Idea: ESCLM Proposal

Submission Type: Organization

Description:
Employment Sector Council London-Middlesex (ESCLM) is a unique and innovative network of over 45 organizations serving more than 80,000 clients and thousands of employers in the city of London and surrounding Middlesex County. Our members include non-profit and public employment service delivery, training, education, and economic development organizations, and representatives from all three levels of government.

Established in 1992 in response to the need for a coordinated sector planning approach, today's ESCLM is one voice for the London-Middlesex employment and training sector. The Council provides a forum to identify labour market needs and trends, share information, plan for services and resources, coordinate sector training and professional development, design and deliver optimal practices for client service, and promote community growth and development. It enables program staff and agencies to implement best practices across the community and ensures the sector can respond quickly to changing labour market trends and adjustments. ESCLM represents the employment and training sector on a diversity of community and economic development initiatives and projects.

With regards to the City of London Plans for Prosperity, ESCLM provides many of the service components required to ensure an array of positive outcomes for residents and employers. The City benefits from our unique and collaborative approach to employment and training sector planning, which has resulted in a seamless, 'no-wrong-door' system of employment and skills training services which reduces duplication and means speedy access to services by clients and employers.

ESCLM has designed governance structures, developed cross-sector information-sharing protocols and tools, shared training and technology platforms for enhanced employment service component delivery, created community-level standards for service delivery, and built substantial partnerships with other community service sectors.

ESCLM meets the City's need for coordinated planning of employment and training services and for the provision of relevant information and seamless referrals for clients. It is essential to provide best client service through appropriate referrals and knowledge transfer both intra-sector and through inter-sector integration (for example, literacy, settlement, health, First Nations, disability/accessibility, and education service sectors). ESCLM actively engage all not-for-profit and public employment and training stakeholders and, thus, have a very representative membership, in regards to organizational mandate, populations served, and services delivered.

ESCLM represents precisely the innovative model for employment sector and workforce partnership the City seeks for enhanced prosperity. The development of a business case with the City of London to fund the important work of ESCLM will build the capacity of agencies to serve the needs of clients and employers. ESCLM is pleased to put forward this application to the Investment and Prosperity Committee for the purpose of promoting and sharing our network building model. This project builds on our 20 years of expertise and experience, and we trust our development of tools, resources, and process for optimal client service, intra-network collaboration, and inter-sectoral coordination will support the IEP and the City of London's efforts in community workforce building through community partnerships.

The ESCLM Network offers much of what the City of London seeks and, with a small injection of resources, could essentially design and deliver an integrated employment system for London, which supports existing and new initiatives to strengthen London's economy. Key ESCLM components which will be leveraged include:

1.   ESCLM and its members have developed, supported, and voluntarily adhered to our own state-of-the-art standards for excellence in employment services. ESCLM's OneClient

Standards are the only standards in Ontario aimed at creating a quality assurance system for the employment services sector. Our sector uses OneClient to ensure optimal client service and planning, ensuring that employers gain access to a high quality field of the best candidates.

2.   All ESCLM agencies use a community-designed common needs assessment process for job seekers, ensuring an integrated network and cross-agency referrals to provide employers and employees with choice, respect, and individual need-based service.

3.   The London region has benefited significantly from the ESCLM Rapid Response Protocol, a one-of-a-kind sector wide strategy for responding to the significant layoffs and plant closures occurring in our region. In response to increasing requests from Action Centres (serving laid-off workers) and companies to provide employment services, ESCLM is a central point of assistance, providing a pool of qualified staff, who can respond quickly and effectively to area lay-offs or plant closures. ESCLM Rapid Response has worked with over 20 London area companies experiencing closures, most recently with the displaced workers of the Ford-Talbotville Plant and Electro-Motive Diesel, assisting workers to face shorter periods of unemployment and avoid the financial burden that so often comes with a job change, particularly an unanticipated job change.

4.   More recently, ESCLM has created a key London area resource for connecting employers and jobseekers. The ESCLM's Job Development Network (JDN) is a unique and innovative effort to collaborate as a sector to establish a common and streamlined approach to assist employers with hiring.   In direct contrast with other communities, the ESCLM JDN seeks to offer a seamless and direct link between employers and job seekers through the provision of workplace placement, experience, and training services and supports, among many others. While still in its early stages, the existence of the JDN in London means that nonprofit and public employment agencies have committed to quickly and collectively respond to London employer needs through the provision and support of the best qualified workers. The next steps for this group are to help employers to understand this common approach and to easily access this network of service providers.

ESCLM brings a critical and valuable systems approach to workforce development and economic restructuring in the London region. As the only such community model in Ontario, our network effectively and successfully matches people to jobs, regardless of employer and job seeker circumstances. We provide necessary skills training and employment supports to get people back to work. We establish and strengthen economic and employment linkages. Our member agencies represent over 40 points of access to employment and job development services and opportunities.

ESCLM represents a key engine for transformational change for the London economy. We provide cohesion among different service providers and sectors, and alignment between workforce supply and demand. Such relationships are critical to building our local economy.

What is the status of this idea – is anything already happening?
Over the last 2 decades, ESCLM has delivered numerous innovative systems, products, and successful projects to our funding partners and members. Pro-actively we have designed, developed and implemented strategies that respond to and address human resource issues affecting our sector. Examples of ESCLM initiatives which are monitored and evaluated for outputs, outcomes, and results include: the design of and adherence to the OneClient Employment Service Delivery Standards, and Common Assessment Process Training. Other innovative products include: Information Sharing Agreements, Principles for the Protection of Personal Information, Professional Development for agency staff, the London-Middlesex Immigrant Employment Council, a Rapid Response Project (to meet Adjustment Committee and Action Centre needs in respect to company layoffs), Privacy Officers and Job Developers Networks, and Links2Work.on.ca (our region's online employment and training information portal).

These initiatives are consistently monitored and evaluated for continuous improvement, and results, benefits, and evaluation outcomes are shared with ESCLM members, community partners, and government partners.

ESCLM agencies serve newcomers, youth, First Nations people, older workers, people with disabilities, Francophone, and rural populations, among others in the general population, whose talents and skills are key, yet often under-utilized labour market resources for our community. ESCLM is involved with several community initiatives aimed at integrating employment service delivery with the business community, not-for-profit literacy and settlement sectors, and poverty reduction strategies, to effect more informed, comprehensive, holistic, and effective service delivery for all area residents.

The ESCLM Model and our expertise are highly regarded across the province and the rest of Canada. And yet, the significance of our strengths and contributions to our own municipality occasionally go un-noticed. ESCLM is an umbrella group that, as an unincorporated project (of WIL Employment Connections) with a network of more than 40 organizations from across the London-Middlesex employment and training, literacy, settlement and public sector, receives little dedicated funding other than the membership fees paid by our Members and fees for our services. The programs we provide are offered on a cost-recovery basis since there is no dedicated funding available for these innovative sector-wide approaches.

This Prosperity Plan proposal aims to build on previous innovation in the employment and training sector with an eye towards fiscal sustainability, increased organizational capacity and a constant stream of requests for our assistance and partnership in addressing ever-changing labour market realities in London

Who are the partners that would need to be involved? What are their roles?
In order to assist the City with its Prosperity Plans, ESCLM will leverage the many partnerships it has established over the last 20 years. A list of ESCLM members are attached, and this group brings decades of expertise and high reputation for excellence in service delivery to this initiative. Key Prosperity partners also include:

1. City of London (ESCLM Member) – investment and planning with regards to ESCLM delivery of an integrated employment and economic system for London

2. Elgin Middlesex Workforce Planning and Development Board (ESCLM Member) - participating in labour market information planning, community consultation events, projects, Local Labour Market Plans, and engagement of the business community in the provision of regional labour market information

3. London Economic Development Corporation (ESCLM Member) – contribution to and participation in Local Labour Market information Knowledge System and recruitment and retention of employers to London

4. "Business London Magazine" – ESCLM is invited each year to provide a feature article in its special Employment and Training edition, creating greater awareness within the London business community about the services of ESCLM agencies

5. Human Resource Professionals London and District (HRPLD) - connecting employers to the best job seeker candidates for their business

6. Ontario Network of Employment Skills Training Projects (ONESTEP) and the Ontario Alliance of Career Development Professionals (OACDP), both provincial networks supporting best practices for workforce development

7. Literacy Link South Central – (ESCLM Member) , London-Middlesex Immigrant Employment Council, and the London-Middlesex Local Immigration Partnership - leveraging our representation on these valuable community partner organizations

Additional projects/partnerships that we are involved with and which we can leverage as key beneficial partnerships include: Integrating Literacy and Employment Project, London-Middlesex Local Immigration Partnership, Child and Youth Network, Employer One Survey Project, Middlesex County – United Way Needs Assessment Project, Centre for LifeLong Learning Adult Learner Counselling Pathway Project, Middlesex Workforce Development Committee, Workplace Literacy Project, among others.

Cost to implement: $50,000

Funding Requested from City ($) if any: $20,000

Will this idea move forward without City of London funding?
ESCLM recognizes the increasing pressures on government funding partners, on our Member Agencies and on foundations to fund programs with outcomes that are often intangible and/or difficult to measure, such as economic prosperity. However, over the last 2 years, ESCLM staff has been tasked with identifying those products, services and innovative approaches that present a potential for commercialization and pursuing strategies to bring them to market.

Our history of success as an organization creates a challenge; more and more often, we are being called-on to participate in community development projects that we have little capacity to join or to otherwise help flourish. Furthermore, a recent decrease in the administrative portion of funding for one of the government programs we have run successfully has meant we've had to pull back on our plans for growth and sustainability, rather than pursue them aggressively. We recognize the need for fiscal accountability and sustainability and we're committed to pursuing strategies that put ESCLM on a firm footing for the next 20 years.

ESCLM tools, resources, products and services have been developed through support from our Member Agencies, small government funds, and a skeleton staff (currently 1 Project Manager). While effective program development has always been achieved over the long run, ESCLM initiatives can move only as efficiently as capacity allows.

Investment in this remarkable network by the City means ESCLM programs that create/enhance our workforce development network could respond to and sustain ongoing capacity review and continuous improvements.

Will your idea create jobs? No
    How many jobs will be created? -
    Full or Part-time: -
    Permanent or Temporary: -
    Job Level: -
    Job Salary: -
    What sector(s) will this create job(s) in? -
    Is there anything else you can tell us about your idea that will create jobs? -

Will this idea leverage investments from others? What kind? How much?
ESCLM has established itself as a unique and widely recognized centre for excellence and innovation in employment sector service delivery. Despite receiving little government funding, it has managed to position itself as a main forum to identify employment needs, share information, plan for services and resources, and promote community growth and development in collaboration with other labour market partners, for 20 years.

ESCLM leverages these partnerships and investments in all its work. Through increased engagement with ESCLM, The City of London will be in an enhanced position to access our actual and potential avenues and networks for communication and planning between sector and community partners, frontline staff and jobseekers, and our extensive network of employer partners.

ESCLM operates on a very modest budget but we offer the decades of experience and expertise of our network in employer and employment services and supports to meet all community members.

As the previous section outlines, our shared efforts as a sector allow for a leveling of the playing field for all job seekers and employers, and a 'no wrong door' approach to employment services. This allows ESCLM to streamline information sharing and communication platforms. We have managed to do a lot with very little and much of this is owed to the significant investments made in our work by our members and partners, who recognized, benefit from, and celebrate the work that we do and the contributions we make to community and economic development.

Will this idea stimulate spin-off benefits? What type? How? Where?
The ESCLM network offers a wide range of employment and training supports to a diverse clientele. As such, and ESCLM – IEP Committee partnership would bring significant benefits to an array of stakeholders.

By strengthening ESCLM capacity to coordinate our employment sector network and by supporting our commitment to improve strength and organizational capacity through clear and objective definition of locally agreed upon principles, we believe standards of service delivery will improve across the board and the following will directly benefit:

Job seeker sin our community will benefit through seamless, one-door client-centric service provision that quickly and effectively assesses their needs, provides for referrals both within and outside the employment sector, ensures client confidentiality/privacy and that the services provided address a continuum of employment barriers. The network also places greater pressure on the for-profit employment and training sector by enhancing the ability of network members to promote their tax-supported, not-for-profit, 'free' services that operate in a transparent, and accountable client-centred system. This environment of managed competition helps guard against unethical, 'near-predatory' practices by ensuring citizens have access to information from a network of client-centred system that is not primarily driven by bottom lines.

Social Service Agencies will benefit by becoming members of a community-wide network that creates an environment of trust and collaboration that puts clients in the centre of the model by ensuring continuous improvement of protocols, services and systems.

London Businesses will benefit through the assurance that agencies and their clients operate in a professional manner and adhere to strict service provision and back-office management standards and will gain confidence in their ability to access a pool of pre-qualified individuals, thereby easing the relationship between labour market supply and demand.

Our community will benefit through the creation and enhancement of a strong, cohesive employment sector that is able to participate in community development both as individual agencies and as one common voice. Building a Network of employment and training service providers leads to greater integration with other community service providers including settlement services, educational institutions and economic development agencies. The network leads to consistent service delivery, greater awareness by employer/business community of the presence of non-profit service providers and access to a pool of qualified candidates leading to greater uptake of employment supports thereby elevating those in the community who face the most significant barriers to full achievement of their potential.

The City of London and its government partners will benefit through further development of inter-agency protocols and methods for sector-wide service planning. Taxpayers receive greater assurance that scarce dollars are being used to achieve optimum outcomes for clients.

Will this idea build new or existing partnerships? How?

Establishing an ESCLM-IEP Committee partnership will allow both our organizations to align our shared and new London Prosperity Partnerships.

ESCLM has designed tools and supports aimed at: creating governance structures, implementing best practices for continuous improvement, building trust-based relationships, providing opportunities and practices for information-sharing, knowledge management and knowledge transfer, introducing and performing evaluations of sector-wide and agency-based, client-centred service delivery standards, building a platform for outreach/integration with other sectors, stronger community voice, shared training, and protocols to guide all future community-building efforts and service planning projects. Existing networks will be enhanced and new networks may be created through participation in this project.

In particular, ESCLM seeks to strengthen its relationship with London's employer community and to assist in workforce development initiatives in a diversity of ways: provision of free and expert services to connect and match employers and job seekers, building talent pools of job seekers and engaging banks of employers. ESCLM has a long history of supporting employer related initiatives, including education about and marketing of job development resources and opportunities available in the London area.

Will this idea benefit emerging or established industry sectors? How?

ESCLM members serve and/or represent every economic sector in the London Region. We have members who specialize in preparing workers in construction, light industrial, professional, and service sectors, to name but a few.

ESCLM's expertise in integrated employment service delivery means that all area businesses and sectors benefit from optimized access to the available pool of workers and enjoy an enhanced relationship with employment service agencies.

ESCLM is a key London area resource for connecting employers and jobseekers. Our approach is unique to London: we collaborate as a sector to establish a common and streamlined approach to assist employers with hiring. Job Developers and Employer Liaison staff across the ESCLM network have recognized the benefits of taking a collective approach to building relationships within our business sector. Job developers are undertaking a significant effort to this sector-wide collaboration to help job seekers to get back into the workforce with the skills that employers require to meet their needs. In direct contrast with other communities, the ESCLM Job Developer Network seeks to offer a seamless and direct link between employers and job seekers through the provision of workplace placement, experience, and training services and supports, among many others.

Will this idea fuel transformative change in London's economy? If so, how?
Like ESCLM, the City of London seeks to enhance existing partnerships and to build on the good workforce development initiatives and planning efforts already taking place in our City.

The City of London's support for networks such as ESCLM has helped to position this community as a forward-looking, collaborative, welcoming community. ESCLM is very much a product of our city's commitment to strong and sustained community prosperity. As a result of 20 years of developing key partnerships and a consistent commitment to our high quality principles and standards for optimal service delivery, ESCLM is well-situated to provide the IEP Committee and the City with our ground-breaking, state-of-the-art innovations and resources for ensuring cohesion between all labour market supply and demand stakeholders.

The work of the Employment Sector Council London-Middlesex and its 45 members has already demonstrated significant success at facilitating getting people back to work. In a recent review of the work of this sector compared to other communities, London is leading the way in connecting people to employment opportunities. Our success lies in our collaborative approach to service delivery. We are considered by many to be one of the best, if not the top, model of optimal community-level employment service delivery in the province and country.

Despite the many economic challenges facing the London region, we are emerging as a robust and innovative community. ESCLM has a key role to play in supporting both job seekers and our employer communities. For two decades, members of the Employment Sector Council London-Middlesex (ESCLM) have worked together to provide the best possible outcomes for job seekers and employers in the region. ESCLM's Steering Committee supports London workforce development initiatives which seek to better connect labour market supply and demand, for optimal outcomes for all London residents and businesses. ESCLM looks forward to participating in community planning for an enhanced workforce and opportunities for our member organizations to contribute to related activities.

Contact:
Carol Stewart | Project Manager
 Employment Sector Council London-Middlesex
141 Dundas Street, 4th Floor, London ON N6A 1G3
Tel: 519.663.0774 ext. 224 | Fax: 519.663.5377 | carol@esclm.ca