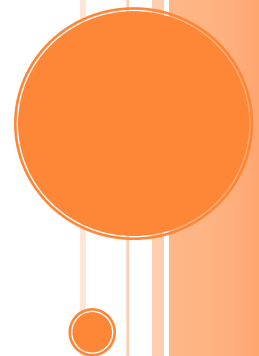


Small Business Savvy

In- Year Funding Project 2013-14

This project was funded by Employment Ontario, a program of the Ontario government.



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Overview

The ultimate goal for the EO client is employment, exiting to work in a small, medium-sized or large business. A vital part of employment readiness is to help a client understand the business environment.

Working with Ontario Office Works, a service provider of the Ontario Self-Employment Benefit (OSEB) program, Literacy Link Niagara designed an exploratory literacy curriculum that allows a learner to learn in the context of small business. The curriculum seeks to build client skills, while providing them with the opportunity to learn more about small business concepts. The curriculum is suitable for a learner who is interested in becoming a small business owner or who wants to work in a business environment.

A goal of this project was to create and strengthen the relationship between OSEB and other Employment Ontario agencies, specifically adult literacy and employment service. Literacy Link Niagara has made an effort to include OSEB partners at more community tables and events. In 2014-15, Literacy Link Niagara will attempt to facilitate an information & referral protocol that includes self-employment program providers.

Activities

The main activity of this project was the creation of the curriculum. Ontario Office Works provided their program framework to give Literacy Link Niagara (LLN) staff a context of what small business owners would need to know to be successful. LLN did not want to duplicate the materials, but use similar documents to help a learner explore self-employment as an option. The focus of the literacy curriculum is to increase skill, not knowledge, where a self-employment program would focus more on the knowledge piece.

It was important to LLN that the curriculum be levelled in relation to the Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework (OALCF). LLN staff met with Lesley Hamilton to ensure that they had the knowledge to level the materials correctly. Lesley also validated some materials.

The curriculum will be distributed at the end of March to local adult literacy programs. It will be housed on the LLN website for download for people outside of Niagara.

To better understand the current relationship between LBS and Self-Employment, LLN took Ontario Office Works staff on a tour of 3 LBS agencies. LLN sent out a survey to LBS staff after the tour to learn about the myths, challenges and current resources available to clients in LBS who are exploring self-employment as a career option. It was clear that there are lots of opportunities to partner and increase knowledge of each other's services in the future.

Deliverables

The main deliverable for this project is the Small Business Savvy curriculum and the associated Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework levelling and rationale.

Feedback from LBS programs on their knowledge of self-employment was also a deliverable.

Partners

Partners on this project included

- Ontario Office Works, a provider of the Ontario Self-Employment Benefit program
- Lesley Hamilton, former Executive Director of LOCS network and skilled OALCF relation expert
- Jacklyn Catterick, LBS practitioner who worked on some of the materials during a previous LLN project that were adapted for the current curriculum
- Local adult literacy programs, who will receive and provide feedback on the curriculum moving forward

Key Findings/Learnings

Literacy Link Niagara (LLN) learned about the experience of a new small business owner through the materials provided by Ontario Office Works.

LLN staff strengthened their knowledge of the Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework (OALCF), which will allow them to level curriculum materials in the future and better understand and respond to the needs of local adult literacy programs.

Challenges

Skills vs. Knowledge

It is difficult for many to understand the purpose of literacy curriculum that is on a specific topic. The goal of the curriculum is not to improve knowledge or provide an overall small business entry course. This curriculum may provide a foundation for people to enter a small business program. It is often hard for people outside of literacy to understand this concept. Literacy Link Niagara (LLN) will try to be very clear in the introduction to the curriculum that the purpose of the curriculum is to improve learner skills while allowing them to explore their interest in small business.

Next Steps

Literacy Link Niagara will distribute the curriculum digitally to all adult literacy programs in Niagara.

Literacy Link Niagara will house the curriculum on their website for free download by programs. Links to available Small Business support programs will be included on the project webpage to assist learners looking for entry into the small business field.

Additional Documents

These documents can be found on the projects page of the Literacy Link Niagara website

- Small Business Savvy curriculum
- Small Business Savvy curriculum - Answers
- Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework (OALCF) relation
- Survey results from tour