manager at Avia Employment Services. There was much to learn.

I might have 10 employment-obligated clients that I have to see every policies and the ramifications for the client if they don’t show. If client wants training we must understand what are the expectations and steps for client to receive government-funded training. It’s a lot.

Judi felt that, as a learner, it was absolutely key to work in a place where the leadership was supportive. Fortunately it was a good learning environment where people were not afraid to make mistakes or ask for help. She said those in leadership positions were knowledgeable and freely shared information. They were “go to” people.

She said this was mirrored among staff who were mutually supportive, and reflected in the overall atmosphere and in a collective sense of care for the clients (“Everybody is a cheerleader for the clients”). If she was meeting with a client and couldn’t answer a specific question, she say, “Hold on. I’ll ask a colleague down the hall.”

And, she felt the clients benefitted. “What better modeling for clients that you don’t have to know all the answers, we can help each other we’re here for you?”

Partner cooperation

The EPBC service delivery structure is based on a prime + subcontractors model with the sub-contractor partner agencies providing much of the specialist services. Ideally all work together to provide seamless service for clients. However, there can be challenges in this including the challenge of managing a large number of sub-contractors, all with their own mission statements. Good client service delivery depends on a cooperative collaboration between all partner agencies.

The better the relationships between providers, the more opportunity for timely assistance and support.

(Marg Lourey, HOPE Project, Australia)
Open Door Group (ODG), featured in one of the CfEE’s Learning From Practice web stories, is one of EPBC’s large lead providers, with offices in five locations. ODG’s WorkBC one-stop centre in Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside has 13 sub-contracted agencies. Ensuring a good inter-agency working relationship has been a priority, which leadership has addressed by setting up a governance structure composed of oversight committees plus a broader group representing each of the 13 partner agencies. Partner agency representatives meet regularly to discuss issues like performance reporting, staffing and training issues, and service delivery for specialized populations.

The challenge of providing good governance and open communication is complicated by the fact that current partner agencies could, within a few years, become competitors. While you want to ensure your agencies have the resources they need to do the best job they can, how much proprietary information can be shared? ODG made the decision to share information – to be transparent, and they feel they made the correct decision. Importantly, ODG apportions a large percentage of contract dollars to flow through to their partner agencies, in recognition of providing services that match the diverse needs of job seekers in Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside.

**Linkages with the Community-based organizations**

High performing sites are more likely than mid and low performing sites to build connections within their community, to reach out to community-based organizations, to make use of government programs, and connect with other employment service providers when necessary. They work with community organizations in ways that are mutually beneficial such as providing job placement services for agencies doing pre-employment work, or being able to use local enterprises for work experience placements before helping the job seeker find paid employment. Sometimes several agencies may work together to provide “wrap-around” assistance.

Developing organizational collaboration is one of the primary activities being tested in the Australian Stream 4 demonstration pilots. Two primary engagement models have emerged:

- Joint case conferences and sharing information, in which providers establish communication protocols with external organizations, or invite these organizations to participate in joint meetings, or make presentations to job seekers, and
- Case management teams that may include staff from several organizations, or might involve co-locating staff in the other organization’s venue.

In both cases, providers gain the job seeker’s consent to share information and, in both cases, it’s best when both/all parties try to understand the context in which the other operates. Arrangements are sometimes formal, through things like Memorandums of Understanding, and informal. Co-location works best when the organizations have overlapping goals.56

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Co-location is useful because you get access to a whole range of clients you wouldn’t otherwise.

(Vanessa Parlatta, CEO, ORS Group, Australia)
Early learning suggests that while establishing these connections can take time and effort, there can be substantial benefits including being able to pool knowledge and skills. For employment service providers, linking with specialist community-based organizations can also mean access to a harder-to-reach client base and, for community-based organizations, it can mean a more streamlined route to employment support for their job seekers.

The following case study concerns a project designed to use community collaboration to address a huge problem in Australia, homelessness. With the number of people classified as homeless just under 105,000 at Census 2006, homelessness was high on the political agenda. The government set a goal of offering accommodation to all “rough sleepers” by the year 2010. Providing more crisis beds was seen as no more than a band-aid solution; breaking the cycle through service interventions was seen as more productive.

The Home Options and Pathways to Employment (HOPE) Project, supported by funding from the Australian Government, brings together a partnership of two peak bodies: the National Employment Services Association (NESA) and Homelessness Australia (HA). Homelessness Australia represents organizations delivering housing and accommodation services.

**CASE STUDY: Home Options & Pathways to Employment (HOPE PROJECT)**

Homeless job seekers present major employment challenges because of the attendant issues that may include mental illness, family breakdown, and substance use. Many are young. And, for a variety of reasons, they are unlikely to access mainstream employment centres, nor to disclose their homelessness if they do.

The ultimate goal was to see if this kind of collaboration would be fruitful in assisting homeless job seekers to find work. But the more immediate goal was to facilitate linkages between Job Services Australia (JSA) and homelessness service providers to strengthen their capacity to work together to support homeless people to gain work.

The HOPE Project had to do with learning about the collaboration process and producing a set of tools that could be used by those working in either homelessness or employment services. Process was important.

Each entity began by conducting research on the other to understand each other's context; views on homelessness, issues faced, and employment prospects; and experience of and views on collaboration. They then moved on to establishing common ground and principles and working out ways of collaborating.

It was not easy for a variety of reasons including things like lack of awareness and trust in the other “side,” differences in degree of willingness to share, but agreements were made and some worked well. For some organizations, a formal arrangement, such as a Memorandum of Understanding, suited them

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57 According to NESAY, an agency assisting youth at risk and homeless people, the average age young people experience homelessness is 14.2 years of age.
best; other organizations preferred a more informal arrangement such as a statement of principles or even just relationships between individual workers.

There were various working relationships from joint case management to co-locating staff.

According to Marg Lourey, a senior policy advisor with NESA and former manager of the HOPE Project,

- Establishing common ground and principles early on is important so that the focus is on what you’re trying to achieve and that can support you through other things you need to do. Be clear about each other’s roles and expectations.

- You need commitment to collaborate at the front level, but you also need commitment from the high level in the organization as well because you need your people doing the day-to-day operation to feel confident, particularly with performance pressures.

  I think you need to have all of that in place because otherwise it’s very easy for relationships to break down, and particularly when there are challenges.

The project was never intended to be more than a point in time exercise to gain information for future activities so does not exist today, but the tools are still there and are used by providers.58 And much was learned about the process of this kind of collaboration.59

The Resource Kits also include “10 Steps to Successful Collaboration,” a framework to guide thinking and underpin collaborative working relationships.

### Staff Capacity

Career development practitioners (CDPs) are expected to have the skills and competencies to work with all job-seekers but, while many may have experience of one or two of the specialized populations such as older workers or immigrants or youth, and would have referred on job seekers with more complex employment barriers to community specialists, front line staff in EPBC are now finding themselves responsible for this support. Some describe themselves as “overwhelmed” with the diversity of clients they must serve and are concerned they do not have the necessary knowledge or skills to provide the necessary support.60

The Skills Requirements for BC Career Development Practitioners Report provided evidence that career development practitioners in BC have concerns about their ability to deliver services effectively for job seekers with complex employment barriers.61 Staff turnover, is also an issue in many jurisdictions, suggests there is a need to find ways to reduce uncertainty and acknowledge strengths.

58 With permission, several HOPE Project resource materials were downloaded from the NESA website and can be shared if requested.

59 There are two kits: one for employment services providers and one for providers of homelessness services. Each is designed provide each entity relevant information about what the other does with the kit for homelessness providers information about how job seekers are assessed and referred to services, and the various service options available to these job seekers.

60 Ibid. p. 22.

Staff capacity training is advised. According to Bruce Stafford (Head, School of Sociology and social Policy, University of Nottingham), apparently it is advised quite often.

*I’ve done a number of evaluations for the Department of Work and Pensions, and virtually for every implementation type study I’ve done, staff training comes up as an issue. It’s as though there’s no corporate memory, no learning about this.*

Stafford says it’s not that there is no staff training offered but the training often misses new staff, or staff that are away the day of the training or the training itself is insufficient. In one-stop shops, staff need cross-training, that is, training that helps them to understand the services that partner agencies provide. There is also the issue of ensuring that staff working in partner agencies also receive necessary training.

The following list includes strategies recommended by the US Institute for Community Inclusion for increasing staff capacity to support job seekers with specialized employment barriers:

- Training staff members about the range of service delivery options available to job seekers with multiple barriers to employment, and about how to help these job seekers determine their best employment options.
- Cross-training to promote relationship-building between various partner agencies.
- Ensuring that partner agencies provide their staff with training about serving clients with particular barriers to employment, such as disability or limited English proficiency.
- Training staff to use nontraditional assessment strategies that maintain a focus on client strengths.
- Ensuring that all staff members interact, whenever possible, with a wide variety of client groups, rather than being "siloed" to a given population.
- Training specific personnel to coordinate planning teams for clients with more significant needs.
- Ensuring that staff performance evaluations include requirements that staff have participated in training on effectively serving clients with particular barriers to employment.
- Training staff about how to procure and use various types of equipment and materials for assisting clients with unique needs such as people with disabilities.
- Training staff on communicating effectively with individuals with limited English proficiency and resources for interpretation and translation services.

Australia has a long history in which private providers have been delivering employment supports for job seekers. NESA, the “peak” provider organization, has taken a proactive role not only in advocacy on behalf of its members but also on professional development, including developing professional standards, as well as helping to shape public policy. NESA frequently partners with government to test and implement new initiatives and have been contracted to undertake an extensive program of capacity training with providers in the new Remote Jobs and Communities Program, a program originally implemented in July of 2013 and incorporating a Prime+Subcontractors service delivery model.
CASE STUDY: Building Organizational Capacity in Remote Australia

Major capacity deficits have emerged among providers under the new contractual arrangements in remote Australia due to the challenges of operating in such geographically remote areas but also because providers tend to be very inexperienced. This is because the government took a stance to hire local providers, and this is because, research showed that indigenous job seekers were much more likely to have positive work outcomes when engaged, and that they were much more likely to be engaged when the employment staff were people they knew from the community. The pre-existing mainstream JSA providers in remote Australia had considerable experience but tended not to employ local, usually indigenous, staff.

Remote Australia covers some 6 million square kilometres, most of Australia.

It is a huge area and a huge capacity building initiative. The providers are inexperienced and the caseload, 85 per cent of whom are indigenous, is complex. Matt Clarke is in charge of the capacity building initiative for NESA.

There is a long history of unemployment. There are massive issues – substance abuse, anger, homelessness, and health issues.

Also, says Clarke, there is a feeling of hopelessness because there are limited work opportunities in the community. Job seekers in remote Australia have low expectations and a long history of
disengagement with employment service providers. It will help that the providers are now members of the community but at the moment, those providers are feeling overwhelmed with the task ahead and eager to gain needed competencies.

According to Clarke, the capacity building initiative must address the following issues:

- Governing boards elected from the community but with no experience of governing or managing contracts.
- Prime providers with no experience of managing sub-contractors and no understanding of business models including legal contracts and financial modeling.
- Have seen established providers without a contract or sub-contracting to the new provider.
- There are issues related to understanding roles and responsibilities, e.g. senior staff and leadership deficits.

  We do a lot around role definition, defining board roles, the role of the CEO, senior staff roles. What is the role of the board in ensuring that the organization meets its contract? How do they manage the CEO? What is expected of the CEO? What’s the expectations around contract delivery?

Clarke says the initial focus is helping prime providers understand different elements of the contract such as the funding framework and other contractual elements. Many do not have systems established to manage money coming in and out of the organization.

Time is spent working with management to understand what is involved in their service delivery and management roles within that delivery – what exactly does the frontline consultant do and how does the manager support those consultants. What are the services that are being delivered? Once there is a better understanding of those things, attention turns to work with frontline staff.

  We had a lot of staff that hadn’t used a computer before in these remote regions. There was a limited knowledge of how do you case manage, because a lot of them hadn’t case managed clients before? How do you address client barriers? How do you move clients through those barriers and how do you move them into work and do that job preparation.

In many cases, organizations do not have experience in allocating caseloads. He cites situations where there may be three staff and there may be three to four hundred clients allocated to the site, but there is not an assigned caseload.

  So what we trying do with organizations is say let’s go back to your service delivery – a simple question like how many JSAs should a staff member have? That’s a first. What do you do with your more complex client? Are you going to have three consultants with a general caseload? Or have three, but one has high complex and the other two have general caseloads?

Supporting service delivery includes addressing labour market realities. Providers are asked to identify work opportunities in the community as well as “fly-in, fly-out” opportunities. The latter are least
Preferred because people do not want to leave the community so part of the work may involve learning about economic development and opportunities for social enterprise employment.

And finally, contractors who worked in the old system, more process-driven, are now struggling in the new performance driven model.

*It helps that NESA is not a governing body. We go in there with the view that we're not looking over your shoulder and telling you what you're not doing; we're here to help you build your capacity.*

Matt Clarke and his team of contractors who do the capacity building also have a “fly-in fly-out” routine. The contractor will remain in the community for two to three weeks, working out the improvement plan with the contractor based on their perceived deficits, and then facilitating the learning.62

**Data Collection and Evaluation**

If the goal is to improve employment outcomes for job seekers, it is crucial to understand more than just the big numbers, e.g., x number of job seekers found work through EPBC, and x number of job seekers kept those jobs for x amount of time. It’s essential to understand how the story varies according to particular populations and particular approaches. What is it about the process that worked best? What worked best for clients with mental health issues? What worked best for new immigrants? What is the message or approach that resonates most with employers and is most likely to lead to sustainable jobs? And lastly but perhaps most importantly, what keeps job seekers, especially those facing significant employment barriers, engaged in the process and motivated to persevere.

Ideally, of course, are randomized trials because this kind of research eliminates doubt about causation, for example, being able to understand the degree to which particular outcomes are the result of particular inputs (e.g., services or in-work accommodations).

However, much can be learned from in-house data collection such as program administrative records, notably through information collected in the ICM in BC, and through opportunities for staff and client feedback.

For example, Worksource Skagit, in Washington, provides their “customers” with an opportunity to give feedback by completing an electronic survey in which they are able to rate their experience with

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| It's a sign of things to come within Australia. You need to be able to demonstrate that you have effectively engaged the community in developing this plan. | If we do it over time, we get a pattern of who is using our services, their experience, and if there is any trending on specific issues like language, disability issues, youth or age (are they being treated differently). We get a profile of our service mix by population. And then if we identify anything that seems to be a variation from the norm, we attend to that through staff training. |

(Brian K. Humphrey, WorkSource Skagit)

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62 Many professional development materials are available to their membership on their website. Some materials are publicly available; others were shared for the purpose of this study.
staff and services on a 5-point scale, from “Unacceptable” to “Excellent.” Job seekers are also asked to indicate whether they are a “first time visitor” or not, and/or any of the following:

- Veteran
- Person with a Disability
- Youth (under 22 years old)

They also do random follow up surveys, as well as tuning into anecdotal information.63

Recommended data collection and evaluation practices include the following:

- Collecting data that tracks job seeker satisfaction and meets the objectives of collaborating partners and other entities providing financial assistance.
- Reviewing records to determine whether various diverse populations participated in programs and activities in a meaningful and effective fashion.
- Ensuring that management information systems comply with legal requirements relating to storage and confidentiality of information, including information concerning disability.
- Eliciting client satisfaction and other feedback in a variety of ways to allow all clients the opportunity to provide it (e.g., verbal, written, electronic, via voice telephone and relay of TTY/TDD).
- Within client satisfaction efforts, establishing policies that allow for the collection of information on the degree to which the jobs obtained for participants match their employment plans.
- Using forms for client and partner feedback that specifically ask about issues clients experience in using the range of One-Stop services.
- Using forms for client and partner feedback that specifically ask about whether services are effective and provide meaningful benefit.

It is, of course, imperative that the data be such that it’s possible to separate out findings for any particular specialized group, that is, not just participation or employment outcomes for “people with disabilities,” but findings specific to specific kinds of disabilities, e.g., mental health vs. physical.64

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63 The survey can be seen at [https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/2X8F6Y8](https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/2X8F6Y8).

64 The particular challenge of data collection given existing database software systems is beyond the scope of this study. However, some sites have developed ways to address this challenge, including supplementing the primary ICM database with proprietary software.
Conclusion

This report has compiled several strategies and practices found to work well with specialized populations seeking employment through one-stop employment service centres. Information has come from experience and program evaluations in the United States, in the United Kingdom and perhaps especially from Australia. Each of these jurisdictions has one-stop systems but each interprets and implements differently, including how incentives are built into the system to stimulate program innovation intended to improve job finding and job retention outcomes.

Each jurisdiction has, additionally, undergone many reforms since first implementing one-stop approaches in the late 1990s, with some reforms more fruitful than others. In a comparison of labour markets in seven countries undertaken by the OECD in 2013, Australia is cited as being the most effective of the OECD countries, including Ireland, Norway, Finland, Switzerland, Japan, Australia and the United Kingdom at weathering the financial crisis of the mid 2000s by “well designed activation policies” which get more people to work and thus reduce benefits paid out.\(^{65}\)

The field of employment services is constantly evolving. New initiatives are being tried and tested; new approaches to problem solving are constantly emerging here and in other jurisdictions. For example, “communities of practice” are developing to tackle some of the challenges in supporting job seekers with complex needs into work.\(^{66}\) Countries like Australia increasingly look to the “third sector;” or community-based organizations to improve outreach and outcomes for clients with complex needs.

New best practices are on the horizon; new reforms are being considered.

In New York City, for example, while there is unlikely to be a change in their current system of generic one-stops supplemented by outsourced services for more complex needs, consideration is given to expanding the connection between the one-stops and the community based organizations through either having staff from the CBOs co-locate even one day/week at the one-stop or vice versa.

Australia too is looking at possible reforms with a view to substantive changes to the current model in July of 2015. NESA has advocated many reforms not least of which are reforms to reduce the amount of red tape experienced by frontline employment staff. Substantive reforms are also being considered in the UK in advance of contract renewals with providers scheduled for 2015.

All jurisdictions strive to provide a consistently high level of services across the board so that there is no “wrong door.” The reality is, some variation in delivery is to be expected.

In a study looking at variation in program effects, the analysis showed that how a program is implemented makes a difference. The study took account of things like client and contextual characteristics, differences in things like treatment exposure and intensity (e.g., a longer counseling session), and less objectively reported measures of treatment “quality” (interactions between staff and


\(^{66}\) A Community of Practice (CoP) is comprised of individuals who share issues, challenges or concerns and want to change or improve practices.
clients). They concluded that how a program is implemented makes a very big difference in how well it works and this is because “a simple but essential truth about program implementation is that it happens inside local organizations.” The study authors point to organizational attributes including strong leadership, organizational resources and staff capacity, culture and climate, and the involvement of an outside monitor or “fixer” as key outcome influencers.67

The learning shared in this report points to ways in which individual one-stops may benefit from targeted support in all relevant areas.

Appendices

Key Informant Interviews

EPBC (Preliminary Research)

Val Beaman
Chair, CPAC Working Group on Specialized Populations

Michael Hawkins
Chair, CPAC Working Group on Specialized Populations

Chris Arnold
Expert Advisory Panel on Specialized Populations

Judi Huta
Job Options
WCG (West Coast Group)

Annette Greer
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Dr. Richard Dorsett
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(Oversight, DWP Research Programme)

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Sally Sinclair
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Matt Clarke
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Marg Lourey
Senior Policy Officer
NESA (National Employment Services Association)
HOPE Project

Vanessa Parlatta
Chief Operations Officer
ORS Group
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