

Common Career Language

MATRIX COMPANION

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Common Career Language MATRIX COMPANION

Efforts to create a common career language in Alberta were sparked by the Alberta Symposium on Career Development and Public Policy in 2002. Since then the Common Language Working Group has developed a tool to help foster the development of increased common use of language. This companion is designed to support the information found in that tool, the Common Career Language Matrix.

The guiding principles of this project are that:

- Career development is integrally connected to education, social development, community development, economic development and accordingly is well served through consultation and inclusion of a diverse range of stakeholders
- Career development is a component of economic development, and the economy is more efficient when its citizens are encouraged to connect to work that is personally-determined and meaningful
- Work is not limited to paid employment; it is dynamic and multi-faceted, and all work is meaningful and valuable within a society and its economy
- Common understanding of career development language between stakeholders is essential to create sustainable economic and social well-being

The goals of this project are to:

- enhance the common understanding of career development, its policies, processes and outcomes through the establishment and promotion of common language
- provide greater overall understanding to all stakeholders of the effectiveness of career development services and provide useful information on how those services can be improved through common language
- reflect a broad spectrum of stakeholders including consumers, practitioners, business / industry and policy makers in the language, its values and benefits
- perform research and assessment of existing practice specific to language
- identify disparity in language and to support the benefits of common language
- provide “any time, any place” access for all stakeholder groups through web-based delivery

Through the Alberta Symposia on Career Development and Public Policy, participants recognized clearly that differences in use of common language contributed to considerable division and confusion in policy development and interpretation, service delivery and identified outcomes of service, as well as the general isolation of the employer community. Through this dialogue, those groups of people in need of greater clarity of language were identified as EMPLOYERS, POLICY MAKERS, PRACTITIONERS and USERS. In order to reflect the diverse needs of all stakeholders, the matrix was structured to include a broad DEFINITION, with identified VALUES and BENEFITS specific to each stakeholder group. This reflects the different applications of language within the practice of each stakeholder group.

Following the Symposia, the Common Language Working Group, composed of employers, policy makers and practitioners collaborated to determine six initial terms for inclusion in the Common Language Matrix. The group reached a consensus on selecting the following terms:

- Career
- Career Development
- Work
- Sector
- Community Economic Development
- Labour Market

These terms are defined in brief by the Common Career Language Matrix and supported by more detailed definitions, and stakeholder values and benefits below.

CONTENT

The Common Career Language Matrix provides users with definitions of six career development terms. As you read across the matrix the definition expands, explaining the values and benefits of this definition for each stakeholder group. The list of terms below provides the fully expanded definitions, values and benefits available in the online version of the Common Career Language Matrix.

CAREER

Career is a life management concept that involves the balance of paid and unpaid work, learning, and personal life roles. Careers are unique to each person and are dynamic, unfolding throughout life.

The word **CAREER** lays the foundation of career development language and accordingly is situated first on the Common Language Matrix. It was identified by the Common Language Working Group as considerably misinterpreted and misused, adding to confusion in discussions between stakeholders. Clarity of policy, employment opportunities, educational programs and service outcomes relies heavily on common understanding of the word career.

Employers

Increase employee retention, productivity and profitability by supporting workers to balance life roles

Often employers use the word “career” to mean profession – it is important that this key stakeholder engages in application of the word “career” in its comprehensive context. Each worker is a composite of their work, educational, lifestyle and recreational choices and balance between the diverse elements of one’s career leads to improved overall life / work satisfaction, improved efficiency of occupational decision-making resulting in increased economic capacity.

Employers may wish to increase their awareness of the economic benefits of career development policy and service delivery, and enhance their own human resource policy to reflect the need for life / work balance, lifelong learning and many other career wellness concepts to improve the longevity and capacity of existing employees.

Policy Makers

Collaboration between government ministries in legislation and funding toward a responsive, wholistic career development delivery system

As policy makers are reminded that “career” implies a balance of all life / work roles, accordingly, collaboration with other stakeholders, or engaging

in cross-ministry initiatives leverage resources in a more meaningful manner.

Practitioners

Delivery of services that is flexible to fit individual client needs and timelines

Service initiatives that are wholistic in scope serve to address a broader range of life / work roles and will create a more meaningful attachment to the labour market. Outcomes related to work maintenance may be better achieved.

Users

Understanding of and personal responsibility for managing life / work roles and transitions

Users are challenged to address the many dimensions of their own career management including learning, family, community and recreation to enhance their overall productivity, marketability and satisfaction.

CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Career development is the lifelong process of managing roles and transitions, with the goals of achieving balance in one's present, and moving towards a preferred future.

Employers

To understand career development's role in workforce development; to gain assurance that workers who actively manage their careers are likely to make sustainable and meaningful choices

Changing roles is important to maintain healthy careers. Employers who support and provided mechanisms for employees to change, learn and evolve within their work may expect improved longevity, economic efficiency and competitive strength in the market place.

Policy Makers

To legislate a continuum of services that maximizes the positive economic impact of work transition accountable to client-determined goals

Career development is a process, not an event. Policies must be developed to support career development at all levels of change including K to 12 education, post-secondary education, through self-employment as well as employment initiatives, with a focus on ongoing support to individuals who have maintained labour market connections, and through the phases of retirement. Additionally, policy may broaden its perspective to include parenting and volunteerism and other non-traditional work models as viable outcomes.

Practitioners

Identify their role within a continuum of service that is accountable, responsive and respectful of clients

Services must be responsive to consumer need at varying stages of their life / work transitions, and focused on more than employment / education / self-employment outcomes.

Users

The right and responsibility to identify and pursue career goals with responsive career development support

Consumers taking active, day-to-day roles in the management of their careers become more competent and therefore, more adaptive to change. Competence has 3 components: Knowledge (awareness), Skills (capacity), and Attitudes (will). Clients' ability to maintain self-sufficiency and make change appropriate to labour market demands will result in improved overall economic performance.

WORK

Work is a set of activities with an intended set of outcomes. Work is not necessarily tied to paid employment, but may include entrepreneurship, consulting, volunteerism, contract, and professional activities.

Employers

Improved productivity and longevity of workers by broadening the definition and structure of work

Employers may be well served to broaden their definition of work when assessing potential candidates. Including volunteerism, home-based responsibilities as well as non-traditional employment in their definition of work may help to identify qualified prospective employees. Additionally, employers looking at non-traditional forms of employment may be able to increase their overall profitability while respecting the life / work roles of their employees, e.g. encouraging telecommuting to reduce overhead costs and providing more responsive schedules to staff.

Policy Makers

Increased range of outcomes using a broader definition of work

In establishing measurable outcomes for career development interventions, a broader definition of work may be helpful to better measure efficacy.

Practitioners

Provide services that are responsive to a broader definition of work

In evaluating the skill base of consumers and their match with the world of work, a broad definition provides a deeper pool of experience from which to draw.

Users

More opportunity becomes available to the worker by including diverse forms of work in career planning

Effective self-marketing requires users to reach into all of their life / work roles to define their skills. It may be meaningful to create a sense of comfort in using non-traditional forms of work as a source of marketable skills, while recognizing that work is packaged in many diverse formats that may meet their needs and enhance their life / work balance.

SECTOR

Industry categories

Employers

Improve recruitment strategies by identifying and valuing transferable skills between and within sectors

Employers may create effective means of promotion and recruitment by grouping with other employers in their sector. Leveraging the costs and benefits of collaborative recruitment may improve their overall profitability and improve the mobility of skilled workers in Canada.

Policy Makers

Respond to skill shortages and economic changes by channeling workers from one sector to another

Examining the mobility of skills at the sector level may provide policy makers with opportunities to address labour shortages in the short run.

Practitioners

Enhance effectiveness of services by facilitating the transition of skills between and within sectors

Making meaningful connections to the world of work at the sector level may provide a broader sense of the labour market and identify paths for mobility of skills and experience.

Users

Open more opportunities by identifying and marketing transferable skills within and between sectors

Users may wish to evaluate the growth and mobility opportunities in their chosen area of work by examining occupations at the sector-level.

COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Developing and maintaining suitable economic, social, and political environments in which balanced growth may be realized, increasing the wealth of the community

Employers

Sustainable economic development is fostered by effective career development delivery systems

Recognizing the connection between economic and community vitality and the ability of individuals within the community to effectively manage their careers, employers are engaging in sustainable community economic development when they support career development initiatives within the community.

Policy Makers

Improve community economic development through cross-ministry career development initiatives

Collaboration between ministries will allow the policies of community development, economic development, and career development to create stronger and more sustainable results at the level of the local economy.

Practitioners

Delivery of career development services that are accountable to sustainable community economic development

Service delivery is grounded in the community, strengthening client awareness of community resources and the client's ability to capitalize on these resources for their own economic health and that of the community.

Users

The right and responsibility to experience and contribute to community economic development through effective career management

Clients are empowered by increased awareness of community resources and strengths, as well as their own resources and strengths, able to tap into where these connect to create economic vitality and opportunity.

LABOUR MARKET INFORMATION

Information about career planning, work options, and learning opportunities. It includes the current economic environment, as well as trends and forecasts about the future.

Employers

Access to labour market information supports strategic business planning, human resource development, and workforce development

A current and accurate understanding of the labour market can support employers in making human resources decisions, determine appropriate expansion planning as well as assist with identifying consumer trends.

Policy Makers

Proactive legislation related to occupational growth and decline, demographics, technological advances, and community economic development

Policy development for the long run requires accurate and current information about technology, economic trends as well as demographics and corresponding social trends.

Practitioners

Improve client outcomes through service delivery that connects to current labour market information

Practitioners require a solid connection to local labour market information to best serve the needs of their clients. On a broader scale, a strong sense of the labour market and its trends is important to identify areas of growing need in service delivery.

Users

Research and application of labour market information improves career decision making

Ultimately, users must understand the water that they are navigating. A basic awareness of the economy, consumer trends, and technological advancement is important to make key career decisions.

CONTRIBUTORS

Sources

Canada Career Consortium
Canadian Career Development Foundation
Canada Career Information Partnership
Canadian Standards and Guidelines for Career Development
National Life / Work Centre:
- The Real Game Series
- Blueprint for Life Work Designs

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FEEDBACK MECHANISM

To determine the effectiveness of the matrix at achieving its goals, the following feedback will be solicited from online users of the matrix, as well as at the Building Tomorrow Today 2005 consultation. Users will be asked the following questions and prompted to select a response from categories that will be provided:

1. What purpose are you hoping to use the matrix to achieve?
2. How does the matrix content match your use of these terms?
3. Are you planning to make shifts in your use of career language to move more closely to the matrix definitions?
4. What stakeholder group do you represent?

Appendix A

HISTORY

The first Alberta Symposium on Career Development and Public Policy was held April 29 and 30, 2002, in Edmonton. Its genesis was a presentation at the “Going for Gold” Conference in Vancouver, 2001, by the Canadian Team, who had participated in the second International Symposium on Career Development and Public Policy immediately preceding the conference. Susan Williams, Assistant Deputy Minister, Skills Investments Division, attended the presentation and concluded that a provincial version of the Symposium could be a promising experiment for promoting dialogue and collaboration among career and workforce development practitioners, policy and employer bodies.

A Steering Committee articulated the objectives and foundational structure for the event and carefully chose delegates to represent the diversity of sectors and stakeholders across the province.

Pre-session work was required of all Symposium delegates. This work included the development of Function Papers on the following five themes:

1. Career Counselling
2. Career Education
3. Career Information and Development
4. Program Delivery and Design
5. Workforce Development

Small working groups were established to prepare these papers according to the following template:

- An outline of the current state of practice;
- A description of the “preferred future”; and
- A delineation of the main challenges within the function.

Members of the Steering Committee undertook the writing of three Synthesis Papers based on overarching issues in each of the five function papers. These issues were:

- Public Policy and Infrastructure
- Preparing Career Development Practitioners
- Preferred Future.

These papers were distributed to delegates on Day One of the Symposium. The vision for the Symposium was a highly interactive event that would help all three stakeholder groups to better understand one another’s perspectives and to work more effectively together.

The specific objectives of the Symposium were:

- To promote dialogue and share perspectives among policy, practice and employer groups with respect to career and workforce development issues;
- To identify needs, gaps, opportunities and trends for career development within Alberta;
- To test the perceived value of the initiative to all three stakeholder groups, to determine if and how momentum would be maintained, and to decide how to keep the broader community engaged; and
- To prepare for the Alberta contribution to the National Symposium.

Following two days of presentations, discussion and plenary dialogue, key strengths and gaps were identified and organized thematically. The six theme areas were:

1. Research and Evaluation
2. Common Language
3. Cooperation Among Stakeholders
4. Social Marketing
5. Seamless Transitions
6. Reaching Marginalized Groups

At the conclusion, a great number of action items were identified, including holding an additional forum to bring policy, practice and employer groups together. The six themes were concentrated into three working groups: Research and Evaluation, Marginalized Populations and Common Language.

Common Language

In the summer of 2002, the Common Language Working Group conducted a short survey of the Alberta Symposium participants to follow-up on the initial ideas that created the working group. The responses, while not representative, indicated a split within and between stakeholders on consistent usage of even the most basic of words related to Career Development (career, job, work). According to the respondents, there are significant implications for adopting a common language in the following areas:

- between government departments (policy makers)
- within the Career Development profession:
- in research and training,
- in defining, communicating and measuring outcomes of service delivery

Note: As no employers responded to the questionnaire, this was not identified as an area for follow-up but was included in the subsequent work of the group.

Process

In March of 2003, the Alberta Symposium participants reconvened to put the ideas generated in 2002 into action plans. The Common Language Working Group projected that a clear understanding of the current use of career language might better support action between all stakeholders toward the development of a common language tool. The Working Group proceeded to detail an action plan. Following this action plan, over the next few months a Career Language video was developed by Rod Tweddle of CareersTV in Edmonton to illustrate and support the issue.

Common Career Language
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CareersTV, access media group

Video Text:

Sometimes life can be so confusing. Same with careers. How are you ever going to know what to do with the rest of your life?

Surely all you've got to do is know the proper lingo to get your career on track. So, let's hit the streets to clear this mess up.

Hi, I'm going to ask you a quick question. What's a career?

- ✿ Well uh a career is something that you do for a period of time and makes you a living.
- ✿ What do you mean what is a career?
- ✿ It's a job.
- ✿ It's something you do to make money.
- ✿ It's a great job. It's something you enjoy going to but it shouldn't consume your life. You should be able to work to live, not live to work.
- ✿ It's something you can look forward to and make lots of money with, and enjoy every day.
- ✿ It's something you don't do at home.
- ✿ Something that you do... that's professional.
- ✿ A career is like something that your Dad does, right?
- ✿ A career is something like a job that can progress into something better, not like a dead end job.

Hey! I'm doing a show on Careers. What does a career mean to you?

- ✿ A career means uh, a job.
- ✿ A career is something that makes you lots of money and keeps you satisfied.
- ✿ A career is something you live your life doin'... hopefully you get paid at it... hopefully you like it.

Now that that's straight you can relax and just look for a job. Or is it work you need? Let's find out.

(font: what's the difference between a job... and work?)

- ✿ Work is something that you don't necessarily want to do... and a job is something that you do want to do. It's a career.
- ✿ A job is something you do temporarily for short change. Work is something you do for a lifetime... hopefully.
- ✿ A job is something that you love... work is something that you go... but you're not really enjoy it.
- ✿ Work is something you like to do (and a job?) A job is something you have to do.
- ✿ For me this is a job, but it's something I like... and work is something you go to and it's a grind.
- ✿ I don't like either of those things... work is bad, job's bad.

- ✿ Work is what you do to obtain your job and future life. Like you work for money... so you can go to school. (and a job is...) A job is what you want to do for the rest of your life. Kinda like a career.
- ✿ Work is a job. There's no difference.
- ✿ If you define your job as work then you shouldn't really be in it because you probably don't enjoy doing it. I think a job is something you should enjoy doing.

At least if you're still confused in your career journey... there's hope. You can always seek out the assistance of a career practitioner.

What does a career practitioner do?

- ✿ I haven't got a clue.
- ✿ No idea. Maybe someone that (like) gives you a career idea.
- ✿ What does a career practitioner do?
- ✿ They practice careers.

Oh, you're the best. Thanks!

- ✿ I have no idea.
- ✿ Not a clue. (laughs)
- ✿ A career practitioner... don't they adjust your neck? Is that right?

Last question. What does a career practitioner do?

- ✿ Practitioner?
- ✿ I don't know.
- ✿ I think I've seen this show before where you ask people (like) these weird questions.
- ✿ I always thought that a career practitioner helped other people find what they want to do for a living.

Where would you find a career practitioner?

- ✿ Good question.

So, there you have it. This is Rod Tweddle of CareersHELP bringing clarity to the nation! So, good luck in your job... uh, your work... your vocation?... good luck in your career.

This video was presented to a group of participants at the Building Tomorrow Today Annual Career Development Consultation in Edmonton, Alberta, at the end of April 2003. Following this, the Common Language Working Group met to discuss the shape of a common language tool and explore its content. The Career Language video illustrated a number of discrepancies in the use of career language and provided an early template. The Working Group co-chairs, Kristen Cumming and Colleen Smith, in consultation with the rest of the Working Group continued the development of the tool during the summer and fall of 2003. This tool is now referred to as the Common Career Language Matrix.

The first draft of the Matrix was submitted to the Working Group for feedback and editing. Revisions were incorporated and the Matrix was then broadcast to members of the Alberta Symposium on Career Development and Public Policy for review. Additional responses were incorporated to the draft document that was formatted for presentation. The Matrix was also presented for input and discussion at the National Consultation on Career Development 2004.

Appendix B

DEVELOPMENT

Research and Sources

The development of the tool included reviewing a number of career development glossaries to define and support the content of the common language tool. This research included the National Life / Work Centre glossary provided through the Real Game Series and the Blueprint for Life Work Design, The Canadian Standards and Guidelines for Career Development, Canada Career Information Partnership, Canada Career Consortium as well as the Canadian Career Development Foundation. Following this research phase, the Working Group agreed that the optimal physical format to present the information was a Matrix that provided information specific to each stakeholder group relative to each career development term.

The common threads through each of these glossaries provided the skeleton of the Matrix and defined the terms of the Matrix and its stakeholder groups. Consultation with each of the stakeholder groups provided the values and benefits concepts. The key to the matrix is in the value of its application to each stakeholder group, and the means by which it connects each stakeholder group to the common definitions.

Stakeholder Feedback from NATCON & BTT

Building Tomorrow Today, Annual Career Development Consultation (BTT) Edmonton, Alberta, 2003, 2004

Enthusiastic discussions were facilitated with the participants in attendance at the BTT sessions. In addition to exploring the meanings of words, the issue of accountability in the definition was discussed. For example, an employer will accept the responsibility to give someone “work” or a “job”, but the individual is responsible for their “career”. Another area that received attention was the need for a cohesive continuum of career development service that provided support on a whole life basis, rather than crisis response. The education curriculum was seen as a key way to support the development of a common career language.

National Consultation on Career Development (NATCON) Ottawa, Ontario, 2004

The 17 participants in the Creating Common Language session at NATCON discussed three questions relating to language:

1. How does language impact culture?
2. How does language shape outcomes?
3. How does language alienate others?

The following summaries capture the comments that the participants shared through discussion of these questions

1. How Does Language Impact Culture?

- Language was seen to be shaping culture and being shaped by culture.
- Language communicates what is important in a culture, creating cultural boundaries and shaping perceptions, as well as defining who is “in” the culture.
- Language has a powerful impact on thought processes, changing culturally assigned meanings over time.

2. How Does Language Shape Outcomes?

- Language creates expectations, for example describing an event as a career fair vs. job fair. This is also evident in the different expectations created between describing oneself as a career coach or a career counsellor.
- Language can define segments of the population, either through the use of inclusive language or the identification of specific groups. We can see this demonstrated in the change in words used to describe persons with disabilities.
- Body language, tones, accents, context all can affect the delivery of message; however, language is the main vehicle for bridging distances and reaching common understanding, impacting the range of outcomes available to those groups.

3. How Does Language Alienate Others?

- Language can evolve within a group to the point where it excludes others. Use of insider words, like acronyms and professional terms, can quickly determine who is “in” or not. As well, certain groups may lay a legal claim on the use of terms. For example, only persons with certain credentials are given permission to use a key term, like Depression (with a capital “d”) in a court of law, although another person in the same court using depression without the capital can very well be communicating the same content. This relates to hierarchies of word use, where certain words are used by individuals of a certain level.
- Geography and cultural connections also play a role in alienating others. Aboriginal people are permitted to use the word Indian to refer to themselves, however, it is not acceptable for a non-Aboriginal to use the word Indian to refer to this group.

Building on this discussion, the Working Group then presented the Common Language Matrix for review and feedback from the participants. The key elements of the Common Language Matrix were well supported by the NATCON participant discussion.

As the Common Language Working Group defined its purpose, the Matrix is intended to support a positive and cohesive culture of career development that spans all stakeholder groups. Additionally, as practitioners and policy makers come together to develop and deliver programs, resources and services, it is of primary importance to clarify outcomes through a congruent acceptance of language. Finally, as a key to inclusion for all stakeholder groups, language must clearly be used to reduce any sense of alienation.