# NOTE TAKER TEMPLATE

# SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT ENGAGEMENT

## COMMUNITY SECTOR WORK PLAN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

## November 29, 2018, 1:30 – 3:30 pm, Housing and Homelessness Network

**Question 1**

**What is it your organization is doing that contributes to the economy of your region and the province? (~30 min)**

* Main industry in region that provides employment (especially from urban to rural); co-worker and client.
* Fulfilling Labour Market need.
* Rural co-worker very high wage, different for urban and Labrador.
* In a broader sense, contributing to a more inclusive society for this specific population.
* Economic benefits through employment – they are contributing as they can purchase (i.e., return on investment).
* Reduces cost to the Income Support system, health care system, etc.
* More catering to needs of certain groups, e.g., sensory rooms, toys; and more businesses are being created and responding to the needs (e.g., restaurants in braille, universal design).
* These individuals offer security and stability to employers who are struggle to find a secure and stable workforce (i.e., not viewed as transitory or a stepping-stone).
* People tend to shop where they are represented – some smaller business were helped to grow due to the wage subsidy, therefore they could add to the staff and expand their business.
* Contribute to community as organizations spend in their communities.
* They have a social return on investment ($3.01 for every $1 spent).
* Engaged in economic development, connect with employers. By sharing for the job, you may connect employers at a local level and as well through the provincial organization (SENL). They work on all levels, even national.
* Assist other industries through promotion of the program.
* Engagement strategies within the business community.
* Government has used terms like ‘unemployable’, but now these people have jobs, so it changed perspectives. This change has moved into the school system, where they now offer individuals life skills and social activities to prepare them for employment.
* Peers and youth in schools now can be seen as working (School to Work Transitions).
* Involved with employers and making them more aware of programs available that they may have not known about before. In some cases, supported employment organizations help employers fill out application (particularly in rural areas).
* Instances of breaking the cycle – youth in the program are working. When both parents are on Income Support, their child working breaks the cycle and contributes to society.
* Lost opportunities when the cycle is ‘intact’ and individuals do not know or understand how to change.
* Connection with social enterprise. Some individuals are involved in social enterprise and could not have done that without support of supported employment (e.g., recycling, Harry’s Place at Mile One). This contributes to self- esteem and networking – it goes beyond just a job. Agencies helped put them on the correct track; some out of desperation found a way to cope and then morphed into something else. Some are self-employed individuals and have lasted 15-20 years.

**Question 2**

**What are the ways Government** can partner with your organization to enhance those economic contributions? (~30 min)

* Sometimes government does not make it easy to do this type of work; they need to listen to those involved in the process.
* Who does government listen to? Needs to be drilled down to the frontline.
* Channeling feedback back to government – used to have an advisory board, but it no longer exists. There is only a provincial office representative (Employment and Training Division, Department of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour).
* How do inquiries get back to government? This was through regional Advanced Education, Skills and Labour offices, then it moved to the provincial office about 4-5 years ago (Employment and Training Division) for more consistency. No one should lose benefits for at least 30 days. They have to start from point A again, start from scratch. Some employees within government do not have the knowledge – there is no case manager and you cannot reach any one person, so you keep moving to different people in different departments. Departments are not talking to each other and therefore knowledge and terminology differ. One individual was moved through 15 different people in government. This causes high levels of stress for individuals and sometimes people lose their jobs. Sometimes there no record of the information that is faxed in.
* Language is high level. This is fine for advocates but not for individuals, individuals who cannot navigate. For example, they do not know what a ‘proxy’ is. Government employees assume everyone has a computer and information is not in plain language.
* How can these issues be streamlined?
  + Need a recognized individual that can do that specific paperwork in the system;
  + This should be tracked once the disability is registered (i.e., they need a navigator). As an example, a 25 year old who did not know they could get Income Support.
  + Recognition that at 18 you are no longer based on parents’/guardians’ income – families do not know that their children can apply when they are 18.
  + Agencies feel communication is not there and connections are not made. Even in schools, individuals can be segregated. They can attend school for 15 years and get a leaving school certificate, but you do not know what they were good at (e.g., math, English). They are there until 21. The minute they are 21, everything gets cut off – supports – unless they are rolled into one of the programs and have a connection. Education needs to focus on transferrable skills, not just life skills. School keeps them there for quota – individuals often do not have a choice.
  + The minute you get a job, the whole support system collapses if you earn a little bit of money.
  + Not everyone needs to stay this long (i.e., until 21). Engagement in a strategy to find a job should start earlier, but quota counts and teacher allocation can be affected if they leave (they believe the school system will hold them until they are 21).
  + If they leave before 21, they can lose all their supports that follows them through school. It is comfortable for parents to keep them there – the bus comes, picks them up, etc. The reality of employment is that you may not be fulltime.
  + If you are being kept in school and missing out on employment opportunities, why would school decide? It might be the parent, but the school might wait until very end when 21 to contact agency.
  + Supported employment finds a job – the person loses benefits and the agency may only get call to make a connection once the person is 21.
  + May not have learned enough to find employment even if in school for an additional four years, may lose medication and then the agency has to work with the individual to see ‘what level’ or amount they can make to maintain their drug card. So they have to work with employers to get fewer hours, etc.
* Different if parents know how to advocate. If you have an advocate, youth can go farther and be more successful.
* Government needs to promote program and recognize people on supported employment are a force and they should not need to prove it every year. They did have three-year contracts before devolution, but it was lost and is just year-to-year now. Not on multi-year funding list.
* Government needs to raise the expectations of these individuals that they can get a job like everyone else.
* Loss of the co-op program was negative (about 5-6 years ago) as it was geared towards all students.
* Government has to remove disincentives.
* In pockets of places, there is good cooperation. There used to be a model of service delivery but that has been lost. Still, in some places in this province, it still works well, but there are cases where it is just a matter of the loudest person getting more.
* There is a better way to replicate these practices.
* If someone does not have a support system, transportation in rural areas is an extreme barrier, especially in Labrador where it is too cold to walk. We need something to avail of to assist with this, an option to pay for transportation, a travel subsidy. This is the biggest barrier in Labrador.
* Make sure government policy supports a person getting more money going to work than staying at home. If the policy does not do this, then the policy needs to be fixed.
* Government needs to acknowledge that supported employment provides an economic benefit.
* Government needs to allow things like shared spaces to allow for collaboration and shared administration services.

**Question 3**

**How can you better collaborate with other organizations in your community to enhance those economic contributions? (~30 min)**

* Collaborating better with other service providers in terms of referrals, partnerships and relationships with others.
* Look at economies of scale – sometimes it is cheaper to tear down than to fix. Cannot get space in St. John’s, so why cannot government allow us to share with another agency?
* Find out where opportunities are. If certain businesses are struggling, maybe we can step in and facilitate with this (e.g., supported employment can help with the lack of labour supply).
* There may be opportunities to work with corporations. At one point this was done in Labrador, but over time things were cut, so now it would not be possible as community funding is limited.
* Many businesses in Labrador are trying to survive on their own, so collaboration does not work.
* It is hard to have a job dependent on good will and it is a liability.
* Most are members on board of trade, etc. but partnerships have not led to solutions for problems like transportation. Some feel they may be more aware, but it does not provide benefits or partnerships. No category for community sector.
* The Avalon is the only region that has job coaches. Agencies are coming to them for help but they do not have enough money to meet the demand and support others all the time.
* Avalon tries to enhance skills through volunteer opportunities.
* Share information between these groups (e.g., policy manual), but we need an avenue or environment to bring things to fruition, such as sharing space. We have to be able to put down defenses (put away ‘turf’).
* Barriers to collaborating can be time or money. Sometimes you volunteer on boards, but it takes a lot of time with a full-time job and a family. SENL assists as well (e.g., they share forms, resources).
* Hold employer breakfasts, participate in boards of trade, bring in guest speakers, and attend national conferences – all to collaborate.
* Share office space (e.g., Gambo) – excellent for supports and exchange of assistance, partnerships. Even for community groups like Lions Club, churches have provided space.