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**Canadian Research Working Group for
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Draft Framework for Evaluating the Effectiveness of Career Development Interventions

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There are many good evaluation models in the literature and it is hard to pick one that is "best" in all regards. Each model has strong points and each has aspects that are not as good. In pervious meetings of the National Working Group on Evidence Based Practice and Research in Career Development (CRWG), we grappled with this for a long time and finally came to the conclusion that no model was superior in all regards, so it was best to pick one model and develop it. There was consensus that the model we adopted should be easy to understand and should be easily incorporated into the practices of agencies and practitioners. We were guided by that spirit in developing the draft framework elaborated in this paper.

Basic Assumptions and Guiding Principles

1. A framework is simply a way of organizing relevant information. There likely is no best framework, and likely any number of frameworks would be sufficient for almost any task.
2. The underlying purpose of any framework is to organize relevant information and then to look for causal connections, or areas of influence, between the types of information collected.
3. It is useful to select a framework that is simple to understand (not overly complicated) and yet has the potential to include all the relevant information

The Framework we have chosen

We have chosen a very basic framework consisting of 3 elements: Inputs, Processes, and Outcomes.

- Inputs are the resources that are available to help clients change (i.e., pursue the outcomes).
- Processes are the mechanisms that are involved in achieving the outcomes.
- Outcomes are the changes in service recipients (clients), i.e., the results of the inputs enacting the processes.

The three elements can be thought of as related in a linear way, but the relationship is not strictly linear. Inputs feed processes. Processes result in outcomes. BUT outcomes are also influenced by the inputs available. AND the nature of the inputs (especially the competencies of the staff) influence the process that can be enacted. Thus, even though we may depict a linear relationship pictorially, in reality, the three elements are very interactive.

It is important to appreciate that in order to do a comprehensive evaluation, all three elements need to be examined and evidence needs to be gathered on all three evaluation components. The resources that are available (inputs) have an effect on what outcomes are realistic, both the nature of the outcomes and volume of outcomes that can be obtained. Thus, an evaluation plan needs to be able to describe the inputs (both the nature of the inputs and the amount available) and link the inputs to the processes followed, as well as specifying the outcomes. Evidence needs to be gathered on the processes that were enacted so that a link can be made between the outcomes obtained and the processes that were used to obtain those outcomes. Ultimately, it is useful to be able to have evidence that will support a claim that these outcomes were obtained, because those processes were followed, and we could follow those process because we had this and that in our resource base. Agencies who routinely gather this sort of data, and especially if the evidence gathering process is integrated into service delivery, have an easy time addressing accountability concerns.

Finally, when developing programs, the logical place to begin is by identifying the outcomes that are desired, then planning the processes that will be needed to produce the outcomes. After the processes are elaborated, then it is sensible to look at the inputs that will be needed in order to implement the process. Some agencies may have limitations on their inputs, especially in matters relating to budget, or to the credentials of their service providers, or the other community resources that are available. Those sorts of things may restrict the interventions or programs that can be implemented, and subsequently the outcomes that can be achieved, or it may mean that additional resources will be needed in order to implement a program successfully. We emphasize this point because often programs are designed without explicit expectations for the outcomes that are intended to be achieved. We believe that the program development process should begin by articulating the client needs that are intended to be met by the program, then identifying the specific types of client change that are intended to result from participation in the program (i.e., the hoped for client outcomes). After the outcomes are clear, then the program content and accompanying processes can be developed along with the development of the evaluation plan. In other words "what are we going to do?" is always asked in conjunction with "How will we tell how well it's working?" Thus the program plan and the evaluation plan are developed together and implemented at the same time. This is somewhat of a departure from normal practice in many circles, but likely is a necessary consideration when the focus is on evidence-based practice and outcome-focused intervention.

One difficulty in using an "Inputs → Processes → Outcomes" model, is deciding where to put the outputs. Outputs usually are things like: quality of service, client flow, scope of services, types of client problems, etc. If we include outputs as "outcomes" they get confused with indicators of client change. Therefore, we suggest putting them in "Processes" as they are not really indicators of client change, but indicators that appropriate processes have been followed. Therefore, the process become all the activities that agencies, clients, third parties, etc., engage in, and to evaluate the processes, we gather evidence on counsellor and client adherence to the intervention plan, and also, client satisfaction with the service, agency adherence to mandate, numbers of clients seen, etc., as well as items such as "goals are determined by clients" which was a suggestion from the focus groups.

An overview of our draft evaluation framework is presented pictorially in the diagram on the next page. Each element in the evaluation framework is elaborated on the pages following the diagram.

A Draft Framework for Evaluation

A tool for organizing relevant evaluation information

Inputs → **Processes** → **Outcomes**

Resources available

- Staff
  - ➢ Number of staff, level of training, type of training
- Funding
  - ➢ Budget (funding level)
- Service guidelines
  - ➢ Agency mandate
- Facilities
- Infrastructure
- Community resources

Activities and process that link to outputs or deliverables

1. **Generic interventions**
   - Working alliance, microskills, etc.
2. **Specific interventions**
   - Interventions used by service providers
     - ➢ Skills or strategies used by service providers
     - ➢ Home practice completed by clients
   - Programs offered by agency
   - Involvement by 3rd parties
   - Quality of service indicators
     - ➢ Stakeholder satisfaction

Indicators of client change

1. Learning outcomes
   - Knowledge and skills that can be linked directly to the program or intervention being used
2. Personal attribute outcomes
   - Changes in attitudes,
   - Intrapersonal variables such as self-esteem, motivation, etc.),
3. Impact outcomes
   - Impact that the learning outcomes or the personal attribute outcomes have on the client's life, such as employment status, enrolled in training, etc.
   - Social and relational impact
   - Economic impact

Please note. This is a preliminary draft, intended for discussion and further refinement by the Working Group and members of the career development community. In the field=testing, we particularly want users to ask themselves "Will this approach work for you?" and "How would this fit in your work place?" We expect that the organizing categories in the framework will change as the framework is tested in the field, and refined to reflect feedback. Thus, this is a dynamic framework, that is very much a work in progress that will change to accommodate user feedback and the realities that exist in the field.

The components of the framework are elaborated on the next several pages.

Outcomes

Definition. An outcome is the specific result or product of an intervention, including changes in client competence (knowledge and skills), changes in client personal attributes, changes in client situation, and/or broader changes for the client and/or community. These broader outcomes usually can be thought of as the impact of the changes in client competence or changes in client personal attributes.

In the Alberta survey, the Alberta focus groups, and in the National survey and focus groups, participants had much difficulty identifying what is an outcome, in a way that would permit the outcome to be linked to the programs or services offered. In fact, many survey respondents indicated that any given intervention (e.g., "networking"), resulted in all the outcomes in the list being achieved (even outcomes such as "build and maintain a positive personal image," "change and grow throughout one's life," "maintain balanced life/work roles"). Clearly, the link between teaching a client the importance of networking and helping the client begin to develop a network, and outcomes such as "building a positive self-image," is quite tenuous, at best. Furthermore, few agencies, we suspect, would feel comfortable being held accountable for producing outcomes such as 'building a positive self-image" as a result of a workshop on networking. Extensive inservice or other forms of staff development will be necessary in order to rectify this situation.

Framework for Organizing Client Learning Outcomes

As a means of organizing all the possible things that clients might learn as a result of accessing career services, we suggested using the framework from *Blueprint for Life/Work Designs*.

1. **Personal management outcomes**
    - Build and maintain a positive personal image
    - Interact positively and effectively with others
    - Change and grow throughout one's life
2. **Learning and work exploration outcomes**
    - Participate in life-long learning supportive of life/work goals
    - Locate and effectively use life/work information
    - Understand the relationship between work and society/economy
3. **Life/work building outcomes**
    - Secure, create and maintain work
    - Make life/work-enhancing decisions
    - Link decision-making to life/work
    - Maintain balanced life/work rules
    - Understand the changing nature of life/work roles
    - Understand, engage in and manage one's own life/work process

The *Blueprint* has become widely accepted as a way of describing client learning outcomes and many of the resources available to career practitioners are now indexed to the *Blueprint*, making it easier to chose resources that are appropriate for the learning outcomes being sought.

Framework for Organizing Client Personal Attribute Outcomes

There is some debate about whether or not Personal Attribute Outcomes are in fact learning outcomes. Rather than get into a debate about this, we have identified them as a separate category of outcomes, acknowledging that some people may view these as learning outcomes and others may not.

In the national survey and the Alberta focus groups, respondents identified some outcomes that they thought were important, but which they did not (or were not allowed to) measure or report. We have organized these suggestions into three broad categories:

1. **Attitudes**
   - Belief that change is possible
   - Internal locus of control
2. **Intrapersonal factors**
   - Confidence
   - Motivation
   - Self-esteem
3. **Client independence**
   - client self reliance and initiative
   - independent client use of tools provided in career services

In the literature these are sometimes referred to "precursors" (Hiebert, 1994: Killeen, White, & Watts, 1993; Maguire & Killeen, 2003). They are arguably learning outcomes, and they often mediate between skill and knowledge attainment and the life-impact outcomes, for they speak to the client's willingness (ability) to put the learning into action. In one of the first meetings of the CRWG, agreement was reached that these are in fact outcomes and the suggestion was made that we cluster them together in a category called "personal attributes." Regardless of the label used to describe these sorts of outcomes, there is widespread agreement that they are important and that it most often is difficult to obtain the desired amount of impact it these personal attributes are not addressed. Therefore, these types of client outcomes need to be identified and addressed in their own right, and trustworthy methods need to be developed to evaluate these variables.

Framework for Organizing Client Impact Outcomes

Impact outcomes are the spin-off effects that derive from the learning outcomes, or perhaps from the personal attribute outcomes. They are the "ultimate, hoped-for" end result of an intervention. They include things such as:

- Employment status
  - placement rates
- Participation in training
- Engaging in job search
- Client ability to fit in at the workplace
  - increased job stability
  - natural job progression occurs for clients
- Societal impacts
- Relational impacts
- Economic impacts

Agencies and funders need to collaborate and reach agreement on what impacts can be reasonably expected. For example, in times of high unemployment it might not be reasonable to expect that all people who participate in a work search program will end up finding employment. In times of lower unemployment, or in geographic regions where the job market is robust, it might be more reasonable to expect high placement rates following completion of a work search program and also high retention rates for 6 months or 12 months because clients were looking for personally meaningful work rather than just taking any old job that came along.

Processes

Processes can be thought of as having two main components: Interventions, which can be linked directly to the outcomes being sought, and Quality Service Factors, which have an effect on the general operation of the agency but do not directly relate to any specific outcomes.

Definition. An Intervention is any intentional activity implemented in the hopes of fostering client change. Interventions include the interactions of service providers with clients or third parties as well as the components of the programs and services that are instrumental in achieving the client outcomes being sought. We conceptualize two broad categories of interventions: Generic and specific.

Generic interventions are those actions of service providers that are embedded in most interactions between service providers and clients or third parties, or that are a subset larger interventions. A strong working alliance between service provider and client has been shown to be important in facilitating client change, and developing a working alliance likely will be part of virtually all interventions. Similarly, teaching a client to reframe an unpleasant event and view it as an opportunity for growth could be part of several interventions and could contribute to achieving numerous client goals.

Specific interventions are more singularly focused than generic interventions. The usually are linked directly to client goals and outcomes, or linked to interactions with third parties that are intended to foster client change. Specific interventions can be part of interactions with clients directly or they can be bundled together as part of a programs and workshops

A Framework for Organizing Specific interventions

Based on the standard practices and reports from the field, we offer the following framework for organizing a sample of the kinds of specific interventions that are used to initiate and/or sustain client change. This is a modified form of the list used in the Alberta survey. The first four categories (career decision making, skills enhancement, job search, and job maintenance) represent typical interventions used to achieve learning outcomes, although some of the bullet points depict the changes in client personal attributes that usually are by-products of learning the knowledge or skills involved. The fifth category, which we have called “career-related personal development,” pertains to interventions that are designed to explicitly address changes in personal attributes. We have included the term “career-related” in the title to acknowledge that most agencies offering career development services to not have a mandate to offer personal counselling, BUT when there is a personal issue, such as lack of self-confidence, that is affecting a client’s ability to pursue career goals, it is important to address that issue as part of the career intervention. The sixth category is for interventions that do not neatly fit into the other five categories: It is our way of acknowledging that an important and legitimate part of providing comprehensive career development services is to be able to recognize when someone may need to be referred, for example, to a de-tox program prior to beginning work aimed more directly at finding employment.

The headings in the framework below represent topics that that are addressed in specific interventions. We have used topical headings as our organizing tool, recognizing that the topics might be addressed in programs or other services in a variety of different ways, e.g., through counselling, teaching, workshop facilitation, guidance, and made available in a group setting, a classroom, through individual counselling, or guided self-help. The mandate of the agency, the expertise of the staff, and the learning styles of the clients typically all come into play when deciding how the interventions are implemented.

1. **Career decision making**
    - Self-awareness of:
        - Occupational interests
        - Relevant aptitudes
        - Job-related skills
        - Adaptability skills
    - How to find and use labour market information
    - Knowledge of community resources
    - Awareness of alternative employment options
    - Adaptability in range of options considered
2. **Work-specific skills enhancement**
    - Specific employment skill training (name certificate or training program completed)
    - Skills for creating opportunities
    - Self-management skills
    - Literacy skills
    - Numeracy skills
    - Computer skills
3. **Work search**
    - How to identify and follow-up on job leads
    - Preparing resumé & cover letter
    - Self-presentation skills
    - Job interview skills
    - Ability to negotiate appropriate employment contract
4. **Job maintenance**
    - Acquiring information about job entitlements
    - Knowledge of factors contributing to job loss
    - Conflict resolution skills
    - Overall work habits
5. **Career-related personal development**
    - Building self-efficacy
        - Self-confidence
        - Motivation
        - Belief that change is possible
    - Skills for managing life demands
        - Stress control
        - Time management
        - Financial management
        - Interpersonal skills

    - Coping with psychological effects of job loss
- Managing transitions
    - Flexibility
    - Adaptability
- Becoming more aware of employment opportunities
    - Opportunity awareness
- Becoming more self-directed
    - Client self-directedness

6. Other

- Referral
- Psychological assessment

An important part of evidence-based practice involves documenting the processes followed by both service providers and service recipients, as well as any significant others that potentially could be affecting the achievement of outcomes. In order to claim that an intervention is responsible for producing a client outcome, we must be able to say with confidence that both service provider and client have followed the intervention plan. There are many examples in our field where an intervention appears to be ineffective, but closer scrutiny reveals that the intervention plan has in fact not been followed.

An important next step in developing a comprehensive evaluation plan will be to map the client learning outcomes on to the interventions. Agencies will need to be encouraged to become very clear about the client outcomes that they want to be held accountable for, and then to identify where in the programs or services they offer are the components that are likely to produce those outcomes. This mapping will need to be quite detailed and likely will be quite specific to an agency or a program, but using a common framework to identify the outcomes and the interventions will help to identify what it is reasonable to expect from the services being offered.

Quality Service Factors

Even though the Quality Service Factors do not link directly to the client outcomes, they are important to address. We all know that a client who gets rude treatment from a receptionist and encounters a dismissive attitude by a group facilitator, will unlikely receive the best outcomes from even a very good program. Furthermore, in the national survey, and also in the Alberta focus groups, respondents identified some factors that they thought were important, but which they did not (or were not allowed to) measure or report.

The list of such factors that agencies and practitioners expressed a desire to measure, included the following:

- Client satisfaction
- Stakeholder satisfaction
- Level of service utilization
- Increased numbers of applicants for services
- Time required for service provision
- Establishing rapport with clients
- Agency reputation
- Workshop evaluations
- Co-worker feedback
- Client relationship with the agency (clients return for service, clients are self reliant, and Clients' ability to fit into the workplace)

- Achieving expected performance indicators
- Employer satisfaction (this could be also an impact outcome if job stability was a goal)
- Increased ability to fund-raise.

Even though these sometimes are thought of as outcomes, they are not indicators of client change, per se. Therefore, we suggest that they be regarded as indicators of successful processes. Some of these items also are frequently referred to as outputs and include factors such as: number of clients seen, types of client problems addressed, number of visits made by a client, etc.

Inputs

The resource base that an agency can access has a large influence on the agency's ability to offer quality services. A framework for organizing the input variables is not elaborated, because those factors were not assessed in the national survey or the Alberta study. However we offer as a starting point, the following framework for tracking inputs. This system for organizing inputs will undoubtedly be elaborated as the framework is field tested,

1. Staff
   - Number of staff
   - Competencies of staff
   - Staff level of training, type of training
2. Funding
   - Budget (funding level)
3. Service guidelines
   - Agency mandate
4. Facilities
5. Infrastructure
   - Support staff
   - Consultants
6. Community resources
   - Other professionals
   - Physical resources such as libraries, internet cafes, etc.

In closing, we reiterate a point made earlier, that any comprehensive plan for evaluating the effectiveness of career development interventions needs to incorporate a systematic method for gathering data on all three components of the framework we are proposing. In order to get an accurate picture of which interventions work best, with which clients, under which circumstances, it is necessary to examine the client outcomes, the processes used to obtain those outcomes, and the inputs needed to enact the processes.