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EMPLOYER-DRIVEN WORKFORCE SOLUTION DESIGN LEARNINGS AND PROMISING PRACTICES REPORT

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purpose

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About Us

Mariam Assefa Fund– World Education Services

The WES Mariam Assefa Fund, as the philanthropic division of World Education Services, is the primary funder of this project. By means of grants and impact investments, the Fund actively backs transformative endeavours aimed at fostering inclusive economies for immigrants and refugees in both the United States and Canada.

Peel Halton Workforce Development Group

The Peel Halton Workforce Development Group is a community-based non-profit. With the goal of promoting inclusive economic development, PHWDG conducts research on labour market trends within Peel Halton shares findings in an accurate and accessible way and convenes workforce system actors and community partners to collaborate on responsive action.

Brampton Economic Development Office

As the home of Canada's largest inland port, Brampton is at the hub of North America's transportation network, contributing roughly two billion dollars annually to the national GDP. Brampton is home to over 11,000 employers in logistics, transportation, and warehousing who employ over 24,000 workers. The Brampton Economic Development Office supports businesses of all sizes to locate, launch and grow in Brampton, and is particularly interested in supporting the logistics & supply chain sector's sustainability and productivity.

Purpose Co

Purpose Co is a strategy, solution design, and capacity-building firm specializing in designing and implementing workforce solutions that advance sustainable outcomes for people and businesses. Purpose Co works with partners to co-design solutions and build the capacity of workforce systems to address the specific needs of job seekers, workers, employers, and practitioners with a focus on increasing equity, inclusion, and economic prosperity.

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It is important to note that the views expressed in this report are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the perspectives of the participating organizations or the funding entity.



Introduction

Collaborative strategies are essential for aligning workforce development initiatives with the unique needs and challenges faced by immigrants and local industry employers in a region. Active engagement and collaboration with employers is a crucial element in this work, ensuring that workforce development initiatives effectively connect individuals to quality job opportunities while addressing the specific needs of the industry. Employers play a vital role in informing the criteria and design of workforce development programming with real job market needs, ensuring that programs produce job-ready individuals. Participation of employers in workforce initiatives fosters commitment and ownership, contributing resources and expertise to support the success of initiatives.

In December 2021, the WES Mariam Assefa Fund, a philanthropic foundation dedicated to supporting efforts to create more inclusive economies for immigrants and refugees in Canada and the United States, announced Peel Halton Workforce Development Group (PHWDG) as one of its grantees. The project's goal was to design and facilitate a process to identify solutions to address employers' workforce challenges and create access to jobs and improved economic opportunities for immigrants, refugees, and newcomers in the region. In partnership with the City of Brampton through Brampton Economic Development Office (BED), and Purpose Co, PHWDG launched the Employer Driven Workforce Solution Design in Logistics project, aimed at developing industry-led solutions to address the workforce needs of the logistics and supply chain sector in Brampton, while also enhancing economic opportunities for newcomers and refugees in the region.

This report provides learnings and best practices in engaging employers to design workforce solutions and influencing employer practices, especially those tailored to supporting and integrating newcomers. These insights are derived from a combination of learnings from this project, additional case studies, and secondary research, providing a holistic perspective on designing initiatives with employers as central decision-makers, and enabling positive changes in their practices. Additionally, it also provides a summary and outcomes related to engaging employers in Brampton's logistics and supply chain sector as part of this project.



Methodology

This report draws from primary and secondary research and insights derived from various workforce initiatives. This includes an array of case studies, some of which are specific to projects undertaken by Purpose Co and developed expressly for this report. These case studies offer a summary of the program, lessons learned, and noteworthy outcomes. They have been intentionally selected to illustrate successful practices in engaging employers in the design of solutions and positively influencing their practices. The insights are drawn from various reports covering industry initiatives, learnings, and promising practices, as well as from Purpose Co's hands-on experience in employer collaborations and the feedback shared by stakeholders and clients.

The Employer Driven Workforce Solution Design in Logistics project funded by the Mariam Assefa Fund, which is covered in greater detail in this report, was designed to engage employers in identifying their own challenges, and priorities and designing actionable solutions. Employers collaborated in developing solutions, aiming to expand job opportunities for immigrants and address workforce needs. The project also involved newcomers and current employees in tailoring solutions for the logistics sector. This approach ensured their vital input was incorporated into the tailored solutions developed for them. The research conducted included a survey encompassing 19 workers in the sector, alongside insightful interviews with various industry stakeholders, including two academic experts in the field of supply chain and logistics in the region, seven employers, and eleven newcomer job seekers aspiring to work in this sector. These interviews provided invaluable, in-depth insights into the experiences, challenges, and aspirations of all stakeholders. Finally, 7 employers participated in 7 structured solutions design sessions aimed at prioritizing their challenges and developing solutions for pilot testing. The research team maintained ongoing communication with participating employers, reaching out to them on two separate occasions to gain insights into their progress, as well as to obtain their feedback on the collaborative design process and their participation in it.



Employer Driven Workforce Solution Design in Logistics

Project Background

The *Employer Driven Workforce Solution Design in Logistics* project was initiated to address the ongoing challenge of workforce recruitment and retention faced by Ontario's logistics and supply chain industry. This challenge, which persisted before and during the COVID-19 pandemic, resulted in high turnover rates, labour shortages, and a lack of in-house training programs, particularly for entry and mid-level positions. Additionally, the project also aimed to address the persistent employment challenges encountered by newcomers in seeking employment in this sector of Canada.

The goal of this project was to engage employers directly in the design of solutions to workforce challenges they are experiencing and establish solutions or pilot initiatives to create better employment or economic opportunities for newcomers and immigrants. Specifically, this project collaborated with employers in the supply chain and logistics sector in the City of Brampton, working in collaboration with Brampton Economic Development. Additionally, this project integrated worker voice by involving workers and newcomer job seekers in the identification and design of solutions by interviewing them and getting their feedback on persisting challenges and potential solutions. The rationale was to involve employers as the primary drivers in defining their current challenges and desired future state with input from workers or potential job seekers affected by these solutions.



Project Features

The project included the following components:

1

Problem and Opportunity Analysis through Primary Research

A detailed assessment was carried out to understand the challenges and opportunities associated with the employers in this sector:

- **Industry Stakeholder and Employer Interviews:** Interviews with 2 academic experts in the field from Sheridan College and 7 employers were conducted to provide valuable insights into their prominent challenges, including those specific to attracting and retaining workers, barriers to supporting skills development for incumbent workforce, and assess their interest in participating in this program.
- **Newcomer Interviews:** In-depth interviews with 11 newcomer jobseekers with either previous international experience or interest in entering this sector were conducted to understand their interests, barriers, and challenges in entering this sector.
- **Incumbent Worker Survey:** A survey of 19 incumbent workers in various roles to understand the experiences, priorities, and pain points of workers in the sector.

The findings from newcomer interviews and incumbent workers' surveys were used to educate employers on worker barriers and motivators and to inform the employers' solutions.

2**Employer Solutions Table (EST)**

The Employer Solutions Table involved 7 facilitated sessions with 7 participating organizations (each employer team consisted of 1-4 participants resulting in a total of 19 participants) that served as a platform for the employers to engage in a structured series of discussions and reflections, with the overarching goal of identifying their key priorities, challenges, and collaboratively brainstorming potential solutions to pilot. This approach was intended to ensure that the solutions proposed and developed were firmly rooted in the tangible experiences of those within the logistics and supply chain sector. The employers were expected to commit to providing 3 hours per month to participate and actively contribute in these sessions. The value for them was to be able to network with fellow employers who are working on similar problems, have a facilitated and supported space to pilot new solutions or enhance existing practices, access primary research about the Brampton-specific workforce landscape, and have an opportunity to learn about evidence-informed solutions from other contexts.

3**Follow-Up Technical Assistance**

The third component of this project involved delivering technical assistance and support to the participating organizations during the implementation of their pilot projects. This included the possibility of offering a range of activities and resources aimed at ensuring the successful execution of their initiatives. For instance, tailored support to address the specific needs and challenges faced by each organization could involve one-on-one consultations, workshops, or training sessions covering implementation support, monitoring support, or troubleshooting unexpected issues or roadblocks. The goal of this follow-up technical assistance was to ensure that the pilot projects not only got off the ground successfully but also continued to progress and achieve their intended outcomes. For various reasons ranging from internal capacity constraints, wanting to take the project on independently, variation in implementation timelines, organization-wide buy-in, and lack of clarity on what support could be provided none of the participating organizations opted to receive this assistance.

The project approach aimed to instill a culture of data-informed decision-making, enhance stakeholder buy-in and commitment, and ultimately yield actionable solutions tailored to meet the distinctive demands of employers and support the integration of newcomers in the logistics and supply chain sector.

Solutions Design Table Participants

A total of 7 employers agreed to participate in this project. The selection of these employers was a collaborative effort, facilitated through the networks of Peel Halton Workforce Development Group (PHWDG), Brampton Economic Development Office, and Purpose Co. Brampton Economic Development Office played a pivotal role in garnering essential support from employers, underlining the significance of their involvement. Additionally, cold-email outreach was also used in approaching potential participants. The following employers with operations in Brampton committed to participating in the project:

- Coca-cola Canada Bottling Ltd (Coke Canada)
- Canada Blood Services
- E-shipper
- DSV
- CN (Canadian National Railway)
- Bollore
- Kuehne and Nagel

Project Outcomes

The Employer Solutions Table yielded six distinct pilot ideas at the end of the first year that were selected to be piloted by the participating employers in their respective organizations. Details on the resulting pilot initiatives are shared below, including updates from the employers. It is important to note that not all organizations were able to fully implement their plans, and not everyone was available to provide feedback on their internal progress during the second year of the project.

	Pilot Concept	Pilot Update
1	Cultivate relationships with local newcomer service agencies to access their clients as a potential talent pool, with a specific emphasis on newcomers possessing transferable skills from various industries.	<p>Successfully partnered with a national logistics association to connect with partners and participate in school events to raise awareness of career opportunities. This helped with recruitment efforts.</p> <p>Positive outcomes included developing an internship program working with local schools. The internship program has been successful and they are working to formalize and standardize the process across Canada. Participating in the school events led to being invited back again, showing the pilot was an effective engagement strategy.</p>

	Pilot Concept	Pilot Update
2	Explore alternative licensing requirements for new drivers (substituting them with targeted training) while maintaining compliance with insurance standards, thereby expanding opportunities for newcomers without a Canadian driving history.	<p>A Training and Mentorship program was developed and introduced to replace mandatory 2-year experience insurance requirements, in collaboration with unions to harmonize these requirements across their 37 distinct labour agreements. This Mentorship Program aims to cater to individuals who may not possess all mandatory skills but showcase potential and eagerness to make valuable contributions to the team.</p> <p>In addition, revamped job descriptions to attract quality candidates over quantity.</p> <p>Both initiatives aim to improve talent acquisition and create a more adaptable workforce. (<i>see Canadian Blood Services Case Study for more details</i>)</p>
3	Refine job descriptions tailored to specific roles and leverage social media for building a compelling employer brand. Utilize these tools to attract fresh candidates, particularly focusing on newcomer women.	Not pursued, the employer shared that they did not have the capacity at that time to devote the resources.
4	Collaborate with associations in the GTA that champion women's economic empowerment. Jointly develop a training curriculum and an industry exposure strategy to attract women candidates to the sector.	Employer is currently exploring this pilot.
5	Develop a two-week 'bootcamp' designed to equip candidates with existing soft skills with the technical training required for specific roles.	Employer was seeking direct funding, and is no longer pursuing this without potential funding opportunities.
6	Engage with targeted newcomer communities at job fairs and translate role descriptions for posting on community- or language-specific job boards.	Employer is currently exploring this pilot.

Key Factors for Employer Engagement

The following factors were critical in the successful implementation of different aspects of this project. These insights stem from the project team's experience and have been applied in subsequent projects with positive outcomes. They also align with feedback received from the project participants.



Local Community Partnership

The initial success in engaging industry employers was significantly bolstered by the presence of a local community partner, like the Brampton Economic Development Office with existing relationships and credibility in the industry. This partnership proved pivotal in effectively involving employers, underlining the significance of local relationships and organizational capacity in this process.



Intentional Design of the Employer Solutions Table

The intentional design and execution of the Employer Solutions Table (EST) that adapted to the needs and concerns of participating firms fostered a collaborative environment among traditionally competitive organizations. This approach effectively encouraged sharing and collaboration among employers, enabling them to collectively explore workforce challenges, identify root issues, and brainstorm potential solutions.



Safe Space for Exploration

The EST provided a secure space for employers to delve into their workforce priorities and challenges. Through facilitated activities, employers pinpointed areas within their "locus of control" where they could take action. This approach was applied to both recruitment and retention challenges, enabling employers to specify areas for improvement.



Targeted Solutions Through Problem Identification

Each employer identified a specific problem they aimed to address, which initiated the planning of pilot programs designed to tackle their recruitment and retention challenges. This targeted approach facilitated the development of solutions tailored to their unique issues.



Facilitated Peer Support and Collaboration

Following the EST sessions, employer feedback underscored the potential benefits of more frequent or extended meetings. Collaborating with, learning from, and relating to other employers who faced similar hiring and retention challenges, as well as effective session facilitation, were highlighted as valuable aspects of the engagement process.



Team Dynamics

Larger employer teams engaged in the EST (with 3–4 representatives offering diverse perspectives on labour challenges within the organization) notably outperformed smaller teams (comprising 1 or 2 members primarily from a single department). This distinction underscores the significance of team capacity and support in fostering engagement and propelling the action-oriented testing of solutions.

Case Studies

The following section presents case studies of initiatives where employers have been engaged to effectively transform their practices to support newcomer integration as a solution to address their prevalent challenges. These case studies collectively illustrate various approaches, including the Employer Solutions Table, where employers have successfully worked with industry or other workforce partners.



Case Study 1: Canadian Blood Services

Employer Solutions Table Participant



Background

Canadian Blood Services is a not-for-profit charitable organization that operates independently from the government. Their services encompass the provision of blood, plasma, and transfusion services, and maintaining a stem cell registry. These services are offered on behalf of all provincial and territorial governments, with the exception of Quebec.



Challenge

Canadian Blood Services (CBS) faced a complex challenge in addressing the urgent need for additional drivers to support the transportation of biological products, a vital aspect of their operations. Previous attempts to hire externally resulted in few qualified candidates. Among potential candidates, many were unwilling to work early morning shifts, consequently leaving CBS in a vulnerable position. The aftermath of the pandemic had a demoralizing impact on workforce motivation, with many individuals hesitant to re-enter the job market. High turnover rates, volunteer resignations, and retirements further reduced the pool of potential candidates. Increasing demands on the existing workforce led to employee burnout due to extended working hours and deferred vacations. Adding to the complexity, their insurance provider required two years of Canadian experience for driving roles, excluding talented newcomers from participating in CBS's vital activities.

Solution

To address these issues, CBS engaged in the Employer Solutions Table, focusing on broadening their pool of qualified candidates, particularly newcomers to Canada. This collaborative effort validated their challenges through discussions with other sector employers, brainstorming solutions, refining their approach, prioritizing their needs, and creating an action plan with clear timelines and goals. Their solution included multiple key elements:



Job Description Enhancement

CBS initiated a quick win by updating their job descriptions. They made them more specific and aligned with their actual needs, taking steps such as incorporating video applications and descriptions to enhance the transparency of job postings, including shift requirements. Additionally, they removed any requirements that might discourage potential candidates from applying.



Addressing Insurance Requirements

CBS intended to engage their insurance providers to find alternative candidate requirements and preparation strategies. The goal was to eliminate the stringent 2-year Canadian driving experience requirement for Driver roles. They connected with their insurance providers and after discussions, identified the possibility of replacing licensing and experience prerequisites with targeted training programs.



Training and Mentorship Program

After securing approvals from their unions, workers, and leadership, CBS established a partnership with an external vetting organization and training providers to collaborate on designing a comprehensive training and mentorship initiative. This program has enabled them to hire drivers without the 2-year experience as trainees, who will undergo hands-on training and mentorship during a 6-month probationary period. These trainees will receive full-time employee compensation during this period. The training involved safety courses and hands-on job-specific training, with a road competence evaluation facilitated by the external vetting organization, both at the beginning and after completing 500 hours of training. This alternative approach was accepted by the insurance company.

Additionally, CBS addressed the challenge of staffing early morning delivery shifts, particularly challenging to fill. They engaged in discussions with hospital partners to negotiate pickup and drop-off times, enhancing their ability to ensure consistent deliveries while providing more stable work opportunities for their employees.



Outcome

The changes implemented have yielded several positive outcomes for CBS:

- Changes in job descriptions have led to a notable increase in higher-quality candidates.
- The training and mentorship program is in progress, with the hiring of the first three trainees who are currently in the program.
- The success achieved in Brampton and Ontario in addressing driver-related issues is being shared with CBS colleagues in Vancouver, with the aim of extending the positive impact of these initiatives to other regions.



Case Study 2: Ontario General Contractors Association



Background

The Ontario General Contractors Association (OGCA) represents general contracting issues throughout the Province of Ontario for construction in the Industrial, Commercial, and Institutional (ICI) sectors. The association encompasses a diverse range of members, including small, medium, and large firms, representing both union and open-shop contractors. These members collectively account for approximately 70% of all ICI projects in Ontario. The OGCA's mission revolves around representing its members, providing advocacy, and taking a leadership role in driving member success while advancing the construction industry.



Challenge

The construction sector in Ontario experienced a significant boom in activity, but its productivity and competitiveness were hampered by severe labour shortages in key areas, particularly in Site Supervisor and Project Manager roles, which were crucial for operational success and productivity. These labour shortages were pervasive across the sector, affecting individual General Contractors (GCs) and impeding the industry as a whole. In response to this challenge, the OGCA identified the need to address this shortage as a critical priority for 2021. This case study details the findings and recommendations of the OGCA's efforts to tackle the sector-wide shortage of Project Managers and Site Supervisors.

Solution

To ensure high-impact solutions for General Contractors (GCs), they were placed at the center of the project. Collaboration and input from GCs were prioritized throughout. This included identifying promising practices and success criteria with significant GC input and ensuring industry-relevant solutions.

The project began with an extensive research phase, covering qualitative, quantitative, participatory, and applied research to understand the labour shortage, its impacts, coping strategies, and success criteria. Subsequently, the Ontario General Contractors Association (OGCA) formed a Workforce Action Group of 11 influential GCs engaging in a facilitated co-design process led by a partner outside of the industry to develop industry-driven solutions to the labour issue.

The co-design process culminated in the development of six innovative solutions aimed at addressing the skilled labour shortage within the Ontario construction sector. These solutions were all developed by the employers and shared with the broader membership. The solutions were categorized as follows:

- 1 Upskilling Current Employees**
- 2 Streamlined Entry of New Talent**
- 3 Solutions for Both New Entrants and Current Employees**



Upskilling Current Employees

- **Internal Employer Upskilling Toolkit:** This toolkit would provide employers with a comprehensive set of resources to facilitate the selection and training of internal candidates for roles as Project Managers and Site Supervisors.
- **Technical Assistance Groups:** Employers using the toolkit would benefit from technical support from external experts to implement best practices and enhance internal upskilling outcomes.
- **Train the Trainer Program:** This cohort-based program would empower current Project Managers and Site Supervisors with the best practices in delivering on-the-job learning. It would further enable them to coach and mentor junior colleagues.



Streamlined Entry of New Talent

- **Newcomer Bridging Program:** This program, spanning 2–3 months, would provide a pathway for skilled newcomers with international experience to transition into the construction industry as Junior Project Managers. It would combine classroom learning, language upskilling, and practical job placements, equipping participants with the necessary skills and knowledge.
- **New Graduates Bridging Program:** A 6–12 month program for new and recent graduates, that would offer classroom learning, job placements, coaching, and mentorship. This program would accelerate skill development, enabling graduates to enter the industry as Junior Project Managers.



Solutions for Both New Entrants and Current Employees

- **Group Insurance Option:** To reduce barriers and personal liability for Site Supervisors, the OGCA would secure competitive professional liability insurance at a group rate. This insurance would be made accessible to Site Supervisors through their employers, providing an additional layer of protection.



Outcome

Following the Workforce Action Group meetings, OGCA, through funding from the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development (MLITSD), advanced their Pathways to ICI Program Initiatives. They partnered with Purpose Co to develop two industry-specific toolkits, including key competencies matrices, assessment tools, and a training and coaching plan for recruitment and upskilling. They also introduced an Employer Train the Trainer Program to enhance mentors' skills for on-the-job training.

In ongoing efforts, OGCA is expanding and piloting the Train-the-Trainer Toolkit, focusing on skill development for Site Supervisors and Project Managers. This initiative's success is rooted in its collaborative, research-driven, and industry-focused approach, addressing the labour shortage in construction and enhancing workforce capabilities. It serves as a model for industry-driven solutions that prioritize end-users' needs and collaborate with employers to address their challenges.



Case Study 3: Hospitality Training Action Centre 75 (HTA 75)



Background

HTA 75, the training division of the union, UNITE HERE Local 75 that is supported by the Government of Ontario and Government of Canada, is committed to enhancing the skills, well-being and economic opportunity of hospitality workers in Canada. Through collaboration with industry employer partners, HTA 75 concentrates on providing vocational skills training to incumbent workers and new entrants to the industry, alongside other employability training programs and support services. This concerted effort aims to cultivate a proficient talent pool of workers and play a vital role in fostering a skilled and resilient hospitality workforce in Canada.



Challenge

Amid the post-COVID recovery phase, hospitality employers faced the challenge in sourcing room attendants due to returning and escalating demand. This surge strained existing staff, resulting in burnout and higher turnover rates. Newly recruited personnel would often depart due to discrepancies between their initial perceptions and the actual demands of the job. Many hotels relied on a pipeline of newcomers to fill immediate needs. Due to the incredible operational challenges presented by post-COVID recovery, many employers lacked the resources and capacity to adequately mentor and train these new hires. HTA 75 offered hands-on housekeeping training and a job-specific language training program for this role. However, employers were slow to utilize these programs to address their needs.

Solution

To address these concerns, HTA 75 proactively connected with incumbent workers and multiple employers, discerning specific challenges within the role and devising strategies to align their offerings for industry support. Additionally, HTA 75 offered and promoted continuous upskilling support to workers and offered to collaborate with employers to align training and support with their distinct requirements, acknowledging the variability of processes across different employers and locations.



Outcome

By tailoring their training and support to accommodate diverse needs and actively working with employers to comprehend their challenges, HTA 75 has strategically positioned their programs to better align with both worker and employer needs. Their immersive training approach guarantees that individuals trained through their program are thoroughly prepared for their roles, consequently leading to higher retention rates. This positive change has been observed and acknowledged by multiple employers who are now witnessing the advantages of collaborating with HTA 75.

In a recent case, an employer sought HTA 75's assistance following the success witnessed in their prior room attendant and language training initiatives. A hotel manager faced challenges supporting a group of four workers to meet performance standards, which could have led to their dismissal. Trainers from HTA 75 were sent on-site to assess the situation, and deliver a comprehensive day of support training to address identified gaps. This intervention improved the room attendants' performance, aligning their output with the manager's expectations. Beyond addressing immediate needs, HTA 75's flexible and customized support has opened the door to building trust and credibility that has paved the way for future collaborative opportunities.

Promising Practices

In addition to the key elements that contributed to the successful engagement of industry employers in the Employer-Driven Workforce Solution Design project, the subsequent key findings and best practices have been identified through an analysis of the other case studies in this report and other similar initiatives. These insights provide valuable supplementary knowledge to enhance stakeholder engagement strategies, with a particular focus on employers. This section covers two thematic areas- building employer buy-in and influencing employer practices.

1

Building Employer Buy-In

This section delves into the key practices and considerations necessary to build trust, secure support, and foster engagement with employers and other industry stakeholders.



Understanding Their Needs

It is crucial to take the time to thoroughly understand the specific needs and priorities of different employers. These needs can vary greatly due to differences in industries, organization sizes, and unique goals. Engaging employers through formal interviews or informal discussions proves to be a highly effective approach for gaining insights into what matters most to each stakeholder.



Employer Engagement in Groups

Encouraging the engagement of employers in group settings supports collective problem-solving and development of scalable solutions. This approach allows for diverse perspectives and insights, leading to comprehensive solutions that cater to industry-wide challenges. Group engagement also fosters a collaborative environment, encouraging knowledge sharing and idea cross-pollination.



Flexibility and Customization

Recognize that a one-size-fits-all approach may not be effective. Implementing personalized strategies can increase the likelihood of securing buy-in and achieving success. Additionally, being ready to adapt and respond to evolving circumstances, especially in rapidly evolving industries, is greatly appreciated by stakeholders.



Anchor Organization and Coordination

An anchor organization is a central entity that coordinates diverse stakeholders within a specific initiative or collaboration, enhancing organization and credibility, especially among industry employers. Leveraging existing networks and relationships, an anchor organization ensures effective collaboration. In cases where such relationships are absent, investing in relationship-building activities becomes crucial. These efforts strengthen partnerships and trust, addressing any perceived competitiveness that may hinder participation or the sharing of information among peers



Set Clear Expectations

Formalize expectations through documents such as Terms of Reference, consent forms, and participation contracts. These documents serve to ensure that all stakeholders have a thorough understanding of the project's scope, their roles, and what actions to take in the event that they cannot participate. This level of clarity significantly reduces the potential for misunderstandings and streamlines collaboration.



Make It Easy to Say Yes

Clearly communicating how initiatives or solutions can directly benefit stakeholders is important. Simplify the process for stakeholders to get involved and build buy-in. Adapting initiatives to align with their current state, assessing their readiness for change, and then tailoring the intended approach accordingly is a pivotal step in securing stakeholder buy-in. Providing support, whether it is offering communication templates, coordinating logistics, or creating briefs for stakeholders to share within their networks or organizations goes a long way in supporting stakeholders to advocate for an initiative and to participate in it.



Offer Honoraria

Motivate stakeholders to participate by offering honoraria. Recognize that their time is valuable, and providing competitive compensation that accounts for their time, experience, and input demonstrates appreciation for their contributions. This is especially important when engaging workers in co-design and solution validation processes.

Driving change in employer practice is a pivotal aspect of supporting improved labour market outcomes for firms and people. Influencing employers to adopt new practices and embrace innovations can be a complex process. This section outlines strategies and approaches that are part of successful initiatives for influencing employer practice.



Seek Input from Those Affected

Engage those impacted by the challenge to gain invaluable insights into their specific experience and ensure tailored solutions. Employee involvement in decision-making and development of new practices is valuable, as their experience and insight will enhance new practices' effectiveness.



Measurable Metrics

Define clear, measurable metrics to assess the success and impact of new practices.



Leadership Buy-In

Ensuring that leadership within the organization is aligned with and supportive of the proposed changes is essential. The commitment of leadership sets the tone for the entire workforce and reinforces the importance of the new practices.



Capacity Building and Support

Provide adequate support systems, resources, and tools to facilitate the transition to new practices. This might include offering tailored training, workshops, access to tools, or guidance on how to undertake change initiatives. Creating support networks or peer learning opportunities for employers can provide them with the chance to learn from community stakeholders as well as each other's experiences and address capacity issues collectively.



Actionable Plan and Takeaways

Developing an actionable plan is a crucial step for collaborative initiatives. This plan should include clear steps, timelines, and well-defined roles and responsibilities. Empowering participants to take ownership, serves as a practical roadmap for employers, enabling effective implementation of potential solutions. Without a detailed action plan, employers may find it challenging to translate broad solutions into tangible actions. Additionally, starting with a pilot program allows organizations to test new practices on a smaller scale before committing to full-scale adoption.



Third-Party Support

The presence of an objective third party from outside the collaborative group plays a pivotal role in maintaining focus and objectivity throughout the collaboration process. Such facilitation ensures a fair and unbiased environment for effective decision-making and problem-solving among a group of employers. The third-party should have credibility among employers and also be responsible for establishing feedback loops with stakeholders to continually refine and optimize practices over time.

Conclusion

The partnership between the WES Mariam Assefa Fund, Peel Halton Workforce Development Group (PHWDG), the City of Brampton, and Purpose Co utilized an innovative, collaborative approach in addressing the workforce needs of the logistics and supply chain sector in Brampton. This report shares valuable insights and best practices derived not only from the specific project but also from additional case studies and research. It offers valuable insights on collaboratively designing workforce solutions with employers at the center and influencing positive changes in employer practices.

It is important to note that while numerous approaches have been presented, the most effective initiatives often involve a combination of these strategies. The context-specific nature of these initiatives allows for flexibility and adaptability in addressing the diverse needs of firms in different industries and newcomers. This report captures the learning from the initiatives described, highlighting the power of collaboration, new approaches to addressing old problems, and the role of employers in addressing pressing industry and workforce needs. It underscores the tremendous potential that lies in effective partnerships, well-defined problems, objective and intentionally designed collaboration and action plans.