

Lifelong Learning Advisory Committee on Adult Education

Meeting #1 Summary

March 20, 2018

Oakham House (Thomas Lounge), 63 Gould Street, Ground Floor

10:00 am – 3:00 pm

Prepared by Third-Party Facilitators,



Condensed Meeting Summary

- This was the kick-off meeting of the Lifelong Learning Advisory Committee (LLAC) on Adult education. 35 people participated, representing four ministries (MAESD, EDU, MCI, and MCSS) and a diverse range of organizations who serve English, French, Deaf, Indigenous, and Immigrant learners. Participants were keen to be in the room. They shared their expectations for the LLAC and provided advice on the continued implementation of steps to strengthen the adult education system.
- The LLAC is expected to be a collaborative, working group. Participants suggested the LLAC would be strengthened through additional participation from service providers and organizations representing Indigenous, Deaf, Immigrant, and other traditionally underrepresented learners, as well as representatives from the social services sector. The LLAC Terms of Reference could be strengthened through the addition of explicit references to:
 - the need for top-down ministry supports and guidance for learner-focused improvements (in addition to bottom-up work of service and program providers);
 - the value of creating opportunities within the LLAC for sharing of best practices;
 - the relevance of the federal government to this work;
 - the value of disaggregated data collection in order to be able to speak to the nuances in social demographics and matters of equity;
 - the importance of recognizing and meeting the needs of the most vulnerable and underserved groups; and
 - the need to find a mechanism/approach that can help identify problems in the very complex, multi-player, multi-learner, adult education system.
- The feedback received on the Discussion Paper rings true, and is also very consistent with the Evaluation of the Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) Program report by Cathexis Consulting (linked [here](#)).
- MAESD's partnership with Code for Canada to identify digital solutions to enhance support for learners is exciting. Remember that any digital solutions and e-learning programs should be accompanied by in-person supports and hard copies of materials.

1. Meeting Overview

On March 20, 2018, the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development (MAESD), together with the Ministry of Education (EDU), Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration (MCI), and Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS), hosted the first Lifelong Learning Advisory Committee (LLAC) meeting on adult education at Oakham House in Toronto. The purpose of the meeting was to officially establish the LLAC and to identify members' expectations for the LLAC, as well as review and discuss feedback on MAESD's Discussion Paper: Strengthening Ontario's Adult Education System (2017).

Over 35 stakeholders attended the meeting, representing the four provincial ministries and several organizations involved in the delivery of adult education programs and services across Ontario (see Attachment A for a list of participants). This was the foundational meeting of the LLAC and the first time that this particular group of stakeholders has come together. Many LLAC members said that they were pleased to have such diverse cross-sectoral and ministerial representation in the room working towards strengthening the adult education system.

Establishing the LLAC

The current Lifelong Learning Advisory Committee builds on the work of the previous Provincial Advisory Committee (PAC), established in 2015 by EDU. The PAC provided advice to the Deputy Minister of Education on the communication and implementation of the former EDU-focused adult education strategy. Their work was focused on improving the educational outcomes of adult learners through a coordinated, coherent, accessible, efficient and effective system of high quality EDU adult education programs and services (see Attachment B for the LLAC Terms of Reference (ToR), which includes a brief history on the PAC).

The purpose of the LLAC is to act as a highly interactive, hands-on, problem solving group providing advice to four ministry ADMs and to support the government in delivering on its commitment to work with its partners to strengthen the adult education system by:

- Improving access to programs that match adult learners' individual foundational learning needs;
- Making transitions between programs smoother and simpler; and
- Implementing ways to recognize adult learners' prior learning and skills.

Overview of the Day

The meeting began with an acknowledgement of, and thanks for, the Indigenous lands upon which the meeting was taking place. LLAC Co-Chairs, Martyn Beckett (ADM of the Student Achievement Division, EDU), Erin McGinn (ADM of the Workforce Policy and Innovation Division, MAESD), and Denys Giguère (ADM, French-Language Teaching, Learning, and Achievement Division, EDU & MAESD) welcomed members to the meeting and provided welcoming remarks. Nicole Swerhun (Swerhun Facilitation) then explained the Swerhun team's role as

independent, third-party facilitators, facilitated a round of introductions throughout the room, and reviewed the agenda for the day (see Attachment C).

The remainder of the meeting unfolded in two parts, each including presentations from ministry representatives, followed by LLAC member discussion: the first part provided an overview of the many areas of the Adult Learning System, and the second part focused on a review and discussion of an early, high level, synthesis of the feedback received on the Discussion Paper. During lunch, Christine Lee, a Fellow with Code for Canada, presented work to date with MAESD, EDU, and MCI on identifying opportunities to enhance support for learners in obtaining timely, accurate, and relevant information (see Attachment D for ministry staff presentations and Attachment E for the Code for Canada presentation).

Casey Craig and Nicole Swerhun wrote this meeting summary, which was shared with participants for review before being finalized. This summary reflects the main points shared during the meeting and is not intended to be a verbatim transcript. The summary is structured to reflect the main areas of discussions, including:

1. Meeting Overview;
2. Welcome from Co-Chairs;
3. LLAC Expectations & Comments on the Terms of Reference;
4. Review & Discuss Feedback on the Discussion Paper;
5. Code for Canada Presentation;
6. Collaborating to Support Adult Learners; and
7. Next Steps.

2. Welcome from the Co-Chairs

The meeting began with an acknowledgement of, and thanks for, the Indigenous lands upon which the meeting was taking place. Following the land acknowledgement, LLAC Co-Chairs, Martyn Beckett (ADM of the Student Achievement Division, EDU), Erin McGinn (ADM of the Workforce Policy and Innovation Division, MAESD), and Denys Giguère (ADM, French-Language Teaching, Learning, and Achievement Division, EDU & MAESD) welcomed members to the meeting and provided opening remarks, which are summarized below.

Martyn Beckett, ADM of the Student Achievement Division, EDU

- We appreciate you taking the time away from your roles to be here today for what is a joint problem-solving effort to improve the experience of adult learners. It is encouraging and meaningful to bring together your experience and expertise to strengthen adult learning in Ontario.
- There are promising practices underway within your organizations and each of the four ministries delivering adult learning. Sharing these here will help chart a path forward.
- Some of you were members of the PAC. The work started through the PAC will be important as we work towards creating a seamless and adult-centred education system. We will honour and build on the work with the PAC and its

networks to date, as the PAC represents a model for deeper collaboration that we want to extend.

Erin McGinn, ADM of the Workforce Policy and Innovation Division, MAESD:

- I echo Martyn's thanks to all of you for coming to participate and to share your experience and expertise. Thank you for your past contributions and for all that is to come.
- Your skilled, resilient, and productive work will continue to be important moving forward. This problem-solving approach signals how we want to work together to address challenges.
- A learner-centred adult education system continues to be our priority. Improving the learner's experience sits at the heart of all of this work.
- Our early review of the feedback received on the Discussion Paper reinforces our goals and objectives, including improving access, making transitions smoother and simpler, and recognizing prior learning and skills. These continue to be central.
- The adult learning system is complex. This will be obvious to you in the room, though it is not well known more broadly, which creates challenges in terms of getting support for the work we are doing throughout the education system. Bringing us together should help bring focus and attention to this area.
- Part of this work involves breaking down government silos. We know some of you are working hard to build stronger links across the system and that's a great part of the collaboration.
- We look forward to building on the strong foundation we have built. We are committed to the process, and it's obvious that you are, too. There is momentum here. We all recognize that it will take time, but let's keep talking and sharing our challenges and best practices for adult education.

Denys Giguère, ADM, French-Language Teaching, Learning, and Achievement Division, EDU & MAESD:

- Happy International Francophonie Day! It's appropriate that we're here today since International Francophonie Day is observed every March 20 to celebrate the French language and Francophone culture.
- I echo my colleagues, who have signalled the importance of working together.
- We would like to bring to light challenges in French-language adult education.
- We have to get out of our offices to understand what's happening on the ground. Meeting the learners motivates us and reminds us why we do the work.
- With a full day ahead, thanks for your engagement. We wish you a great day.

3. LLAC Expectations & Comments on the ToR

Ministry representatives Monica Neitzert (MAESD), Yvonne Ferrer (MCI), Marg Connor (EDU), and Erin Hannah (MCSS) each provided brief presentations covering how the adult education system is organized today, brief descriptions of the respective roles and responsibilities that all four ministries have related to adult education, and an explanation of learner profiles (see Attachment D for ministry staff presentations).

Following the presentations, LLAC members were asked the following questions:

1. What are your expectations for the LLAC? How can the LLAC be most useful in supporting achievement of the three core government commitments related to adult education and lifelong learning?
2. Do you have any comments or suggested edits on the draft ToR for the LLAC? (please send any comments in the week following the meeting)

LLAC members provided the following comments and advice for the four ministries to consider:

- **Expectations of the LLAC Membership**

LLAC members suggested that the collective and shared work of the LLAC should:

- Be guided by clear direction ‘from the top’ to support the ‘bottom up’ work of colleges, school boards, and community organizations to work together to make sure the learner gets the best service based on his or her objectives and needs.
- Capture the excellent resources available for serving adult learners, which may be well known in the Literacy and Basic Skills sector, but not others.
- Give thought to how to engage the federal government in this work.
- Consider how vulnerable and underserved groups can best benefit from a strengthened adult education system, like those in the corrections system, and those living in poverty.
- Consider problem transparency – it would be helpful to try to pinpoint what is not working in the adult education system and why, recognizing that sometimes we don’t know why (perhaps because we haven’t built in indicators).

- **Suggestions for Strengthening the Terms of Reference**

LLAC members provided the following comments/suggested edits to the LLAC Terms of Reference (ToR):

Expanded participation

- Provide more representation on the LLAC for traditionally underrepresented groups. Some members were the only person representing groups who

- traditionally encounter barriers within the adult education system (i.e. Deaf, Indigenous learners; immigrants and newcomers).
- Provide more representation from social services, given high poverty levels amongst many learners (e.g. representatives from COMSOC or social services sector, like Foodbanks Ontario).
 - Consider including representation from the private sector. Those working on skills development will eventually enter the work force. Private sector representatives could provide understanding of the realities and needs of hiring companies. It would make sense to include participation from both the employer perspective and the union/labour perspective.
 - Include more representation from public colleges, who play a role in the adult education system, as well.
 - *Action: Members suggesting expanded participation will share names and organizations of potential additional Committee members with the Co-Chairs for consideration.*

Disaggregate data collection

- Explicitly focus on disaggregated data collection to be able to speak to nuances in social demographics and matters of equity (e.g. women, racialized communities, people living in deep poverty, etc.).
- From there, the LLAC could begin to discuss and consider streaming and developing specific programs for target populations based on need.

Emphasize best practices

- Emphasize the importance of sharing promising practices already in place in communities.
- London has 'community connectors' - people who know not just the services that a London Community Hub offers, but also the services available in the entire London area. The LLAC has four ministries at the table and can act as a provincial 'community connector' by listening to each other and making connections that could not otherwise be made.

Specific suggested edits

- Edit the basic programming table on page 7 to reflect that 140 community agencies offer LBS (instead of 'some').

4. Review & Discuss Feedback on the Discussion Paper

Pauline McNaughton (EDU) thanked participants for their time and rich and deep feedback on the discussion paper, noting that the Central Region's feedback was so comprehensive that it happened to be longer than the Discussion Paper itself. Pauline asked the LLAC: Now that we have all this information, what do we do with it?

Lisa Bifano (MAESD), Geneviève Brouyaux (EDU/MAESD), and Belinda Ellsworth (EDU) presented a summary of the 80 responses received to the Discussion Paper: *Strengthening Ontario's Adult Education System (2017)* and the aggregate feedback received from 86 people who participated in focus groups with learners. They added that in today's meeting, the ministries are seeking feedback and advice on next steps and a proposed implementation plan.

To wrap-up the presentation, Terrence Kwaramba (MAESD) highlighted some of the challenges from his own newcomer's perspective, including being well-trained, but not knowing where to go to access jobs, resources, and support. He noted that it would be great to be able to tell a story about a system that is easy to access, navigate, and understand for those seeking adult education services.

LLAC members were asked the following questions to generate discussion:

1. Do the results ring true?
2. Is there anything surprising in the results? If so, what?
3. Is there anything that wasn't said or anything missing?
4. Do you have any early thoughts on potential actions to consider/explore based on the feedback received?

Comments and advice shared by LLAC members are summarized below.

- **The results reinforce feedback heard through other channels.** Some said the report is good overall, some said it is an excellent document. It was noted that the findings of the Evaluation of the Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) Program report by Cathexis Consulting reinforce and align well with the summary of the Discussion Paper feedback.
- **Adult learners have noticed our issue with competition.** The issue of competition has been raised a lot, particularly at the regional level. To see that it's also being perceived by adult learners is interesting. There are long and historical reasons for why competition has occurred. It is imperative we work toward eliminating this competition. Having impartial intake is an important step towards a learner-centred system.
- **Improve the e-learning process and quality of content.** Create a deliberate group of people working on this. MAESD has invested millions of dollars to work on e-learning infrastructure which is good, but at some point we need to talk about the process and the quality of the content to support this fabulous tool.
- **Guidance counsellors are critical to a learner's success in the system.** More resources should be dedicated to ensuring that in-person guidance support is

provided to help learners make the right choices at the right time. Currently, there is something like one full-time councillor for every 1600 learners. Guidance councillors are especially important to connecting learners with low literacy levels and those who really need the programs to appropriate options. Employment councillors rarely refer someone to LBS or adult education.

- **Learners with poverty issues** need wrap-around supports. It would be helpful to develop better linkages and information sharing between ministries and service providers and to collect and share promising practices to enhance support for learners living in poverty.
- **Remove the hidden, as well as the obvious, barriers.** The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) and the human rights code are robust, but learners still face barriers and challenges. For example, it has been said that some Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) caseworkers do not refer Deaf people to adult learning services because they assume Deaf people cannot do the jobs. If there are other such barriers in place, where do these programs lead?
- **Increase regional availability of Indigenous programming.** There are currently 23 Indigenous programs, but none of them serve the areas north of Timmins or east of Peterborough (except in landlocked Akwesasne). While the province is investing in e-learning infrastructure, the region north of Timmins faces problems with infrastructure that still limit learners' access to programs and services (bandwidth, people, facilities).
- **A digital solution must also be paired with physical tools that use plain language to be useful for those who need it most.** Digital tools are welcome, though we also need to make use of other ways to advertise and promote adult education services (e.g. posters, etc.).
- **Access, intake and transitions experiences of learners from immigrant populations and those with precarious status do not appear to be captured.**
 - Similar to Francophone learners, immigrant learners also face language and access barriers.
 - Immigrant learners can experience racism and discrimination in accessing wrap around supports.
 - There is a lack of availability of onsite supports, such as childcare for women and women refugees. This limits their ability to access language services, which can make it more difficult to access other supports.
 - Provide access to people regardless of their immigration status. Changes to the caregiver program have impacted women with precarious status, for example, caregivers. Some women caregivers have lost their status after 20 years, leaving them without access to any programs. When they do try to access programs, they are charged international student fees. It is a barrier to accessing publicly funded programs and services.

5. Code for Canada Presentation

Christine Lee, a Fellow with Code for Canada, presented work to date with MAESD, EDU, and MCI on identifying opportunities to enhance support for learners in obtaining timely, accurate, and relevant information (see Attachment E for presentation slides).

Following the presentation, LLAC members had the opportunity to ask questions and provide comments. Responses from Christine and ministry staff are noted in *italics*, where provided.

- **We work with people with very low literacy and other barriers. To provide wrap around services we sometimes have to sit with a learner for up to an hour and a half to understand their needs and how to get them the best service. We need to protect time/space to discuss with the learner the services they need and which program best fits their needs. At the end of the day we want a website where people can go to get info on options, etc. but we do not want to lose the personal touch. We are hearing from learners they would like to know in more detail what the program offerings are. This solution is going to work only if we build it for everyone. It needs to be built into the system to empower those working with the learner to share with the learner the granularity of the program.**
- **Is this platform going to work with existing websites?** *Yes, that is the goal. We are trying to develop the tool in a way that pulls from existing sources that are accurate, consistent and up to date [Christine]. Down the road, we may wish to consider aligning the three 3 different databases.*
- *Everyone in the four ministries knows we can't do things the same way. We have to look at supporting a whole continuum of needs. We are excited about the Code for Canada project and how it can connect with portals and others.*

6. Collaborating to Support Adult Learners

Monica Neitzert (MAESD) and Pauline McNaughton (EDU) co-delivered a presentation on collaborating to support adult learners that covered proposed system and program enhancements, as well as updates on the Regional Adult Credit Regional Partnerships (see Attachment C for presentation slide deck). LLAC members discussed the following three questions with each other at their tables.

1. What ideas/advice do LLAC members have to inform the development of the implementation plan/framework?
2. What do agencies/organizations need from the government in terms of support for local/regional collaboration and coordination?
3. What advice, if any, would you like the ministries to consider as they develop the DRAFT implementation plan/framework for discussion at the next LLAC meeting?

Each table reported back highlights of their discussion with the group, which are summarized below.

- **Maintain a learner-centred focus.** Keep the focus on the three goals within the Terms of Reference. There are so many issues you can get lost. These are: improving access to programs that match adult learners' individual foundational learning needs; making transitions between programs smoother and simpler; and implementing ways to recognize adult learners' prior learning and skills.
- **Review current policies.** Review all of our policies to get a sense of where we are for input into implementation plans.
- **Improve local service planning through tracking targets and creating shared accountability.** Focus on shared accountability, with some local decision making ability to be able to truly plan services locally. By tracking things at a community level we can look at things like access.
- **Work with Labour Market Information.** Use Labour Market Information (LMI) to guide learners and plan programs. However, LMI is only one side of the coin. Knowing who is in your community and what kind of demographic changes are happening is also important. We want to prepare learners for the current labour market, but also need to know who you are reaching out to on the supply side.
- **Equip front-line staff with skills and knowledge to help learners find out about the right programs and access services that match their needs.** Provide training for front line staff to increase their knowledge of the range of publicly funded programs and services that learners can access that are appropriate for their needs. Everyone, including Ontario Works workers and settlement agency workers, need to know how the system works.
- **Leverage existing data sources to reveal additional helpful information.** There are multiple data sources we could use if there was some way to share that information in a privacy-minded way. Consider inviting the Ontario Centre for Workforce Innovation (OCWI) as an observer or resource. OCWI could provide this group with hard data and best practices. Consider them as a support organization to this group. Further, many valuable resources have been produced within the LBS sector, which could be more broadly shared between ministries, and between LBS sectors and streams and other stakeholders.
- **Bring clarity to roles and expectations of ministries, regions and communities.** Develop a common language and clear goals around what government may expect of the regional level, what government expect regions to work with them on, inform them about, who should be at the table, and why. For example, does planning happen at a regional level with implementation happening at a local level?
- **Develop a 1-pager outlining the implementation plan.** Bringing a 1-pager in September outlining what the plan is would go a long way. We could take this to any ministry/partner.
- **Speak to local employment planning councils (LEPCs).** There are eight LEPCs and they're bringing together educators, trainers, employers, private sector – worth looking at how that's going (community planning processes, supply and demand).

- **Professional development support for those delivering programs.** Program delivery staff turnover is a factor, with many staff quickly moving on to other things. Professional development support at the program level is required to ensure consistent delivery.
- **Address competition.** We need to consider the types of behaviours that are incentivized in the system, particularly those that lead to competition, which goes back to the funding model.

7. Immediate next steps as discussed at the meeting

The Swerhun team will prepare a summary that synthesizes and organizes the feedback shared today so it becomes a useful tool for the LLAC. Swerhun will share the summary with the LLAC in draft for review to ensure it accurately captures the feedback.

If you have additional comments or suggestions for the Terms of Reference (beyond what was shared during the meeting and documented in this summary), **please share them by Thursday, April 12, 2018** with MAESD. A finalized version will be shared with the LLAC that considers member suggestions.

Ministry staff will begin drafting an implementation plan that builds on the successes and achievements thus far to bring to the next LLAC meeting, which will likely take place in September 2018.

Attachment A: Participant List

Attachment B: LLAC Terms of Reference

Attachment C: Agenda

Lifelong Learning Advisory Committee (LLAC) on Adult Education MEETING 1

March 20, 2018
Oakham House (Thomas Lounge)
63 Gould Street, Ground Floor
10:00 am – 3:00 pm

9:30 am Coffee & Light Breakfast

10:00 am Land Acknowledgement & Introduction of Co-Chairs
Nicole Swerhun, Facilitator

10:01 Welcome from the Co-Chairs
Martyn Beckett, Assistant Deputy Minister (ADM) of the Student Achievement Division, Ministry of Education (EDU)
Erin McGinn, ADM of the Workforce Policy and Innovation Division in the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development (MAESD)
Denys Giguère, ADM, French-Language Teaching, Learning and Achievement Division, EDU and MAESD

10:10 Introductions & Agenda Review
Nicole Swerhun, Facilitator

10:30 An Overview of the many parts to our Adult Learning System
Monica Neitzert (MAESD), Marg Connor (EDU), Yvonne Ferrer (MCI)

1. What are your expectations for the LLAC? How can the LLAC be most useful in supporting achievement of the three core government commitments related to adult education and lifelong learning?
2. Do you have any comments or suggested edits on the draft ToR for the LLAC? (please send any comments in the week following the meeting)

11:00 Break

11:10 Review and Discuss Feedback on Discussion Paper
MAESD and EDU

1. Do the results ring true? Is there anything surprising in the results?
2. Is there anything that wasn't said or anything missing?
3. Do you have any early thoughts on potential actions to consider/explore based on the feedback received?

12:00 pm Lunch (provided)

1:00 Collaborating to Support Adult Learners

2:00 Break

2:10 Collaborating to Support Adult Learners *continued...*

2:45 Wrap-Up and Next Steps
Co-Chairs

3:00 pm Adjourn

Attachment D: Ministry Staff Presentations

Attachment E: Code for Canada Presentation
