

Summary

Collective Action: How Agencies & Government Can Respond to Issues 2nd Annual Golden Horseshoe / Bi-Regional Networking Day, June 19, 2007

This exercise explored the impact of labour market policy changes and ways issues could be resolved at agency and governmental levels.

Communication and Clarification of the Process

Agencies saw that they could resolve the issue of communication about the changes somewhat by increasing their own opportunities for networking and collaboration, and by asking questions and sharing information. In turn, participants feel that government needs to provide more information, be more sensitive to the impact on community agencies, and to participate in local level events.

Recognition of Client Needs

Agencies are concerned about those clients who may not fit into the “one-stop” and “outcomes” oriented philosophies. These are clients with multiple barriers, non-EI eligible clients, those living in rural areas, and those without Internet access or skills. Agencies also want to ensure that their local labour market trends are recognized.

"The Numbers Game"

Evaluation of program success and related funding issues were key. Participants are concerned that the outcomes-based evaluation does not serve all clients and results in "cherry picking" as agencies struggle to meet numbers. They encourage government to refine the definition of success to include qualitative measures, to take into account client barriers, quality of work, and local markets, and to hold agencies accountable. At the same time, participants recognize that agencies need to be more honest about meeting targets, to advocate more strongly on the clients' behalf and to connect closely with their communities to determine service needs and private sector opportunities.

Operational Issues

Technology, staff development and promotion were issues for which participants offered a number of solutions. While they encourage government to recognize and appropriately fund these operational components, participants also see ways they can share their own expertise and work harder to enlighten funders on the need.

This information was collected at the 2nd Annual Golden Horseshoe / Bi-Regional Networking Day on June 19, 2007, by Facilitating Inclusion, St. Joseph's Immigrant Women's Centre, and summarized by ACTEW, A Committee to Training and Employment for Women (www.actew.org).