Developing

the RIGHT PEOPLE

with the RIGHT SKILLS

at the RIGHT TIME!

for 2008 & beyond

Promoting
Workforce Development
Through Partnerships

"There has always been a division: school is school and work is work. It's time to bring school into the workplace and the workplace into school".

Integrated solutions for representatives of business, industry, educators, trainers, government and the community.

EMPLOYMENT ONTARIO
Ontario's employment & training network

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IMPORTANT NOTE:
> The views expressed in this document do not necessarily reflect those of the Government of Ontario or the Government of Canada.

The purpose of this report is relatively simple:
  (1) present strategies to improve and initiate partnerships between business, industry, educators, trainers and the community
  (2) review what we already know, identify what we want to achieve and
  (3) collect input on what needs to be in place to make it happen.

We are asking for your input.....
  Please review the various models/strategies in this report and
  COMPLETE OUR ON-LINE SURVEY (click here)
  which will tell us which models you believe will lead to success!

REPORT GOAL

The goal is straightforward—to establish a model, with realistic strategies and action plans, that will create streamlined partnerships and alliances between business, industry, educators, trainers and the community.

Fostering partnerships between industry, education and the community is not new—but is has become a necessity in a highly competitive market. Global competition, leaner processes and rapid advances in technology have generated an immediate need to substantially expand the skills of our workforce.

It's no secret that there have been considerable changes in the way we do business! But it is the impact of these business changes that has created the greatest Human Resource challenge—qualified candidates must possess skills, talents and abilities that are increasingly complex—and it will be the availability of these qualified candidates that will be a determining factor in economic growth and success. We want to formalize a commitment to creating a talent pool of highly qualified candidates.

A survey, completed by the Grand Valley Educational Society (GVES) in July, 2005 (www.gves.ca) with business and industry in the Brantford-Brant area, reaffirmed the **need to improve collaboration and strengthen the integration between business, industry, educators and trainers** towards a common goal—improving the skills, talents and abilities of our workforce.

The overwhelming consensus was; **"There has always been a division: school is school and work is work. It's time to bring school into the workplace and the workplace into school".** It will be the partnership, alliance and direct link between education and employment that will be a decisive factor in creating this talent pool of highly qualified employees.

The critical question now becomes "HOW DO WE ACCOMPLISH THIS?" We must acknowledge that a key barrier to developing an integrated strategy is that **business, industry and educators are all time and resource starved**. Actions are prioritized daily and allocation of resources is determined by one factor—what will provide the greatest return on investment.

We are asking key stakeholders in the community to make this investment and to **expect a high return on that investment!** The objective is to establish a business/education strategy that will mimic and model the fluid business strategies of today. To implement a sustainable and realistic action plan that will result in change and improvement to a workforce that must go beyond adapting to what "is" and evolve into a driving force that has "what it takes".

Collaboration is the key:

Strategies and solutions must bring together the unique insight of: (a) **business and industry** which brings the expertise regarding skills and knowledge requirements and provides the job and training for workers; (b) **educators** and **trainers** who are aware of skill requirements and respond to them and; (c) **individuals from the community** who invest in education and skills throughout their lives.

Human Resource challenges exist:

Human Resource deficiencies exist—numerous reports and studies clearly identify skill gaps and shortages! Candidates may be available but a **qualified candidate** is often the challenge. We know workforce development is extremely complex—it will require the efforts of multiple stakeholders to re-create and retain a pool of qualified talent that will help us to compete.

Integration strategies must address more than "graduates":

The issues of training, education and skill development extend far beyond secondary or post secondary graduates. A key challenge is how **to re-skill, upgrade** and **expand** the skills of our **existing workforce** to ensure that these individuals maintain a strong skill base and remain highly marketable.

Succession planning is an excellent THEORY:

Almost every sector will be faced with above average retirement rates over the next 5-10 years. The following best reflects the business reality; "*We simply* **cannot afford***, in today's highly competitive environment, to take on employees today to groom them for positions* **5-10 years down the road**—*jobs that exist today may not even exist in 5-10 years".* The solution is to make an investment and work in conjunction with trainers and educators so that **future candidates** will be more skilled and knowledgeable workers.

Skill requirements are increasingly more complex:

"Entry level" positions have been drastically re-defined—the skills required at a very basic level are **more complex** and **technologically advanced**. This requirement is made even more complicated by expectations regarding "**blending**" of **skills**. The Industrial Maintenance Mechanic will have skills in technology to deal with robotics, automation and computerized equipment. The Lab Technician will have skills in project management, communication and customer service.

Actions must produce results:

Previous surveys have identified some hesitation regarding industry/education partnerships, based in part on past experience or perceptions. Business and industry stakeholders indicated they had participated in "*meetings that went nowhere"* on a variety of skills and training issues. However, collectively these stakeholders also indicated a high level of willingness to work with educators and trainers to prepare for future challenges. **"I know I need to come to the table if I want to make a difference. However, this is a two way street and the trainers and educators need to be willing to work with us to make this happen."**

Job choice is as much of a challenge as job retention:

There are an **infinite number** of **career opportunities** today! Informing individuals of these opportunities—exposing them to careers—getting them interested in a particular career or industry is a major challenge. Employers are looking for those individuals who have entered a **career by choice**. The need exists to connect business and education so people can learn about career options and experience the workplace—in a career cluster or industry sector.

What we want to achieve is straightforward—develop **successful partnerships** with business, industry, educators, trainers and the community. Create a working model that will result in a **proactive group** of stakeholders that will work together, in a **seamless** way, to improve the skills, talents and abilities of the local workforce.

As with any investment a critical question is "What's in it for me"? When successful, this investment of time and energy will create a solid return on investment—a competitive **advantage** in the **talent wars**. It will create a workforce that has the skills, knowledge and competencies to allow us to compete as **"employers of choice"** and as a **"community of choice".**

As a community of choice we will be able to spur **economic development**, which in turn drives **business growth** and produces additional employment opportunities. As employers of choice we have the capacity to attract **qualified candidates** to the local talent pool and ultimately increase the number of highly adaptable, lifelong learners who have the necessary talents to meet current and future business needs.

This integrated strategy will present a **unified voice** and mutual agreement on realistic actions that will maximize the knowledge and skill of people who are (a) already active in the workforce and (b) entering the workforce from secondary or post secondary education.

This is an ideal opportunity to help **reduce** the impact of **workforce shortages** and **skill gaps**, both in your business and in your community. Together we can pool our energies and resources, develop our local workforce, and **attract** and **retain qualified workers** for the future.

Local educators and trainers already realize the value of integrated strategies! Business and industry from select areas currently provide input into program development and curriculum. Further, educators and trainers openly acknowledge that business and industry are the very foundation to providing valuable work experience which compliments education and training and ultimately provides employment for graduates.

The Challenge:
Business, industry, educators, trainers and the community are collectively committed to making workforce development a reality. The question now becomes:

> **"How do we make this happen? How do we cross traditional barriers between employment & education and set a new standard for our community?"**

What needs to be in place?
A successful partnership will share the following:
‣ It will be a mutually beneficial relationship that will enhance education and employment opportunities
‣ It will result in a high degree of cooperation
‣ It will address local opportunities and challenges
‣ Actions will be coordinated between business, industry, educators and trainers
‣ A mutual understanding that it will be the skills, abilities and talents of the workforce and the quality of the workers, which will ultimately meet the economic development, business and industry needs of our communities!
‣ An agreed upon model and supporting structure that will sustain the partnership

The goal is not to totally overhaul the existing system but refine and improve upon what is already successful. To build on those strengths and offer training, programming and services that will increase the skills of the future workforce and increase workplace skills training and development.

There is a clear and immediate need to create and retain a pool of qualified talent in order to compete. It will require a consolidated effort to up-skill and/or re-skill the workforce and ultimately support and strengthen the skills of all employees.

This Human Resource challenge does have a solution: implement a strategy that will promote integration between stakeholders from business, industry, educators, trainers and the community.

Current issues are complex and funding is especially difficult as trainers and educators try to meet the needs of the community, business, industry and their students. By improving the structure of existing partnerships we have the capacity to ensure we obtain useful information on:

- needs assessments
- program evaluation
- suggestions for curriculum development
- students, adult learners, continuing education
- improved use of facilities by all community partners
- increased access to state-of-the-art equipment
- the formation of a talent pool of specialized staff that can bring real life, real world knowledge and experience into the classroom
- how to source additional revenue through increased enrollments, partner donations or by reducing costs associated with operating programs or services
- how trainers and educators integrate, develop and teach employability skills to students, and how these skills can be assessed and reported upon

To implement this integrated strategy, there needs to be a common purpose and formal commitment by all stakeholders. A unified voice that believes:

- The purpose will be to create a collective driving force that will build an innovative, stronger, local labour pool
- This collective force will be the catalyst to a strong, local employment system
- The strategy will focus on ultimately developing, attracting and retaining qualified workers for target sectors
- Actions will be designed in such a manner that they support the identified needs of employers and job seekers
- Plans and actions will be tangible and measurable and matched to economic development priorities
- Strategies will create equal benefits for all stakeholders and the roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder group will be clearly defined
- In the need for a more responsive system that uses existing supports within the community to ultimately meet the needs of students of all ages, educators, trainers and employers
- Membership should include representatives from: small, medium and large business and industry, educators, community trainers, government, labour and community groups/individuals

"Individually we are good—together we are great!"

A partnership that focuses on integrated strategies will expand the abilities of each stakeholder group to accomplish objectives that could not be accomplished as well alone. Realistically no single organization has the mandate or resources to:

- ‣ Identify skills gaps in the local labour force

- ‣ Identify talent pool gaps—where qualified candidates simply do not exist

- ‣ Develop pilot projects and ensure that these specific, customized pilot projects are implemented to address the gaps

- ‣ Integrate economic development and business growth with the development of the talent pool, particularly at a community level

- ‣ Create the necessary structure that will build a seamless "education to work" system

- ‣ Increase awareness of careers and the educational opportunities to match those careers

We are not implying that we can create an ultimate "one window—one voice" for all workforce initiatives. We are however, stating that whether it is a specific sector or a specific career, we can develop a vastly improved structure that will (a) address specific workforce issues, (b) avoid unnecessary duplication and (c) maximize the available resources and expertise of all community stakeholders.

A strategic integrated approach to these targeted sectors will act as a "broker" of information and resources related to (the industry or the career) for; industry representatives, community-based organizations, economic development organizations, trainers and post secondary educators.

Ultimately, whichever model (or models) chosen, it will need to be flexible and dynamic and able to quickly adjust to community needs. Previous alliances and partnership strategies have achieved amazing success and are proven to:

- ‣ coordinate trainers, labour market analysts, educators, associations and organizations who support employers and job seekers, simply by providing a COMMON ACCESS POINT FOR INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

- ‣ assist unemployed and underemployed to find meaningful and sustainable employment, AND, re-skill those candidates currently employed to ensure the skills match the demands of business and industry

- ‣ expand information about current job opportunities and job growth and the training available to meet these opportunities

Business & Industry Benefits

‣ Access to an expanded talent pool that has the necessary skills and abilities for today and for the future

‣ Reduction in Human Resource costs required to recruit, hire and train employees

‣ Increased opportunities to implement pilot projects in conjunction with other stakeholders, especially in the area of highly specialized or "difficult to fill" positions

‣ Create a "learning" community that will attract new workers to the local talent pool based on investment, economic development and career opportunities happening within the community

‣ Improved coordination of agencies and resources that that provide employment and training support to job seekers

Educational Benefits

‣ Curriculum is customized, updated regularly and includes specialized topics and skills. This promotes a "state-of-the-art" program. Reputation of the educator is increased substantially due to the higher quality programs being offered

‣ Educators realize that the combination of flexibility, on-site instruction and direct industry links have increased:
- Enrollment (and subsequently revenue)
- Educator visibility and credibility within a community
- The accessibility and knowledge of state-of-the-art equipment and technology
- Knowledge and skill base of teachers and instructors who have the benefit of directly working with business and industry experts

‣ Partners and stakeholders increase referrals to post secondary education, including establishing closer links to continuing education for employed workers

‣ Significant increase in graduate employment rate
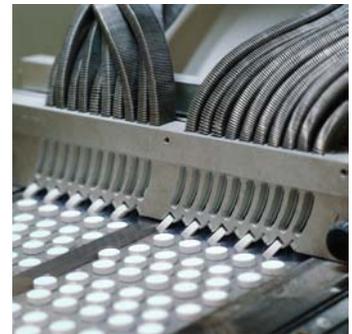
Community Benefits

‣ Social infrastructure of a community typically deals with multiple adult education levels including:
- Job obsolescence
- Unemployment
- Illiteracy
- Limited English proficiency
- Education and employment for older adults

‣ A strategy that integrates educators, business, industry and the community allows the community to have increased success in dealing with:
- Aging workforce
- Out migration of highly qualified talent
- Skills assessment of newcomers
- Increased business investment and economic development

‣ Ensures that specialized and customized project plans developed are matched to economic development priorities

‣ Having the capacity to address issues that may negatively impact the quality of life for the community

The purpose of integrated activities will be to promote positive and realistic change to improve workforce development.

Through integrated activities each stakeholder group has the opportunity to compromise and build on **common ground**. Educators can improve service delivery to incorporate career specific skills—business and industry can move beyond traditional views of competition and work together to generate sufficient numbers that would allow educators and trainers to provide highly specialized training.

Equal benefit does not imply that every stakeholder realizes the same benefit from each individual action—it does imply that each stakeholder will realize substantial benefit from the end result—an expanded and highly skilled workforce.

Educators, for example, typically emphasize broad-based education. Business and industry want practical, career specific knowledge and skills. Business and industry may have a high demand for extremely specialized training, however, educators require a "critical mass" in order to deliver a program in a cost effective manner.

By working together, challenging traditional mindsets, being open and creative and taking a proactive position, solutions can be identified and implemented that are not only cost effective, but will ultimately develop the ultimate, a highly skilled workforce.

We are presented with an opportunity to bring our workforce back into focus!

Regardless of the type of integration strategy chosen, there are issues and challenges that are universally applicable to every partnership and alliance strategy. They are as follows:

Scheduling Meetings:

PRO	CON
If meetings or events are pre-scheduled for the year OR have a pre-determined date and time (e.g. third Wednesday every other month), it makes it much easier for everyone to plan in advance and accommodate the meeting.	Every community stakeholder, public and private, is time starved. Scheduling of meetings, events and activities is the greatest challenge and results in attendance of approximately 75%. This makes it extremely difficulty to have continuity in discussions.

Membership:

PRO	CON
Participating members must have the authority to make decisions on behalf of whomever they are representing. This allows the group to quickly commit to specific actions, especially if funding is required.	A representative may be sent because the agency/organization feels they "have to", resulting in the wrong person at the table. This is especially evident when sourcing local representation where the head office is in Toronto or the United States.

Administrative Support:

PRO	CON
To be successful, administrative support MUST be in place to assist with agendas, taking and distributing minutes, implementing actions and monitoring outcomes. The office support is also a critical component when the need arises to write proposals to access funding for pilot programs, special events, etc.	Lack of administrative support has been the downfall to numerous committees and strategies. Someone needs to be in place to do the background research, office support, administration and provide a central contact. Members participating in any collaborative strategy are typically not forthcoming in providing funding to hire office support and administration. Everyone stresses the need and importance, but are typically unwilling to contribute monies.

Facilitator:

PRO	CON
A good facilitator will ensure that members stay on track and will remind participants of guiding principles. More importantly, the role of the facilitator is to help everyone move beyond barriers and personal agendas to focus on strategies that have mutual benefits.	Lack of a good facilitator typically results in the failure of the group to establish clearly defined goals and objectives. It is the facilitator that will ensure that the group identifies a clear purpose and strong direction—they take members from where they are to where they want to be.

Prioritizing Issues:

PRO	CON
Once issues have been identified, they are typically extremely complex, large and interconnected. The solution is to divide the issue and solutions into smaller, more manageable projects.	Members often find it difficulty to prioritize issues and are faced with the "chicken or the egg" dilemma.

Pilot Projects:

PRO	CON
A good strategy will result in tangible actions and pilot projects that can be implemented, monitored and ultimately eliminate the identified issue or achieve the ultimate goal.	Individually, members often lack the necessary funding to implement the strategies and pilot projects. Collectively they may decide to share costs or apply for funding.

Local Representation:

PRO	CON
Local representation is critical, and it needs to be directly linked with economic development. This full membership must have above average diversity to ensure that the information and data gathered is current, up-to-date and focused on existing and future needs. Effective membership must be representative of the whole community: business, industry, educators, trainers, students, those seeking employment etc.	A select few may speak for all, and what is applicable to a large industry (500+ employees), may not be relevant to small (under 20) or medium industries (50-300). Members often have their own agenda, which must be put aside to establish and work towards a common goal. The diversity is a definite advantage for input, but can result in time consuming activities to get everyone "on the same page".

Commitment:

PRO	CON
Typically collaborations begin with bi-monthly meetings which evolve into meeting two – four times per year to discuss progress and implement corrective actions. The most important end result is a group of people that share in the belief that they will work together to make a difference and they will be successful.	Members are often put off by the time commitment. Especially in the initial stages of establishing goals and objectives and determining projects and strategies which can be very time intensive.

Purpose and Goals:

PRO	CON
Strong and successful collaboration will provide a clear set of actions—something that is measurable and can be implemented. This set of actions defines the purpose, establishes direction and goes beyond simply providing ideas or advice. The end result is a voice that is recognized!	When everyone focuses on their own agenda, there is a general inability to ensure that it is a two way street. Sometimes this means that one stakeholder may receive more benefit than another in a *specific action* and members often struggle with this.

Attitude:

PRO	CON
Members see this as a fabulous opportunity to obtain input from players from all walks of life, different perspectives and ideas, non-territorial and open to making changes. None of us is as smart as all of us! Educators, community and industry members compliment each other and collectively can be a driving force to success.	The larger the bureaucracy, the more challenging it is to get them to move beyond "the way things are". Members are often viewed as "not appreciating" the restrictions of other stakeholders which ultimately brings the entire process to a standstill.

When considering a specific strategy for integrating business, industry, educators, trainers and the community it is important to recognize that the integration strategy can be:

INDUSTRY SPECIFIC such as food, chemical, logistics or packaging industries

CAREER SPECIFIC such as senior levels of management, middle supervisory and line leaders, skilled trades or lab technicians.

Advisories
  The most common term used in integration strategies is "advisories", which encompasses multiple definitions and variations. For the purposes of this report and the on-line survey, the term "advisory" will be further refined.

Advisory Committee

Process

Advisory committees are typically formed by educators/trainers and key business and industry stakeholders are **invited** to participate. The purpose of advisory committees is to promote partnerships between the educator and the business and industry in the communities they serve. These advisories can be for a specific industry sector OR career cluster

1. Advisory councils have a clear set of guidelines established by the educator/trainer which highlight roles and responsibilities
2. Meetings can be bi-monthly or quarterly
3. Membership is restricted to a maximum number of industry stakeholders and educators
4. Advisory committee members provide input on program structure, curriculum, technology and student preparation

PRO	CON
- Roles, responsibilities and expectations are clearly defined in guidelines	- May restrict input and activities of industry members
- "By invitation" allows the educator the opportunity to choose a broad cross section of industry partners	- Industry partners selected represent entire career or industry sector even though these members have not been officially appointed or nominated by the sector
- Membership is restricted to a maximum, providing the opportunity for increased consensus	- Small "select" group may not be representative of entire sector
- Scheduling meetings that all members can attend is biggest hurdle	- Attendance is typically 75% of membership, meaning a much smaller group is representing the interests of all
- If membership is diverse, and representatives are a good cross section of stakeholders, there is typically above average ideas and solutions	- Membership often is the same people participating over many years, resulting in the loss of new ideas and a fresh perspective that is typically contributed by new members
- Members from a cross section of the community, business and industry often do not "speak the same language" as educators, and may want to challenge traditional means of delivery, content etc.	- Challenging traditional means or processes occasionally makes people uncomfortable and defensive
- Members are often selected for a specific expertise, skill or talent	- Members may not be "known" by those making the choice, therefore difficult to accurately predict skills and expertise - Personality conflicts may hamper process. When suggestions do not "fit" (a) some individuals (creative and flexible) take the "no harm in trying approach", while others (b) simply feel it is so out of the realm of what is, that it is not even worth pursuing
- Good cross section of membership increases the potential of success for suggested and implemented actions	- Once pilot programs/solutions have been established, the greatest challenge is "getting the word out" to the right people that these services/programs are available
- Typically generates substantial input, ideas, realistic and viable solutions and action plans	- Educators often lack the necessary resources and funding to implement and monitor the actions plans

Taskforce / Industry Symposium

Process

A taskforce is brought together on an "as needed" basis to address a specific career or training issue. The taskforce can be formed by either industry partners or educators and can address career, industry or specific Human Resource challenges (e.g. mandated safety training). This "focus group" is used to source data and information and establish a clear direction. Often the taskforce will evolve into advisories or steering committees.

1. Membership is restricted to a maximum number of industry and educator stakeholders (established by whoever creates the taskforce)
2. Membership is typically by invitation only, however, members are often asked to invite additional stakeholders with specific expertise
3. This is usually a "one time" activity taking place over one to two days
4. Requires a strong facilitator to take the taskforce through the brainstorming process to final solutions and recommendations
5. The taskforce may be asked to meet again after a specified time (e.g. one year) to review success and re-evaluate challenges
6. Final report is submitted to educators/trainers OR they can be invited as part of the process

PRO	CON
- "By invitation" allows the opportunity to choose a broad cross section of industry partners - Requires a strong chair/facilitator who can get the group to move beyond barriers and personal agendas to focus on strategies that will benefit everyone	- Industry partners selected represent entire career or industry sector even though these members have not been officially appointed or nominated by the sector - Not always the "right person" (level of authority) is invited
- One or two day event (with appropriate notice of purpose) allows members to focus on suggestions	- Members have "one shot" to make sure all ideas and suggestions are presented
- Membership is restricted to a maximum, providing the opportunity for increased consensus	- Small "select" group may not have sufficient diversity to be representative of all issues
- Scheduling a one or two day symposium that is convenient for everyone is often the biggest hurdle - Confirmation is typically requested to ensure that a good cross section is present	- Substantial notice, good publication, marketing and direct contact typically results in good attendance - People often indicate a willingness to participate but fail to respond unless/ even when personally invited/approached
- Diversity of participants generates above average levels of ideas and solutions	- Stakeholders willing to commit are often the same people coming to the table; may result in fewer new ideas and fresh perspective
- One day event requires a strong facilitator to keep the process moving forward	- Many one day events do not go beyond identifying core issues
- The coordinator of the event collects all data and information and consolidates it into a report to be distributed to interested stakeholders	- Participants may not be aware of solutions, proposed activities or any outcomes
- Typically generates substantial input, ideas, realistic and viable solutions and action plans	- Educators and trainers often lack the necessary resources and funding to implement and monitor the actions plans
- Excellent opportunity to present issues, discuss and identify common challenges	- Typically identifies "big picture" challenges and does not break down issues into manageable sections

Advisory Council

Process

Advisory councils are typically formed by business and industry stakeholders that have a mutual Human Resource interest or challenge. These business and industry stakeholders meet to clearly identify specific challenges that are industry or career specific.

1. Advisory councils begin with business and industry stakeholders with a common interest or challenge
2. Initial meetings are monthly or bi-monthly to clearly define challenges
3. Educators and trainers are then invited to attend meetings to work out viable solutions
4. Educators, trainers, business and industry establish realistic monitoring and follow up schedule
5. Often progresses into an advisory committee under the umbrella of the educational institution

PRO	CON
- Typically begins with an "informal" survey (through networking) that identifies a common human resource challenge	- May be a small percentage of the overall industry sector that is experiencing the same issue
- Information about meetings, identified priorities and potential solutions are often common throughout the entire sector	- Distribution of information throughout sector is often "word of mouth" and no formal process is identified or implemented
- Scheduling meetings that all members can attend is biggest hurdle	- Attendance is typically 75% of membership, continuity of discussions is challenging
- Provides a strong forum to present human resource challenges, share information and strategies, focus on previous successes/failures	- Time consuming to identify the core challenges (versus symptoms), and to prioritize key issues that are common
- Membership is restricted to a maximum, providing the opportunity for increased consensus	- Small "select" group may not be representative of entire sector and all issues
- Industry sectors often represented by an association or organization and key members are instrumental in coordinating meetings	- People often indicate a willingness to participate but fail to respond unless personally invited/approached
- Typically substantial amounts of data and information is generated to support identified challenges	- Lack a central point of communication, office support to collect, summarize and distribute data
- Diversity of participants generates above average levels of ideas and solutions	- Solutions identified by industry are often not viewed as being realistic by educators and trainers
- Typically generates substantial input, ideas, realistic and viable solutions and action plans	- Industry partners are hesitant to commit funds and resources into pilot projects that do not have proven return on investment
- Industry partners often have a clear vision of where they are and where they want to be. Actions and solutions are clearly defined.	- Educators and trainers often lack the necessary resources and funding to implement and monitor recommended actions
- Information presented and discussed is current and up to date	- Educators and trainers must go through formal authorization process to adjust programs and curriculum; not always as timely as business and industry would like
- Action plans are typically viewed in business terms, e.g. return on investment, flexibility. Business approach to changing what is not working (do it immediately before any more revenue is lost)	- Educators and trainers don't always speak the same language as business and industry. Industry stakeholders may not understand when expectations are too high or exceed current boundaries

Discussion Forum

Process

A Discussion Forum makes use of available computer technology. Community, business, industry and educators participate in an initial meeting to identify specific Human Resource challenges. An on-line discussion forum is then created and typically hosted by the community stakeholder

1. Members are provided with log in information to review implemented actions and proposed solutions
2. Members can post their comments and solutions and see the comments and solutions of others and build on them
3. Once per month there is a "live chat" with the appropriate department head
4. Members may meet once per year to review if (a) challenges are still relevant, (b) solutions are working and (c) monitoring progress and success

PRO	CON
- Stakeholders can access the forum anytime, at their convenience - Avoids scheduling and attendance issues	- Loss of interaction that typically occurs in meetings
- Questions can build from "yes/no" to narrative	- Requires expertise and knowledge of developing effective questions. Ultimately needs to identify core issues, action plans and implementation process'
- Participants can build on the comments and suggestions of others	- Can result in redundant information - Common goal established in initial meeting, may become "clouded" over time - Facilitator / chair not present to keep all respondents on track
- Technology is available to collect and summarize data	- Technology is restricted as to the type of data it can summarize - Narrative answers must be manually summarized requiring substantial labour - Technology support and expertise not always available
- Complex issues can be thoroughly explored to ensure core issues are identified	- Identifying core issues can be time consuming
- Membership is not restricted to a maximum, providing the opportunity for increased information and data gathering - Allows individual stakeholders to participate, in addition to associations and organizations	- Time consuming to summarize information and data - Resources not always available - Not always the "right" person (level of authority) providing the information
- Typically substantial amounts of data and information are generated to support identified challenges	- Lack a central point of communication, office support to collect, summarize and distribute data
- Strong pilot projects can be developed	- Often lack the necessary funding to implement the strategies - Collaborative sharing/supplying of resources difficult to establish and coordinate
- Participants must provide contact information to receive log in, creating an immediate industry database	- Database of industry may be current for immediate future, but require administrative support to ensure ongoing accuracy
- Simple "yes / no" questions can immediately determine employers willingness to provide work terms for students and/or employment for graduates	- "Yes/no" questions do not provide the opportunity to determine employers reasons for not being willing to consider work terms/employment for students and graduates

Project Symposium

Process

A series of committees are formed (typically 8-10 members):

(1) Business & Industry Partners

Members are from community business and industry and are brought together to discuss a specific industry sector or career sector. These members clearly identify specific Human Resource challenges

(2) Research Committee

Members are typically from community agencies and associations and government departments that deal specifically with labour and workforce issues. The research team reviews and summarizes the relevant data based on the Human Resource challenges identified by Business & Industry Partners

(3) Educator Committee

Members are trainers and educators in the community that provide the training that proposes to address the Human Resource challenges identified by Business & Industry Partners. Members typically include faculty, guidance counselors, program developers, program chairs. This committee prepares an overview of the current programs available

(4) Action Committee

Members can be from the other three committees, and should include key community partners. This committee takes the action plan and meets monthly or bi-monthly to review progress and offer input on changes and refinements. This committee is ultimately responsible for measuring results and modifying action plans.

Process:

Business and industry committee meets first to clearly identify the specific Human Resource challenges as it relates to the common industry sector OR career cluster. This information is then provided to the Research and Educator Committees.

After a mutually decided on time line, a summarized report is submitted to all committees and a meeting date is scheduled. The committees may decide to either (a) commit to a two day session or (b) schedule two separate meeting dates.

The first meeting is designed for brainstorming only—not evaluation. Proposed solutions to the identified issues are summarize and expanded upon by the group. The second meeting is done on a separate day to allow members time to review all information and solutions. At the second meeting the members agree on priorities, specific actions plans and time lines.

At this point the Action Committee takes the lead. Often, during initial implementation there will be a follow up meeting six months – one year after initial implementation to update all members and make critical and/or major revisions.

NOTE: There have been instances of a "summer workshop" that lasts from one - four days for the initial implementation stage. Also some Project Committees have opted to have regularly scheduled updates throughout the academic year.

Project Symposium cont'd

PRO	CON
- Multiple committees can focus on specific areas and multiple meetings provide structured agendas with outcomes	- Someone must step up to the plate to coordinate all committees, meetings, information etc. - Time consuming and resources often are not available
- Members for each committee are chosen for their specific expertise and skill	- Personality of members not known in advance; could result in a poor blending of personal characteristics on individual committees
- Individual committees can access the expertise from the other committees as required	- Often committees need answers in a timely manner in order to proceed, not always realistic given everyone's schedule
- "By invitation" allows the opportunity to choose a broad cross section of industry partners - Requires a strong chair/facilitator who can get the group to move beyond barriers and personal agendas to focus on strategies that will benefit everyone	- Industry partners selected represent entire career or industry sector even though these members have not been officially appointed or nominated by the sector - Not always the "right person" (level of authority) is invited
- Membership is restricted to a maximum, providing the opportunity for increased consensus	- Small "select" group may not be representative of entire sector and all issues
- Substantial notice, good publication and marketing and direct contact for meetings typically results in good attendance - Confirmation is typically requested to ensure that a good cross section is present for each committee	- Scheduling that is convenient for everyone is often the biggest hurdle - People often indicate a willingness to participate but fail to respond unless personally invited/approached
- Complex issues can be thoroughly explored to ensure core issues are identified	- Identifying core issues can be time consuming
- Diversity of participants generates above average levels of ideas and solutions	- Requires strong facilitator/coordinator to simplify and prioritize ideas and solutions *for each committee*
- Individual committees can exploit "what they do best"	- Lack of ongoing interaction between committees may result in misinterpretation of suggestions and/or actions
- Participants follow entire process from identifying and prioritizing challenges to implementing and monitoring solutions	- Process is time consuming in initial stages - Requires long term commitment from members
- Multiple committees and multiple members provides increased exposure of purpose and goal of symposium	- Getting the word out to interested stakeholders is a challenge. - If individual members do not feel the committee is progressing as expected or anticipated, could result in poor public perception
- Diversity of membership generates realistic and viable action plans and solutions	- Committee members may not have authority to commit resources to action plans and solutions. As a result, more time is required to receive appropriate authorization

Industry Consortium

Process

Members of a consortium are representatives from business and industry that have a common interest in skills development, whether for a specific industry (e.g. food manufacturing, pharmaceutical, packaging) or a specific career cluster (senior management, technical sales & marketing, middle management, line leaders).

These members collectively work together to identify the specific Human Resource challenges and skill gaps/shortages they are currently experiencing and those they anticipate will present future challenges. Typically the results include:
- Ranking, in order of importance, the knowledge and skills required for their (career or industry) cluster
- Identifying any gaps and emerging areas that are essential to the (career or industry) that need to be addressed by career education
- Providing general comments or information that may help improve the quality of workers available

Members of the consortium summarize the identified issues and *from their perspective* develop a list of proposed strategies and solutions that eliminate or minimize the skill gaps and shortages.

This consortium facilitates a meeting with key educators, trainers, agencies and organizations in the community that provide support for the unemployed and underemployed. During this meeting, solutions are presented and discussed and ultimately a priority list is generated with specific action plans.

NOTE: Some consortiums (to clearly indicate their commitment) have developed and signed a formal agreement that clearly states their commitment to developing a workforce with improved skills. Commitments in these formal declarations have included providing:
- work terms, apprenticeships, co-ops
- equipment and/or materials
- guest speakers and instructors for areas requiring high levels of specialized expertise
- volunteer representatives to participate in future surveys and/or to serve on advisory councils

PRO	CON
- Representatives already have established common ground, and most likely are experiencing same or similar challenges	- May exclude some complimentary industries that are experiencing similar issues - Community stakeholders are typically not involved
- With common ground, members are usually able to quickly determine the purpose of the consortium, it's goals and objectives	- Without a strong facilitator/chair, as issues are explored it is easier to lose sight of purpose
- Members are typically volunteers who have come to the table with a commitment	- May not be representative of entire industry sector
- Substantial notice, good publication and marketing and direct contact for meetings typically results in good attendance - Confirmation is typically requested to ensure that a good cross section is present for each committee	- Scheduling that is convenient for everyone is often the biggest hurdle - People often indicate a willingness to participate but fail to respond unless personally invited/approached
- Complex issues can be thoroughly explored to ensure core issues are identified	- Identifying core issues can be time consuming

Industry Consortium cont'd

PRO	CON
- Participants follow entire process from identifying and prioritizing challenges to implementing and monitoring solutions	- Process is time consuming in initial stages - Requires long term commitment from members
- Signing of formal agreement/statement of intent is a clear indication of willingness to participate and make formal commitments	- Industry partners may be willing to participate and make a commitment, but what they are able to achieve and what the educators and trainers require are not always the same - Not all members are able to provide the same level of commitment or supports to such areas as work terms, apprenticeships, equipment or materials
- Members are usually representatives from key players in the industry	- Getting the word out to all business and industry relevant to the sector is greatest challenge - Large businesses participating in the consortium may "overshadow" small to medium size organizations
- Members are typically part of a formal association or organization OR they end up forming a formal association or organization	- Funding to sustain a consortium, provide the necessary office support to coordinate data and information continues to be greatest challenge
- Formal associations typically charge some form of membership fee to cover office and subsequent support costs	- Membership fees may deter some industries from participating
- Invitation is typically sent to all members in the industry sector OR in a similar sector	- Can result in an extremely large consortium making it increasingly difficulty to achieve consensus on key issues and priorities
- As solutions and strategies are developed by business and industry, the formal commitments strengthen their position and commitment to action plans	- Action plans developed by business and industry are not always conducive with educators and trainers
- Membership are people who are active in the industry and have current and relevant knowledge of what is required immediately and for the future	- What is required by business and industry and what educators and trainers can provide are not always synonymous

Surveys

Process

Whether on-line, face to face or pen and paper, surveys have been the most common tool used to gain input from stakeholders. A strategy using surveys typically requires a "series" of surveys to be distributed. For example, Human Resource challenges are identified in very general terms. These challenges are then prioritized, occasionally on the same survey. A series of surveys are then distributed over time to further define and refine (a) specific issues, (b) proposed solutions, (c) implementation methods and timelines.

Follow up and monitoring of the activities requires administrative support and subsequent surveys may be distributed to indicated challenges during implementation and ask for input on additional solutions. Survey questions can include:
- checklists which are designed to make it easier to complete the survey
- open ended questions requiring a narrative answer

PRO	CON
- Surveys can be broadcast to a large number of stakeholders in a timely manner	- Recent statistics indicate that less than 10% of recipients respond to surveys

- There is flexibility in questions which can include;
(a) checklists
    - easier for the respondent to complete
(b) open ended questions / narrative
    - allows for more detailed answers
	- Narrative answers are difficult to collate and summarize
	- Checklists cannot provide all potential answers
	- Typically includes a section that allows the respondent to add additional information

- Stakeholders can complete the survey at their convenience	- Loss of interaction typically found in meetings - Avoids scheduling and attendance issues
- Multiple surveys can be issued to identify core issues, achieve consensus on priorities and establish action plans	- Labour intensive to develop multiple surveys based on summarized data - Respondents typically do not want to complete more than one survey
- Questions can build from "yes/no" to narrative	- Requires expertise and knowledge of developing effective questions - Information is redundant, and used mainly to determine the impression of the "majority" - Majority is determined by respondents, which could totally eliminate a specific group or classification if they do not respond
- Complex issues can be thoroughly explored to ensure core issues are identified	- Identifying core issues can be time consuming
- Based on response, survey may be broadcast to additional community stakeholders	- Time consuming to summarize information and data. Resources not always available
- Allows anyone in the company or organization to respond (typically is assigned by the company or organization)	- Is the viewpoint of one person in the company or organization, which may or may not be the right person (level of authority)
- Typically substantial amounts of data and information is generated to support identified challenges	- Requires a central point of communication, office support to collect, summarize and distribute data - Information and data often not distributed to respondents
- Simple "yes / no" questions can immediately determine employers willingness to provide work terms for students and/or employment for graduates	- "Yes/no" questions do not provide the opportunity to determine employers reasons for not being willing to consider work terms/employment for students and graduates

Face to Face Outreach

Process

These meetings have to be "at the speed of business" as everyone is time starved.

This strategy can be facilitated by any community stakeholder. Key community representatives are chosen to participate in consultations, individually or in a group. Typically the appropriate person of authority is sourced and provided with questions and ask to submit their answers prior to the meeting.

The scheduled meeting is typically 15-20 minutes in length and the facilitator simply clarifies some of the answers provided.

PRO	CON
- Maximum number of key stakeholders are chosen	- Small "select" group may not be representative of entire sector - Individual answers from their perspective and based on their personal agenda
- Provides a very personalized approach which many respondents prefer	- Information may be so highly specialized it is difficult to summarize and find common issues - Respondents are not provided the opportunity to collaborate with members in similar industry or with similar issues - Extremely time consuming to schedule and complete adequate number of interviews
- Choosing participants that are diverse and a good cross section generates substantial ideas and solutions	- Often the same people are approached over many years, due to their willingness to participate
- Questions are typically structured to allow the person to identify particular training needs, skill gaps and workforce issues	- Participant may not agree with needs, gaps and issues presented - Conversation can quickly lose focus, based on individual experience
- Participants volunteer to participate	- May not be representative of entire industry sector
- Complex issues can be thoroughly explored to ensure core issues are identified	- Identifying core issues can be time consuming
- Participation is typically "by invitation only"	- A few select people are speaking for everyone, even though they have not been "elected" as a spokesperson
- Person being interviewed is usually in a position of knowledge and authority	- Often difficult to determine the appropriate person to speak with, due to the diversity of issues presented
- Is effective for determining core issues	- Is not effective for developing action plans, implementing or monitoring solutions
- Short time commitment requested of the respondent	- Does not ensure commitment for additional stages of solutions and implementation