



PILLAR CONSULTING & ADVISORY SERVICES
ACCELERATING COMMUNITY CHANGE

Community Conversation With London's African Community

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Prepared By:

Pillar Consulting & Advisory Services
251 Dundas Street Central Library, 2nd Floor
London, Ontario, N6A 6H9
(519) 433-7976

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Section One: Process and Purpose

In July 2013, the City of London invited members of London's African community to participate in one of two sessions to talk about employment. The purpose of the sessions was to provide African community members with an opportunity to share and learn from each other. (Please see Appendix A for the invitation)

The City of London engaged Pillar Consulting & Advisory Services to facilitate the sessions. The first session was held on Thursday July 16th, 2013 from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. In total, 38 youth attended the session. The second session, primarily for adults, was held on July 2nd, 2013 from 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. In total 45 participants were engaged.

The following questions were discussed by both groups:

- What has been your experience in looking for work?
- What challenges or barriers have you experienced in looking for work?
- What has helped you look for work?
- What supports or services do you need from the community to help you find employment?
- What innovative solutions do you have to address unemployment?
- What would you like to see as next steps from this discussion?

For both sessions, five stations were set up around the room. Each station had one question for participants to answer. Participants were divided into five groups. Each group spent 10 - 15 minutes discussing the question and then rotated to the next table. A facilitator was at each table to help guide the conversation and capture notes from the discussions. Participants were also encouraged to write their thoughts and responses on the paper covering the table.

After participants had rotated to each table and responded to all five questions, participants reconvened as a large group. Participants then discussed what they would like to see as next steps from this discussion.

After both sessions, the team of facilitators gathered and transcribed the notes. The data was analyzed to extract key themes that summarized the feedback from the participants. Sections two, three and four of this report present the themes in various ways.

Many thanks to the individuals who participated in the sessions. Your contribution to and support of this endeavor is sincerely appreciated.

Section Two: Key Themes By Question

Six questions were asked during both sessions. Participant responses for each question were reviewed and categorized into the key themes. Both adult and youth responses are incorporated into the themes. If a theme was identified by only one group it has been noted within the description of each theme.

Question 1: What Has Been Your Experience In Looking For Work?

Lack of Experience (n=16)

Not having enough experience was discussed by both groups of participants. Specifically, some of the adults explained they face barriers because they do not have “Canadian experience”.

- Lack of Canadian experience (n=6)
- Not qualified in Canada (n=2)
- Never ending cycle, can't get a job because of lack of Canadian experience
- Even if you have skills and qualifications, an immigrant is asked for Canadian experience
- Asking for Canadian work experience from a skilled immigrant is a form of discrimination and contributes to high unemployment in the new immigrant population
- Must start from the beginning with no experience
- No experience (n=5)

Volunteering (n=11)

Volunteering was discussed by many of the youth participants as a useful way to gain experience that has helped them in applying for jobs. For example, some noted having this experience can act as a “gateway” to employment and can enhance skill sets. Two individuals, however, explained that even though they volunteered, this experience did not help them find or secure employment.

- Volunteering (n=3)
- Volunteering becomes a gateway/helps with employment
- Gaining more skills/volunteering helps
- Volunteer hours

- Skills/volunteering
- I volunteered at a lot of different places
- Tried to get a job from volunteering but didn't work
- Volunteering doesn't match job experience

Co-op and Internship (n=4)

Gaining experience through co-ops and internships was noted by some participants as beneficial in gaining experience and employment. In addition, some adult participants explained there is a need to have co-op programs that specifically target newcomers.

- They should have a program similar to co-op for newcomers to get that first step to Canadian experience
- More programs like co-op for newcomers/immigrants
- Internship
- Great because it was through a co-op and I was hired after my two month program

Discrimination (n=14)

Both groups of participants discussed experiencing discrimination based on their race/ethnicity, gender and neighbourhood when seeking employment. For example, some explained they have felt discriminated against by employers because of the name or address listed on their resume. Likewise, some adults reported being discriminated against because they are newcomers.

- Skin colour (n=3)
- Accent (n=2)
- Names play a part, name can be a barrier
- Racism when go into an interview
- Hard for newcomers
- Feel looked down on for being a refugee/immigrant
- Sexual discrimination; males are less likely to be hired when compared to female counterparts of similar qualifications (n=2)
- Racial discrimination
- Stereotypical
- Address on resume has held me back

Good Experience (n=5)

Some participants explained they had a “positive” or “good” experience in looking for work. For example, one participant explained they were able to apply for a job and obtain employment without any issues.

- Good experience (n=3)
- It was easy for me to find a job
- Applied and got the job I wanted, so good experience

Connections (n=6)

Having “good connections” was noted by many participants as a supportive factor in seeking employment. For example, developing connections through networking. Another participant explained there is a need to provide more opportunities to build connections.

- Connections (n=2)
- Networking is key
- Good experience because of connections/networks
- Network is helpful
- Need more connections

Lack of Jobs (n=6)

There was discussion among participants about the lack of jobs available to apply for. Many explained there are not enough “opportunities” and it is “hard finding a job.”

- No jobs
- Hardest part is looking for the job, once I got my first job it was easier for further employment
- Not enough opportunities for young people
- This summer I can't find a job
- It is hard looking for a job
- Finding a job was hard

Support Systems (n=14)

Many participants explained the importance of having supports when looking for work. For example, some discussed the importance of family and friends in assisting with this process. Likewise, other participants mentioned social and community services as important supports.

- Friends (n=4)
- Family (n=2)
- School (n=2)
- Y.O.U. (n=3)
- Different services help you with different jobs
- Resources for youth
- Youth leaders helped me find a job

Interview Preparation (n=2)

Some participants explained the importance of gaining experience and support in preparation for interviews as helpful.

- More help with interview preparation
- Get experience for interviews

Good Resume (n=3)

Having a good resume was noted by two participants as helpful when seeking employment. One participant, for example, explained going to the library to receive help in completing their resume was useful. Another participant explained they had a challenge finding resources to help with writing a resume.

- Resume
- Going to the library and asking help to do a resume
- Lack of knowledge of where to get help writing a resume

Applying in Person (n=3)

Applying in person was discussed by some participants as an effective way of obtaining employment. For example, going to the place you are applying and asking to speak with a manager.

- Better to apply in person and ask for a manager when dropping off resume
- Online not as good as in person
- Ask for management

Maintaining a Positive Attitude (n=4)

Some participants explained the importance of maintaining a positive attitude when seeking employment. For example, “not giving up” and “thinking positively.”

- Not going into looking for a job with the thought that everyone is against you
- Thinking positively
- Not giving up
- Be positive

Communication (n=3)

Communicating with others was noted as a beneficial activity when seeking employment. For example, communicating with the employer and learning from the experience of others.

- Learning from others
- Communication
- Communicating with employers

Question 2: What Challenges or Barriers Have You Experienced in Looking for Work?

Discrimination (n=14)

Many participants discussed discrimination as a barrier they experienced in looking for work. For example, employers making assumptions about immigrants and newcomers or being discriminated against because of their last name.

- Last names are being judged (n=3)
- Assuming that you're not educated
- Fear of not getting a job because of skin colour or accent
- Employer perspective about immigrants
- Employer perceptions about Africans
- Discrimination
- They judge before hiring
- People's prejudice
- Stereotypes
- Address is a problem because they judge by where we live
- Negative assumptions
- Some agencies assume African immigrants lack certain skills
- Chances of being hired increases when one's skin is lighter than that of the competitor

Lack of Experience (n=3)

Not having experience to obtain employment was discussed by some participants. For example, not having enough experience in general or not having "Canadian" experience.

- Inexperience
- Experience
- Employers ask for Canadian experience

Lack of Connections (n=8)

Not having connections or relationships with key individuals to obtain employment was discussed as a barrier to employment. For example, many participants explained securing employment is often based on "who you know." Likewise, other participants noted there is a lack of connection between agencies and jobs. For example, there was discussion around the need to provide more connections to jobs through agencies.

- Expectations from employment services to be connected to jobs directly (n=2)
- Not having connections
- Connections
- Depends on who you know
- I don't have relationships with people who can help
- Immigrants expect to be connected to jobs
- Non-profit employment agencies do not directly connect people to jobs

Navigation (n=2)

Navigating the employment spectrum and knowing where to apply were discussed by some participants.

- Not knowing where to apply
- Many people don't know how to navigate the workplace, they stick to what they know and what the people they know are doing

Lack of Resources (n=8)

Some participants discussed specific resources that were barriers when looking for work. For example, dressing appropriately, transportation and access to resources. Likewise, many participants felt current agencies are lacking in terms of service delivery and as a result African organizations are trying to "fill the gap" that is missing.

- Transportation (n=3)
- Dressing appropriately
- Advice
- Agencies are not meeting the need of services
- More agencies
- African organizations are trying to fill the gap that is missing from current agencies

Service Providers (n=8)

There was discussion among participants about a lack of cultural sensitivity among service providers. For example, many participants noted the importance of connecting with "the right service provider" and "culturally sensitive organizations" as important considerations.

- Not connecting with the right service provider
- It is easier to explain your concerns to someone that understands you

- It is safer to go to an agent that understands your culture
- Mismatch between the individual and the service agency in terms of understanding their culture
- Culturally sensitive organizations usually approach differently
- Not considering the cultural aspect of job seekers
- Cultural sensitivity
- We need culturally sensitive organizations to help find employment

Cultural and Language Barriers (n=6)

Language and cultural barriers were discussed by some of the adults as a barrier to seeking employment.

- The language barrier (n=4)
- Cultural barriers such as selling yourself
- Cultural barriers

Lack of Confidence (n=3)

Lacking confidence was discussed by some participants. For example, some individuals explained fear of the unknown as a barrier when looking for employment.

- Need confidence
- Fear of the unknown
- There is a fear when looking for work

Communication (n=3)

Providing feedback and dialogue as to what needs to happen and having someone to listen were all aspects of communication discussed by the groups.

- Conversations need to happen in the community
- Not receiving feedback
- No one there to listen

Question 3: What Has Helped You Look for Work?

Informal Support Network

Receiving support from an informal support network such as friends and family was often discussed as a resource that has assisted participants in looking for work.

- Friends (n=12)
- Family (n=7)
- Friend who helped with language barriers
- Your friends if they have found work and how they found the job
- Friends that have jobs
- Friends networking
- Talking to friends who already have a job and are working
- Information from friends
- Advice from friends
- Friend referrals
- Family friends
- Social support - family to depend on helps lower levels of stress

Connections (n=7)

Having a connection with an individual or support was noted by some participants as factor that enhanced their ability to obtain employment.

- Connections (n=3)
- Personal connections
- People hooking you up
- Alfred, Yasmin
- African community members

Training and Education (7)

Accessing training opportunities in the form of workshops and job skills training was discussed by many participants. In addition, obtaining post-secondary education was also noted as a factor that aids in looking for work.

- Training opportunities that lead to employment
- University education

- Post-secondary education helps with the transition to the workforce
- Workshops
 - Helping with work research and resume
 - Learning Canadian culture in order to fit in
- More exposure to information provides an opportunity to learn
- Accreditation

Online Resources (n=7)

Using the internet to find employment and information was noted by some participants as helpful.

- Internet (n=4)
- Websites—Kijiji
- Online information
- Online searching

Gaining Experience (n=14)

Many participants explained engaging in volunteer work provided job experience and networking opportunities which led to employment opportunities. Likewise, other participants noted co-ops, placements and apprenticeships as helpful.

- Volunteer experience (n=5)
- Doing your hours/volunteering
- Job skills—volunteering
- Networking through volunteering
- Participation through voluntary services
- Getting volunteer experience
- Experience helps you find a job
- Placement
- Co-op
- Apprenticeship

Community Resources (n=19)

Accessing community services to obtain employment and employment support was discussed by many of the participants.

- Y.O.U. (n=5)
 - Gets you a job without any experience
 - Except only allowed to do it once
 - Still hard to find a job next year
 - Summer jobs for youth
 - Without Y.O.U. would be hard to find first job
 - Gives experience
 - Offers a starting point
- African Community Council (n=2)
 - Provide a lot of services
 - Very positive experience
 - They refer to other services
 - Understand that Africans are well educated
- Community organizations (n=2)
 - Help with giving you information
 - Making connections
- LIHC (n=2)
 - Youth workers
- LRC (n=2)
 - Youth groups
 - Post jobs
 - Bring job bank to youth
- LIT
- YMCA
- Youth outreach workers
- Fanshawe CES
- ACFO - Francophone associations
- WIL Employment

School (n=11)

Youth discussed school as a resource that has assisted them when seeking employment. For example, accessing guidance counsellors and teachers.

- School (n=5)
- School counsellors (n=2)
- Schools with counsellors who work specifically with you
- Educators
- School information
- School opportunities

References (n=6)

Obtaining a good reference or recommendation for a position was discussed as a factor that can help in obtaining employment by some participants.

- References (n=3)
- Past employers
- Recommendations
- Access to references

Networking (n=9)

Engaging in opportunities to network was noted as an important activity in obtaining employment. For example, communicating with employers directly.

- Networking (n=6)
- Socializing
- Community networking
- Talking to people in the field that you are interested in
- Go to mall and ask, go in person
- Asking around who is hiring
- In person

Culturally Specific Resources (n=6)

The adults who participated in the discussion explained the importance of providing culturally specific resources. For example, providing more support services.

- Cultural sensitivity for people looking for work in organizations
- Places where a variety of information from jobs and agencies are available for newcomers
- More support services for people of different backgrounds
- For African Canadians to have one place where agencies/city could provide help for people looking for work while being culturally sensitive to their needs
- People are at different levels, so agencies need to focus on individual needs
- Interview skills for various backgrounds

Job Fairs and Job Listings (n=3)

Connecting to job fairs was explained by some participants as a resource that has assisted them in looking for work. Likewise, searching newspapers and reading billboards was also discussed.

- Job fair (n=2)
- Connection to job fairs
- Newspaper
- Billboards

Individual Perseverance and Motivation (n=6)

Being persistent and focused was noted as important characteristics when seeking employment. For example, staying focused, reading and researching regularly and remaining determined.

- Doing research
- Read everyday
- Keep up to date within your own field or where you are interested
- Persistence
- Staying focused
- My determination to keep looking forward when there is a set-back

Starting Own Business (n=4)

Some individuals discussed starting their own business or becoming self-employed as a way to assist with the difficulties of finding employment.

- Make your own job
- Self-employment initiatives
- Independence
- Self-employment

Resume (n=2)

Having experience and skills writing a resume was also noted by some participants.

- Resume experience
- Resume skills

Question 4: What Supports Or Services Do You Need From The Community To Help You Find Employment?

Culturally Sensitive Service Providers (n=9)

There was discussion among many participants regarding the importance of ensuring service providers are culturally competent and sensitive to the needs of diverse cultures, immigrants and newcomers. For example, many noted a need for more training for service providers in this area and the need to connect service providers to members of the African community to help explain these culturally specific barriers.

- Service providers need more training (i.e., sensitivity, differences)
- More training to target needs—culturally sensitive service providers
- Need a sense of belonging at service locations
- Policy of service providers
- Small details a service provider might not know
- Major barriers
 - Trauma
 - Sensitivity
 - Cultural barriers
 - Societal experience
 - Norms
 - War torn areas
 - Journey
 - Needs of newcomers
- Need someone we can identify with (i.e., “he knows me”)
- Service providers need to have an open mind, ask questions, listen, be engaged, and respectful
- Need to understand the gaps

Networking Opportunities (n=9)

Gaining access to networking opportunities was noted by some participants as potential support that would be helpful in obtaining employment. For example, help with creating connections and information on networking events.

- Networking (n=4)
- Connections
- Help with creating connections
- Networking access
- Connection to events
- Networks

Building Supports within Cultural Community (n=4)

Building supports within the cultural community was discussed. For example, some noted this would help with language translations and empowerment.

- Connecting with established African communities is important
- Meet people in your own community who can help with language translation
- Build supports within own community
- Established community can empower

Guide to Help with Process (n=7)

Having a guide to mentor and assist with the process of seeking employment was discussed by some of the adult participants. For example, to assist with language barriers, introductions to employers and assistance with interviews.

- Need person to help with the process
- Speaking and writing in English on site
- I walk them to employers—ask them to give them a chance
- Help with interviews, guide, pre-interview, coach
- Guiding them
- Language barriers—preparation for interviews

Awareness and Connection to Available Services (n=4)

Some participants noted the importance of access to and awareness of support services. For example, knowledge of job fairs and how to access community services.

- Inform us of job fairs and services available
- Awareness
- Services are out there, how to get them is a challenge
- Lack of awareness

Access to Resources (n=6)

Not having access to resources such as transportation and computers was noted by some participants as a challenge.

- Transportation (n=2)
- Buss pass (n=2)
- Help with transportation to workplace in the city
- Lack of resources (i.e., access to computers)

Connection to Employment/Job Creation (n=11)

Some participants discussed the need to provide more employment information and opportunities. For example, more job fairs and connections to employers.

- More job fairs (n=2)
- Youth programs that help you to find jobs (n=2)
- Job placement for youth to apply to after Y.O.U
- Guidance to jobs for people in the community
- Internships
- Job opportunities
- Finding a job
- Connection with employers
- Need direct connections to employers

Training and Resources (n=23)

Enhancing the current services available and adding new services were discussed. This focused on the need for more training and resources such as resume writing, how to network, interview preparation and job search strategies.

- Education on culture in Canada (n=2)
- Help writing resumes (n=4)
- Interview preparation (n=2)
- More education and training opportunities for small businesses (n=3)
- Workshops
- Information sessions
- Training services
- Workshops on preparing for work

- Resume building
- Mock interviews
- How to navigate the internet for job searching
- Barriers to resources that help with job search
- How to search for jobs
- How to network
 - Teaching to network
 - Social etiquette
 - Who to talk to
- Teaching trades
- Computer skills

Unified Service Delivery (n=6)

Fragmented service delivery was explained as a challenge by some participants. Providing direct and integrated services was noted. This also includes engaging service providers, employers and other social supports in the process.

- Include all relevant service providers (i.e., educators, employers)
- Ensure all stakeholders are included in the process
- Stop sending to a bunch of different services
- Steps to getting a job—takes too much time
- Don't want to wait
- No direct services

Opportunities to Gain Experience (n=9)

Many participants discussed the importance of gaining experience in obtaining employment. Providing more opportunities to gain experience, for example through volunteer work, was noted as a service the community could provide.

- Volunteer (n=5)
- Experience (n=4)

Follow-through Into Practice (n=2)

Ensuring ideas are implemented into practice was noted by some participants as an important step for service providers.

- Commitment to follow-through with ideas into practice
- Need to translate into practice

Preparation for Newcomers (n=1)

One adult participant explained there is a need to ensure there is efficient preparation for newcomers immediately when they come to Canada, or even before. As they explained, this would help in terms of speeding up the process in obtaining employment.

- Before landing, provide information on what documents are needed
- Should embrace an abundance mentality because highly skilled and qualified labour is attracted, screened and accepted into Canada
- Need to provide newcomers with an opportunity to contribute their talent, expertise and experience as well as culturally and socially integrate into Canada

Reduce Barriers (n=1)

A need to reduce stereotypes was noted by one participant as a support or service the community could provide in aiding individuals to gain employment.

- To take away stereotypes

Question 5: What Innovative Solutions Do You Have To Address Unemployment?

Job Listing and Job Fairs (n=4)

Providing access to job listings was discussed by some individuals. For example, having more job fairs and making a youth employment website.

- Job fairs (n=2)
- Make a youth employment website
- Websites
- Make finding jobs easier

Address Discrimination (n=2)

Addressing discrimination was noted as a solution to address unemployment.

- Stop discrimination/judging
- Racism
- Provide a probationary period of employment for newcomers to prove their “worthiness”; give them a chance to demonstrate their potential as innovators of opportunities for wealth and employment creation

Enhance Connections and Supportive Networks (n=11)

Some individuals discussed the importance of enhancing connections and supportive networks as a solution to address unemployment. For example, providing connections to employers and mentorship opportunities.

- Connect you with employers (n=2)
- Networking (n=2)
 - School
 - Community centres
 - Relationships with people
 - Volunteer
 - Job seekers
- Give youth connections and information
- Connections
- Mentorship (n=2)
- Youth mentorship

- Put resources out and connect with jobs
- Opportunities for people to share information

Training and Education (n=8)

More opportunities to engage in training and education were discussed. For example, vocational training, skills development, and workshops.

- Provide more training
- Workshops
- Courses that can give training
- Give youth more training
- Vocational education
- Additional education opportunities plus training
- Directed training
- Skills development
- Short term job training
- Training people according to their interests

Social Services and Support (n=19)

Access to and enhancement of current services was discussed by some participants as an innovative solution to address unemployment. For example, the need for more youth-specific programs, the importance of the African Community Council and ACFOLA in assisting newcomers, and other services in the community.

- Library
- Program like Y.O.U. that provide services more than once (n=3)
- More youth services and programs (n=2)
- City of London to get more involved in ESL programs or other programs that can help immigrants
- Help centres
- African Community Council (n=3)
 - Assist newcomers find jobs
 - Guide toward successful path provide employment connections
- Support groups (n=2)
- ACFOLA (n=3)
 - Initiatives, Youth mentorships, Co-ops, Self-employment
- Western University

Opportunities to Gain Experience (n=10)

Having experience in order to be able to obtain employment was discussed by many participants as important. As such, providing more opportunities to gain experience was noted as a potential innovative solution to address unemployment. For example, through increased volunteer opportunities, internships and job experience.

- Volunteer opportunities/connections
- More volunteer opportunities
- Volunteering
- Volunteer to get jobs
- Willing to volunteer
- Employers can come to schools to hire people
- Give youth more experience
- We should give youth more training and experience so that they can find jobs
- Internship
- Extra-curricular activities

Support with Resumes (n=2)

Two individuals discussed more assistance with creating resumes as a solution to address unemployment.

- Help make resume
- They should help us make resumes

Support (n=2)

Having support from friends, family, mentors and individuals who have successfully obtained employment was discussed.

- Friends and family
- Mentorship by people from the community who have ``made it``

Question 6: What Would You Like To See As Next Steps From This Discussion?

Follow-up from Service Providers and Employers (n=3)

Some of the adults expressed frustration in terms of follow-up from service providers and employers. As such, some participants expressed a need to ensure there is follow-up.

- Employer follow-up
- Service provider follow-up
- Responses from service providers and employers

Results and Action (n=4)

Results and action in terms of change and progress was discussed by some participants. For example, moving forward and acting on ideas.

- Take action and make a change
- Things change
- What are game changing ideas that we should be doing
- Results – time to move forward

Employer Engagement (n=5)

Engaging employers in the conversation was noted as important in terms of creating awareness and connections to employment in particular by the adult participants.

- Discussion with employers – engage employers
- Linking with employment agencies – address culture and connections
- Education and awareness of employers and ``trial co-op``
- Connection between African agencies and employers
- Orient employers to not discriminate on the basis of a person's name

More Paid Job Opportunities (n=7)

Job creation in terms of more employment opportunities was discussed by many participants in both groups.

- More jobs (n=4)
- Give more people jobs
- Jobs
- Paid placement opportunities

More Opportunities to Gain Experience (n=2)

Providing more opportunities to gain experience was also noted by some participants. For example, through volunteer opportunities.

- More volunteer opportunities to help the youth work their way up with jobs
- Provide opportunities for people to enhance their experience and prove themselves

Support During Transition to Canada (n=3)

There was some discussion among the adult participants regarding a need to have more support during the transition to Canada for newcomers. For example, training to bridge into employment and credential or skill bridging programs to train newcomers.

- Find a way to support transition to Canada
- Training for newcomers to bridge to employment
- 2-3 months get people into the workforce
- Credentials/skill bridging training programs to train newcomers

Continuation of Dialogue (n=3)

The continuation of the discussion with the African community was noted by some individuals as important moving forward.

- Continue to have dialogue with the African community
- Another discussion, use this as a foundation
- Invite community leaders to participate in discussion

Ways to De-isolate Community (n=1)

One individual stated there is a need to look for ways to de-isolate the community.

- Look for ways to de-isolate community

Section Three: Differences Between Adult and Youth Responses

Although the discussion between the youth and adult participants involved in this facilitation contained many similar themes, there were also some notable differences between the two groups. In the following section, the differences among the youth and adult participants are highlighted.

Social Services and Supports

There were some notable differences between the adult and youth responses in terms of social service and employment agency supports that have supported them in their journey. Youth often mentioned youth specific resources in the community such as Youth Opportunities Unlimited (YOU) and Learn it Together (LIT), whereas adults identified WIL, Goodwill and employment agencies in general. Adults also focused on culturally specific service organizations such as the African Community Council and ACFOLA in terms of providing support and resources. Youth, however, did not identify cultural organizations in their responses.

There were also differences in terms of the need for supports. Youth discussed a need to provide more services directed to youth and for youth. For example, many discussed the need to have a job listing website and more job fairs directed to youth. Adults, on the other hand, discussed the need and benefit of having access to job placements, co-ops and apprenticeships. Likewise, the adults specifically discussed the usefulness of having workshops on computers skills and self-employment, whereas the youth more often discussed a need for interview preparation, resume writing and job search support.

Finally, there appears to be differences around the type of support youth and adults seek. Youth, for example, discussed support from family and friends as helpful and useful whereas the adults had a more focused discussion on the importance of having access to mentors or guides to assist them when looking for employment.

Culturally Specific Resources

In comparison to the youth participants, the adult group overwhelmingly discussed the importance of culturally specific resources. In particular, there was discussion by many of the individuals in the adult group for the need to connect newcomers with culturally sensitive resources and supports in the community.

In addition, this group also discussed the need to educate service providers on the needs of newcomers and to enhance the capacity of current cultural organizations to better serve the needs of the African and newcomer communities.

Discrimination and Cultural Barriers

Both groups of participants discussed barriers to employment relating to discrimination and cultural barriers. For example, the adult and youth participants discussed challenges in terms of discrimination based on skin colour and name; however, there were some notable differences. The adults often discussed discrimination based on newcomer or immigrant status. For example, judgments based on English speaking abilities, accent, general language barriers, and lack of “Canadian” experience. In addition, the adult group discussed cultural barriers in terms of finding employment.

Youth, in comparison, uniquely focused on discrimination based on their neighbourhood. For example, not being invited to an interview because of the address listed on their resume.

Section Four: Overall Themes

Upon reviewing the results from both groups, it became apparent there were overall themes that were evident. The following section presents the overarching themes.

Networking

Networking was a theme that appeared in the discussion multiple times in terms of a factor that has helped participants look for work and as a resource that could be strengthened. Many participants explained it is often “who you know” that has the biggest impact when securing employment, for example, receiving a reference from a family member or friend, socializing at different community events, or volunteering.

In order to enhance networking opportunities, participants suggested providing education on how to effectively network and hosting events to bring employers and job seekers together to engage in networking. Likewise, being made aware of different networking events that are occurring in the community was another suggestion.

Connections and Supportive Networks

Having access to connections and supportive networks was another common theme discussed by both groups. In terms of addressing unemployment, many participants suggested providing more connections to employers, mentors, and guides. In addition, having support from family and friends was discussed as an important source of support and guidance.

Experience

A lack of experience was discussed frequently by both groups. In particular, many participants explained not having experience, or “Canadian” experience, as a struggle when seeking employment.

Looking at ways to counteract this barrier, some participants suggested engaging in volunteer opportunities as helpful. Likewise, many participants suggested a need to focus on creating more co-ops, apprenticeships, internships and youth and newcomer specific opportunities to gain experience.

Continued Communication and Action

There was discussion among participants about the importance of ensuring action and change moving forward. Some participants expressed frustration in terms of a lack of follow-through on ideas translating into concrete change. This includes, for example, follow-up from both service providers and employers.

Likewise, some participants expressed the need to ensure the continuation of dialogue with the African community to create change. Some participants noted the facilitated discussion was a good start and can act as a foundation, but more dialogue is needed to have impact.

Job Creation

A common struggle among both groups was the lack of employment opportunities in London. Many participants expressed a need to focus on job creation. For example, having more job fairs and engaging service providers to build connections with employers to assist job seekers.

Community Services

Gaining support and resources from community services was discussed as a factor that has assisted many participants in seeking employment. For youth in particular, accessing services provided by YOU and LIP were discussed as useful. For adults, support from the ACC and ACFOLA were noted as useful. Likewise, both groups discussed support from schools and libraries in terms of accessing guidance and resources.

There were, however, many services that participants indicated were lacking in the community and many participants indicated a need to provide more training and education opportunities. For example, a need to provide targeted services for youth and newcomers, workshops on interview preparation, computer skills, and how to effectively search for jobs are some examples. Having a good resume was also discussed by many participants as a skill that could be enhanced through workshop training. Some participants, however, indicated a lack of awareness of services to assist with developing an effective resume.

In addition, the adults in particular indicated a need to provide culturally specific resources, especially for newcomers. For example, ensuring service providers are culturally sensitive and responsive to the needs of the African community to assist with the process of adapting to a new culture.

Finally, both groups discussed barriers relating to transportation when both seeking employment and engaging in active employment. Suggestions by the group to counteract this barrier included providing bus tickets or bus passes.

Discrimination

Discrimination presented as an overall theme and barrier in obtaining employment. In particular, participants expressed experiencing discrimination from employers based on their skin colour, sexual orientation, accent, newcomer or immigrant status, and neighbourhood when seeking employment.

Likewise, participants indicated there is a need to address this discrimination to resolve the issue of unemployment. Providing education to employers and the general public to reduce stereotypes was discussed as one strategy to address this issue.

Engagement of Stakeholders

Engaging all stakeholders in the solution to address the issues of unemployment is a strategy many participants discussed. For example, not only service providers, but employers, community groups, leaders, schools, informal supports, government and members of the African community.

Section Five: Barriers, Facilitators & Recommendations

The following charts highlight the barriers and facilitators to accessing employment as discussed by the participants.

Summary of Barriers To Employment	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Race/ethnicity • Judgement based on neighbourhood • Lack of connections • Lack of jobs • Lack of qualifications • Accent • Discrimination and stereotypes • Language barriers • Lack of communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transportation • Cultural barriers • Lack of training and workshops • Lack of experience • Newcomer and immigrant status • Isolation • Gender • Service providers who are not culturally sensitive to needs

Summary of Facilitators To Employment	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job fairs • Employment websites • Networking • Informal social support networks • Community services • Culturally sensitive service providers • Culturally specific services • Connections • Self-employment • Building supports within the cultural community • Good resume 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentorship • Training and workshops • Education • Engagement of all stakeholders • Connecting with employers • Community engagement • Experience • Positive attitude and persistence • Active engagement in seeking employment • Interview preparation • Access to online resources • References

In addition, participants put forward new and innovative ideas that could be introduced in the London community. It is important to note that some of the ideas and suggestions for services to support job seekers are already available in the London community. Further exploration is required to fully understand and address the disconnection.

Innovative Ideas and Solutions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create youth focused services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Youth employment website ○ Youth employment opportunities ○ Youth mentorship programs • Offer workshops <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Resume writing ○ Interview preparation ○ How to start your own business ○ How to search for employment ○ Information on available services ○ Computer skills ○ How to network ○ Canadian culture • Have more job fairs • Create events to enhance networking opportunities • Provide access to transportation • Enhance the centralization of services • Develop opportunities to gain experience and knowledge <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Co-ops ○ Apprenticeships ○ Internships ○ Volunteer opportunities ○ Jobs ○ Probationary work experience • Determine what each person needs and create a plan to help that person quickly and efficiently 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide education to the community, employers, and service providers about the skills of the African community • Provide education to service providers about cultural differences and the needs of the immigrant and newcomer population • Create services that connect job seekers directly to employment and employers • Build the capacity of the cultural community to provide support for immigrants and newcomers • Provide targeted supports to newcomers to address cultural barriers • Provide mentors and/or guides from the African community who have already successfully secured employment • Continue the dialogue about African employment and create strategies to address barriers (move to action) • Engage multiple stakeholders in the conversation, specifically employers • Create opportunities for incentives for business ventures • Promote initiatives put forward by umbrella organizations • Build supports within the African community • Ensure follow through with services and supports

Section Six: Conclusion

The previous report highlighted results and themes from two sessions with members of London's African community. The purpose of the facilitations was to discuss issues of employment.

Based on the results of this facilitation, various themes emerged and have been highlighted for future consideration and discussion for members of the larger community.

London has numerous community assets and services to support individuals seeking employment. The purpose of this process was to explore how the community can build and enhance what already exists, as well as, further investigate gaps and opportunities to address those gaps.

Moving forward, the City of London will distribute this report and make it available to key stakeholders to further the conversation to address employment among the African community.

Appendix A: Invitations

An invitation to members of London's African Community

To talk about employment:

- What are your experiences in looking for work?
- What has helped you look for work?
- What supports do you still need?

This will be an opportunity to share and learn from each other.

Date: Tuesday, July 23, 2013

Time: 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Place: Goodwill Industries
255 Horton Street, 3rd floor

Please let us know if you are coming:
neighbourhoods@london.ca or 519 661-5336

A summary of the discussions will be sent out after the meeting