

Employment Services

A variety of employment services are described in the following five entries. They also refer the reader to other relevant entries in *Tools & Techniques*.

Of special note in considering these tools for CED is an overall look at community-based employment services in the U.S.: Bennet Harrison and colleagues in a report to the Ford Foundation, which involved research in 10 urban areas and more than 100 organizations, briefly describe about 20 case studies of employment services and argue that CDCs and like groups sometimes do the best work not by mounting their own employment service programs but by building city-wide or region-wide networks for varied employment services. Bennet Harrison et al., *Building Bridges: Community Development Corporations and the World of Employment Training* (1995), available from the Economic Development Assistance Consortium (1 Fanueil Hall, Boston, MA 02109; tel. 617-742-4481).

Career Planning

Description

Career planning encompasses decision making, goal setting, self-reflection, labour market analysis and more - all with a focus on determining one's future career path. Career planning is not a process that simply begins and ends, it is an evolving vision of one's future. However, in the context of a community's HR plan, the career planning program does occur within a set period of time, either through one-to-one career counselling or group sessions. The idea is to offer people who are uncertain about career options and their own career goals a chance to reflect on their skills, abilities, and preferred working environment as well as look at current labour market conditions to establish a career path for themselves. Based on the goals set during career planning a person would take steps toward gaining any necessary training or education and securing employment in their chosen field. Career planning programs, then, become a foundation for later-stage programs in job search and job placement.

Career counsellor and researcher, Norman Amundson, describes four phases of career planning:

1. Readiness: Asking, Are the participants ready to engage in the career planning process which will require personal exploration and assessment, and a commitment to skill

training and job search? Are other dimensions of their lives in place to allow them to fully participate in this process - i.e., are basic needs met?

2. Personal Exploration (Who am I?) and Career Exploration (What can I do?): Examining one's interests, values, strengths, limitations, etc., and then looking at external factors that may have an impact on career decisions, such as, labour market information and access to educational opportunities.
3. Evaluation, Compromise and Integration: Weighing all the information gathered, considering where to compromise (e.g., go away to school for two years or study by correspondence) and then formulating choices into a personal career plan.
4. Commitment, Action Planning and Follow Through: With well-defined goals that permit incremental steps, taking the steps toward those goals.

Career planning as part of an overall HR plan can be specialized to populations that may need higher levels of support. For example, if a community is faced with high rates of youth dropping out of high school, this can present an opportunity for career planning with at-risk youth.

Career planning programs can be short and intensive (e.g., three full days) or may be designed to take place over a longer period of time (several weeks). For the short programs, selection of participants is important in order to target people who are already functioning well, can work independently and do not have a lot of barriers to finding employment. For those people who are already part-time workers or are parents or have barriers to employment, it is better to have a longer program in order to have the time to understand and address the various needs of those involved as well as offer a more flexible schedule.

Benefits

People will be more satisfied with their jobs and more successful in them if the jobs meet their needs in terms of flexibility, level of challenge, income, number of hours, skills required, etc. With a systematic career planning approach, one can make an informed choice before entering a training program or field of employment.

Quite apart from improving income potential, career planning can broaden out horizons to consider employment possibilities that may be more than just an income, to look at jobs that can also be fulfilling and meaningful.

Major challenges

Being unemployed can be like riding an emotional rollercoaster. So entering a career planning program, people may appear unmotivated and resentful of assistance, perhaps in part because their self-confidence has already been squashed and their energy drained. In

some cases people have been through the hoops of the Employment Insurance or Income Assistance systems which in themselves can be demoralizing.

What is encountered in the career planning process often involves a lot more than just job-related issues. For example, someone who is an immigrant and qualified as an engineer may seek career planning assistance because she cannot find work in her field and lacks Canadian experience. She works as a cleaning person in order to support her family. This person may be contending with disbelief that after years of education and experience she is cleaning floors. She also may be struggling to learn English and experiencing social isolation. Thus the career counsellor has not one but many issues to focus on.

People seeking the assistance of a career counsellor may view the counsellor as someone having “magical powers” who can quickly resolve situations of unemployment or career uncertainty. It is still another challenge to make sure that clients are being empowered to make their own career plans and decisions.

Some practical steps

Creating a career planning program calls for flexibility because the process will not always happen in a linear order. Flexibility is also required so as to adapt to changing labour markets and changing local conditions.

To offer current labour market information to the program participants, use resources such as the public library or the Chamber of Commerce for local information or consider broader publications like Work Futures or CareerWare which are updated annually.

Resource organizations & contacts

- The Learning Enrichment Foundation runs an integrated multi-function employment program which they call their Action Centre for Employment (ACE). Contact them via their website (www.lefca.org) or telephone (416-769-0830) or fax (416-769-9912).
- Human Resource Development Canada offers a website which includes a 10-step career planning guide, the Career Paths Program, a facilitator’s guide and related resources and internet links. (www.careerpathsonline.com). Contact HRDC Career Paths by phone (604-435-1937).
- Yes Canada Career Planning. Contact Sophie Barteck or Carolyn Robertson by phone (604-435-1937).

Publications

- ***Case Study:** “The Power of integrated Services.” How Toronto’s Learning Enrichment Foundation not only finds jobs for people, but finds people for jobs (current and future) through its network of training programs.
- Norman Amundson, Gray Poehnell, and Stuart Smithson. *Employment Counselling Theory and Strategies: A Book of Readings*. Orders and inquiries to Ergon Communications (fax: 604-448-9025).
- *WorkScene: BC Work Futures for Youth*. Provides basic information on specific careers in BC and has been designed specifically for young people. To order, contact the Open Learning Agency (800-663-1653).
- Joe Valvasori, *An Integrated Model for Career Development* (Toronto, ON: Learning Enrichment Foundation, 2000).
- *Careerware* is a software program that provides current national labour market information and is updated annually. Call 800-267-1544.