

Assessment Factors Handbook

Individual Assessment Services



Updated November 2008

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Purpose of this Handbook

The purpose of this handbook is to provide you with:

- the range of assessment factors that need to be explored with an individual in order to determine their strengths, abilities, and service and program needs
- areas to explore to help them determine where they are in relation to their goals
- sample questions to use when determining individual needs, taking action and supporting those actions

Definition of Terms

The following definitions are provided here to help clarify terminology that is used throughout this handbook:

Assessment

- Assessment is a process involving gathering information, identifying issues, needs, and clarifying personal and environmental resources in relation to issues and needs. Assessment helps individuals to increase self-awareness; understand their career issues; establish work, learning and/or life balance goals; and provides a foundation for taking action and an indicator of ongoing progress.

Employability

- is the level of skill, education and employment readiness of the individual

Participants

- are individuals who access the department's programs and services.

Types of Assessments

Service Needs Determination Assessment

- includes identifying an individual's need for career, training, and employment services, and financial support. It also identifies the need for an Employability Assessment and additional activities.

Employability Assessment:

Employability Assessment is a process that addresses one or more of the following:

- career/occupational decision-making
- skill development and/or enhancement
- work search and/or maintenance

An Employability Assessment includes:

- reviewing the individual's current situation
- reviewing the individual's occupational goal, as presented
- reviewing the individual's employment and training history
- identifying the individual's credentials, knowledge, skills and interests
- identifying the individual's occupational experience, strengths and barriers
- identifying personal factors in an individual's life that may influence success in their goals
- determining if an individual is labour market destined
- determining whether training is required in order for the individual to remain in or to enter the labour market
- determining if specialized supports or services are required to overcome barriers
- creating a Service Plan

Results of Assessment:

- the overall objective of an Employability Assessment is to help individuals improve their employability and self-sufficiency in the labour market.

Service Consultant

- contracted service provider or AEII employees who conduct individual assessments.

Service Plan

- contains jointly set goals, sub goals, and plan items that are designed to maximize the effectiveness of the service plan objective. It describes which services and funding are required, and reflects the mutual agreement on how to proceed.

Goal

- is the primary objective or desired outcome of the Service Plan. It is the objective which the individual is working towards. A service plan must have one overall goal.

Sub-Goal

- A service plan goal can be further divided into more manageable components called sub-goals. The individual may have more than one sub-goal that must be met to achieve the overall goal.

Service Agreement:

- is the collaborative agreement between the individual and the service consultant that states the actions to be taken to achieve goals within the Service Plan. It reflects the agreement on the Service Plan and is signed by both parties.

Ranking of Assessment Factors:***Strengths:***

- personal, situational and environmental factors that help people to achieve their career, work/life goals.
- personal variables that support goal attainment.

Satisfactory:

- are assessment factors that do not require further development to achieve goals and sub-goals.

Needs Development:

- are personal, situational and environmental factors that negatively influence the ability of individuals to achieve their career, work/life goals.
- are personal variables that impede goal attainment.

Unknown

- a factor that is unable to be assessed, or this factor is not relevant to this goal.

Purpose of Assessment

The purpose of the assessment interview is to determine the individual's strengths and needs and the programs and services that may be most useful, for the individual in pursuing and achieving their career/life goals.

To help you assist the individual in clarifying and assessing their strengths and challenges, this Handbook offers valuable suggestions and questions you can use while engaging in a collaborative discussion. Exploring these different areas may help individuals to focus on important factors that relate to their desired goals. Whether the individual's goals are to reconnect with the labour market, manage their health and family needs, or return to school to increase their self-reliance, a profile of the individual's presenting circumstances and what they bring to the process will help to determine the action required.

The intent of the assessment is to identify potential/suitable programs and services. The intent of the assessment process is to focus on the individual, and be collaborative and inclusive in providing services and programs. It is critical that starting with the assessment process, and throughout your interactions, the individual is an active participant, and is comfortable with both the result of the assessment and the proposed response before services continue to be delivered.

There are two desired results of the assessment process:

Individual Profile: Determination of an individual's career/life goals, and the positive and negative impact that their individualized assessment factors will have on the achievement of those goals. The individual profile is a snapshot of where they see themselves on their career/life path, and in what areas they will need further support or development.

Identified Needs: Determination of the services and benefits that will be required to achieve the individual's career/life goals, as per the following categories:

- Employment Services
- Career Services
- Skill Development
- Support-Non Financial
- Support – Financial
- Information Services

Process of Assessment

There are several models that may be of use in focusing the interview. Two models are provided below as examples.

1. Employability Assessment Steps

A 6-step process:

1. Process Explanation

- Establish the parameters within which the consultant and the individual will be working together
- Clarify and provide opportunity for discussion about:
 - a. the process the consultant will be taking to address the concerns of the individual
 - b. what is within the scope of the consultant role
 - c. what the role and responsibilities of each are in the process
 - d. what the individual can expect throughout the assessment and planning process
 - e. the contractual nature of assessment and service(action) planning
 - f. the reason for the individual's active participation and openness

The individual will feel more at ease sharing information if the goals and purposes are established.

2. Issues Identification

- Consultant uses communication skills to encourage the individual to present his or her circumstances and the influences operating within it. This gives the individual the opportunity to be heard
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- Start where the individual is right now – their presenting circumstances
- What are the issues as the individual sees them
- Identify what the individual's support systems and strengths that will help with these issues
- Identify values that are important to the individual

3. Issues Clarification

- Consultant and individual look at the total picture together to identify which factors will work in the individual's favour and which issues will require some type of action to be identified in the service plan and service agreement.

4. Joint Conclusions

- Consultant in collaboration with the individual, summarize what needs are to be addressed. This is done in logical *if...then* statements e.g. “If I am going to attend school, then I must have childcare arranged first.”

5. Individual Confirmation

- Consultant checks to ensure that the individual agrees with the identified needs, and the proposed actions.
- With agreement about the results of the assessment in place, and which issues need to be addressed the consultant and individual are ready to develop the service plan and service agreement.

6. Documentation

- The consultant documents all stages of the assessment process on Mobius. Mobius provides an essential tool that serves both the assessment process and the needs of the department.

2. CONDUCT Model

The CONDUCT model provides an alternative framework for these 6 steps:

Step 1: Develop/Clarify a Preferred Future

The individual provides an initial statement regarding their presenting circumstances, and what it is they would like to be different. Begin by encouraging the individual to describe or create a vision of their preferred future. Ownership of their preferred future will help provide direction and motivation for agreed upon actions.

Suggested questions to help set the stage are as follows:

What do you want your life to be like? If you could choose, where would you be living? Who would you be living with? What kind of relationships would you have? What sort of work would you do? What would you do for fun and recreation? What kind of lifestyle do you see for yourself?

Answering these questions is part of helping the individual develop a preferred future.

Step 2: Understand Current Position Relative to a Preferred Future

Effective movement towards a preferred future requires that the individual has a thorough understanding of their current assets and situation: skills, knowledge, attitudes, activities, personal characteristics, relationships, finances and material assets. (Strengths and challenges)

Step 3: Identify Needs (gaps between current position and preferred future)

Help the individual determine what s/he needs to undertake to move towards the preferred future. You may find that many of the individual's needs are personal and involve skill development or needs related to learning.

Step 4: Set Short-Term Goals (particularly learning goals).

Individuals need to find ways to make short-term decisions that will move them toward their preferred future while being meaningful here and now. Although learning is a key component of career development, individuals will also have goals related to areas such as finances, work experiences and volunteer activities.

Step 5: Identify Challenges or Barriers to Reaching your Goals.

There are often roadblocks on the paths toward goals. Identifying challenges along the road is the first step in getting over, around or through them.

Step 6: Develop/Follow (Action) Service Plans.

Setting goals and reaching goals are two different things! Regardless of the type of goal the individual is pursuing, actions that identify specific steps, dates and support will help each one reach their goals.

(Action/Client Investment Plan) Service Plan

Note: Consultant documents all stages of the assessment process on Mobius (AEII's client tracking system). This computer system is an essential tool that helps the consultant, service management, and department needs.

The Service Plan

Service Plan (formerly known as Client Investment Plan, Action Plan and Employment Plan) describes how the results of the assessment interview will be put into action to achieve goals that will move the individual toward obtaining their career/life goals.

The service plan:

- is being developed throughout the assessment process,
- is mutually derived and mutually agreed-upon by the individual and the consultant,
- takes into account the individual's employment related strengths and challenges,
- deals with a relevant employment concern,
- is made up of goals that can be characterized as specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, time-targeted and supported. In other words, they have the S.M.A.R.T.S. criteria.

This Handbook will provide you with some information about each employability or assessment factor. It will also provide suggestions of how you can begin to explore these assessment factors with individuals. You may wish to personalize this Handbook by adding information and questions you find to be effective in your assessment practice.

Reading Text

- Reading text involves the ability to read, comprehend and use written materials including graphs, charts and displays. Functional literacy is the ability to use written or numerical information in daily activities such as reading and understanding the correct dosage on a prescription, completing an application form or finding a specific listing in the telephone directory.

Background Information and Areas to Explore with the Individual:

- ESL is closely tied to the reading text assessment factor.
- Considering those adult Canadians with low literacy, 15 per cent have serious problems dealing with any printed materials; an additional 27 per cent can only deal with simple reading tasks. (*Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey*, 2005)
- An individual's educational level is not necessarily an accurate assessment of literacy skills. It may be necessary to ask an individual to provide a sample of written work. A referral for literacy assessment can be provided as required.
- The following behaviours and/or responses may provide some insights into the individual's level of literacy and/or fluency with English. Ability to:
 - describe formal academic achievements,
 - read written information or questions on a form and respond appropriately in writing,
 - follow instructions to complete forms independently,
 - produce legible written work with appropriate spelling and grammar,
 - participate in an interview, responding using appropriate English grammar.
- An individual who appears to have average thinking/reasoning abilities but demonstrates difficulties with reading skills may have a learning disability. (*Learning Disabilities Association of Canada*, 2002) If a disability is identified, additional specialized diagnostic services may be required to confirm the nature of the disability and to assist in the development of strategies that will accommodate for the disability and allow the individual to succeed.
- Resource lists are available to assist with referrals for specialized diagnostic services.
- Programs designed to assist individuals with employment preparation, life skills or job search often require a minimum reading level. It is important to ensure individuals referred to such programs possess appropriate literacy levels.

- Some individuals have poor English language skills despite having participated in formal ESL training. They find language learning difficult or they may have had little chance to practice their English with native English speakers.
- Immigrants who were illiterate in their mother tongue have great difficulty in learning both verbal and written English skills. Decisions about employment, learning and career planning will be impacted by the individual's ability to learn English.
- Individuals with English barriers may also lack knowledge of the Canadian labour market and hiring and workplace practices and may have difficulty in obtaining recognition of their credentials and experience. Those with adequate English skills may benefit from a referral to the International Qualifications Assessment Service (IQAS).
- The individual's level of self-confidence in English may impact their ability to handle job interviews. Building interview skills through role-playing may also assist in building the individual's self-confidence.

Sample Questions to Consider:

- Tell me about your educational background.
- What types of reading appeal to you?
- Tell me about the reading and writing that you were required to do in your previous work.
- How comfortable is it for you to answer these questions in English?

Numeracy Skills

- Numeracy involves the ability to demonstrate skill in working with numbers and mathematics. Skill may be reflected in the ability to use numbers to perform calculations and estimations and to complete tasks such as handling cash, budgeting, measuring and analyzing.

Background Information and Areas to Explore with the Individual:

- It is important to explore whether individuals appear to have the numeracy skills required to attain and succeed in their stated employment or training goals.
- Another related area to explore includes individuals' experiences with handling money such as making change, using registers, computers and calculators.

Sample Questions to Consider:

- How would you rate yourself in terms of your ability to work with numbers?
- What experience have you had where you worked with numbers?
- How do you like working with numbers and math – statistics and measurements and other areas that require those skills?

Oral Communication

- Oral communication skills involve the use of speech to give and exchange thoughts and information. They include the ability to listen for understanding and to speak the language in which business is conducted.

Background Information and Areas to Explore with the Individual:

- Communication is a two-way street and oral communication includes both listening and talking:
 - Effective listening involves concentrating on the message to understand it and also responding appropriately.
 - Effective talking involves conveying the intended message clearly. Messages are clearest when an individual's body language matches what is being said.
- Oral communication skills are key in both securing and maintaining employment. Successfully completing work search activities such as networking and participating in interviews as well as on the job exchanges with supervisors, customers and colleagues, requires confident and effective communication.
- Oral communication skills demanded by different areas of employment vary greatly from little to no interaction involving listening to or leaving messages on voice mail, to one-on-one exchanges with colleagues and customers in person or by telephone, to giving presentations in large groups. Individuals can be encouraged to check the oral communication skills required to perform their preferred type of work.
- Good oral communication is an important ingredient in preventing or resolving conflicts. Individuals who have not had success in resolving conflicts at work may benefit from practising:
 - assertive communication skills and using "I" statements (*Communicating with Confidence, ALIS Employment Tips*)
 - asking open-ended questions and listening carefully to the responses. (*Let's Talk: A Guide to Resolving Workplace Conflicts, 2004*)

Sample Questions to Consider:

- On a scale of 1-5, how would you rate your ability to communicate with co-workers? Supervisors? Customers?
 - What might you do to move that rating up a notch?

- Tell me about a time that you used your oral communication skills successfully.
- What feedback have you received regarding your communication skills, either on the job, while volunteering or in your everyday life?
- Describe the way you might be required to use your oral communication skills in the work that you are seeking.
 - How do you think your skills relate to those required?

Thinking Skills

- Thinking skills include knowing how to problem solve, make decisions, plan and organize tasks, find information and make effective use of memory.

Background Information and Areas to Explore with the Individual:

- Individuals may not have the confidence or awareness to identify their thinking skills, therefore, asking for examples of times when they have used them is most effective.
- Part of planning and organizing is keeping track of tasks and appointments. This is particularly important in job search where individuals need to know such things as who they have contacted and when and where an interview will take place.
- Asking questions about how an individual learns or remembers new things may be one way of identifying whether the individual has a learning disability. Ask about experiences in school, including upgrading.
- Thinking and/or learning styles are also indicators of an individual's work style and may affect how that person works with others or the type of work situation in which they would best function.
- Knowing how to study and prepare for tests as well as having a quiet place to study are important for success in school. Individuals who are planning to return to school will benefit from the knowledge that most training providers have counsellors or teachers who can advise them on study skills and habits.

Sample Questions to Consider:

- Tell me about a time that you had to solve a problem and how you went about solving it.
- Give me an example of a decision that you have made and tell me how you made it.
- Tell me about your school experience.
 - What are some of the things that you do well when it comes to learning and studying?
 - What do you find challenging when learning new things?

Continuous Learning

- Continuous learning involves continuing to acquire and build knowledge and skills on an ongoing and lifelong basis.

Background Information and Areas to Explore with the Individual:

- Continuous learning does not mean continuous schooling. Rather, it includes learning informally as well as formally, for example, learning from a colleague or friend, self-teaching through reading and online activities, attending workshops and going back to school. (*Multiple Choices*, 2006)
- Lifelong learning is a reality in our constantly changing world. Workers are continually challenged to expand their knowledge and skills. Employers look for:
 - a positive attitude to learning on the job
 - the ability to initiate new learning.
- An important aspect of continuous learning is the ability to identify a personal learning strategy. An effective learning strategy includes the following components: (*Multiple Choices*, 2006)
 - Determine learning needs based on short and mid-term goals. Types of support required for learning, as well as preferred learning situations are important considerations.
 - Acquire the skills and knowledge needed.
Skills and knowledge can be acquired formally or informally by, for example, attending a course, receiving coaching from a colleague, self teaching through manuals and books.
 - Practice using new skills and knowledge.
Apply new learning in a variety of situations and ask for feedback to ensure correct application.
 - Challenge competency in new skills and knowledge to master them, if needed to meet goals.
A “master” of a skill creates new ways of doing things and passes their skills and knowledge on to others.
To become a master, take more advanced courses, present speeches at staff meetings or conferences, write articles for newsletters or journals and/or help others acquire the skill.
- It is also important to help individuals identify their preferred learning style. The three primary methods of learning are:
 - visual: learning best by seeing including reading, watching videos, using a computer and using note-taking as a study aid

- auditory: learning best by hearing including lecture and discussions and using audio tapes and spoken reviews as study aids
- kinesthetic: learning best by doing including hands-on activities and practising activities as a study aid. (*What's Your Learning Style? ALIS, Employment Tips*)
- Some individuals may not have had positive learning experiences in the past and may associate learning only with formal learning settings. Helping them to identify successful experiences with learning, especially any informal learning, will help them become aware of the variety of ways they can learn and may help build confidence in their ability to learn. Helping them identify how they might access appropriate resources and learning opportunities will facilitate their ability to initiate their own learning.

Sample Questions to Consider:

- Tell me about something that you have recently learned.
 - How did you learn it?
- What have you done recently that is new or different for you?
 - What new learning was involved in this experience?
- Tell me about some goals you have for the next one to two years.
 - What might you need to learn to accomplish your goals?
 - How might you go about learning these new skills or getting this knowledge?
 - What kinds of support have been helpful to you in learning new things before?
 - In what ways did this support help you learn?

Document Use

- Document use skills are used in tasks that involve a variety of information displays in which words, numbers, icons and other visual characteristics, for example; line, colour, shape, are given meaning by their spatial arrangement. For example, graphs, lists, tables, blueprints, schematics, drawings, signs and labels are documents used in the world of work.

Background Information and Areas to Explore with the Individual:

- Document use includes:
 - print and non-print media, for example: computer screen or microfiche documents, equipment gauges, clocks and flags
 - reading and interpreting documents, for example; tables, schedules, completed forms, interpreting scale drawings
 - writing, completing and producing of documents, for example; creating tables and schedules, entering information on forms, draw graphs or charts
 - simultaneously using skills as part of the same task, for example; completing a form, checking off items on a list of tasks, plotting information on a graph, and entering information on an activity schedule.
- Document use varies in type and complexity according to the field of work. It will be helpful for individuals to check how they might be required to use documents in their preferred type of work.

Sample Questions to Consider:

- Tell me how you have used documents in your work and in your everyday life.
- Have you used tables, charts, schedules in your work or everyday life?
 - In what ways have you used them?
- Have you been involved in creating any types of documents?
 - Describe the types of documents and your role in creating them.
- Describe the way you might be required to use documents in the work that you are seeking.
 - How do you think your skills relate to those required?

Writing

- Writing involves the ability to write effectively in the language in which business is conducted. It includes writing texts and writing in documents, for example; completing forms as well as non-paper-based writing, for example; typing on a computer.

Background Information and Areas to Explore with the Individual:

- Writing skills continue to be important in many fields of work. The level of skill required varies greatly depending on the position held. Writing may be done by hand or involve composing messages and materials electronically.
- It is important to explore whether individuals appear to have the writing skills necessary to gain and perform effectively in the types of positions they are targeting.
- Individuals' educational levels do not necessarily reflect their level of writing skill. It may be necessary to ask individuals to bring in samples of their written work. Observing some of the following individual behaviours may also provide insight into their writing ability:
 - completing forms legibly
 - participating in interview activities that require writing and producing legible written work with correct spelling and grammar
- An individual who appears to have average thinking and reasoning abilities but demonstrates difficulties with writing skills may have a learning disability. (*Learning Disabilities Association of Canada, 2002*) If a disability is identified, additional specialized diagnostic services may be required to confirm the nature of the disability and to assist in the development of strategies that will accommodate for the disability and allow the individual to succeed.
- Resource lists are available to assist with referrals for specialized diagnostic services.
- Immigrants who were illiterate in their mother tongue have great difficulty in learning both verbal and written English skills. Decisions about employment, learning and career planning will be impacted by the individual's ability to learn English.

Sample Questions to Consider:

- Tell me about your educational background.
- Tell me about the writing that you were required to do in your previous work.
- On a scale of 1-5, how would you rate your ability to write notes, messages and documentation in order to pass on important information to others?
- What feedback have you received on your writing skills?

Working with Others

- Working with others, whether with partners or as a member of a team is common in today's workplace. Interpersonal skills such as active listening, accepting, non-judgmental attitude and assertiveness lay an important base for effective communication with team members. Working with others may also include working with customers and providing service, where the skills identified previously are also important.

Background Information and Areas to Explore with the Individual:

- Individuals may have had the opportunity to work with partners or teams through previous work. Volunteer work or leisure activities may provide other examples of their ability to work with others.
- Knowing how to effectively resolve conflict is an important life skill. Individuals' examples of conflict situations and how they handled them can lead to discussions regarding how to turn a negative situation into a positive. It may be helpful to further explore the following issues that may be a flag for employers who believe they reflect interpersonal problems:
 - having a series of short-term jobs
 - having been fired
- Working effectively with others may also include working with customers. Providing good customer service is a skill that can be used in many types of work including business, health care, tourism, retail and hospitality sectors. Because service industries employ many people and offer many entry level as well as more advanced positions, a customer service orientation is an important skill for individuals to be able to demonstrate.
- Relating well with and providing service to co-workers is another form of customer service and is relevant for organizations whose staff, in some cases, are "internal customers".

Sample Questions to Consider:

- Tell me about a time that you have worked with a partner or on a team.
 - What skills did you need to relate effectively to your co-worker(s) to get the job done?
 - How did that experience go for you?
- What is your greatest strength in building relationships with others?

- Describe a time that an issue arose with a co-worker.
 - How did you deal with and resolve that issue?
- What interpersonal skills do you think might be required in the work that you are thinking of?
- How do you see your skills compared to those that are required?

Computer Use

- Computer use includes skills required to effectively manage basic technology such as voice messaging, automated banking systems and computers encountered in everyday life and work. Basic computer skills include using the internet for electronic communication as well as a basic research tool and use of simple software to open, read and create documents.

Background Information and Areas to Explore with the Individual:

- Achieving computer literacy may assist some very skilled, valuable workers to take an active role in the labour market in a variety of settings. Individuals who have been out of the workforce for any length of time may need to acquire basic computer and related technical skills.
 - Office and service work may demand skills using computers as well as other technology, such as audio-visual machines and telephone technology. The level of computer skill required can range from entering information to knowing a software package to analyzing and designing systems.
 - Many production plants offer opportunities for those skilled in the use of computer-assisted control systems and the use of robotics resulting in fewer semi-skilled production jobs.
- A certain level of literacy is usually required to use computers and read manuals.

Sample Questions to Consider:

- In what ways have you used technology in your previous work, volunteer experiences and/or your everyday life?
- Are you familiar with using a computer?
 - How have you used a computer?
 - What computer tasks can you perform?
- What technology skills might you require related to your employment and/or training goals?
- How does your present level of skill using technology compare to the level you think you will need?

Resume Writing Skills

- Resume writing skills involve the ability to create and edit a visually appealing resume that accurately conveys one's skills, strengths and accomplishments and has the potential to convince an employer to grant the writer an interview.

Background Information and Areas to Explore with the Individual:

- There is no perfect resume format and resume writing advice is often conflicting. Appropriate resume content varies with individuals, their skills, backgrounds and the work that they are seeking. The best resume brings attention to the individual's competencies and experience and acts as a marketing tool to help gain an interview with an employer for the type of work desired.
- Resumes can be organized in various ways with different formats being more appropriate for different backgrounds and purposes. Three common formats include the chronological, combination and functional resume. (*Advanced Techniques for Work Search, 2007*)
 - A chronological format lists work experience from most to least recent and may emphasize growth in increasing responsibility in positions held. It is particularly useful when work experience relates directly to the position applied for.
 - A combination format identifies skill categories and groups work experiences according to these categories. It highlights skills relevant to the position applied for and links them to related experience.
 - A functional format highlights competencies and accomplishments rather than employment background. It is most appropriate for those with limited employment experiences, gaps in their employment background or for those making career changes or wanting to use their skills in new ways.
- The internet is an increasingly popular and effective work search tool. For individuals choosing to use the internet in their work search, it may be helpful to discuss the following:
 - applying for work online including a resume
 - effective resume format for online posting including use of appropriate key words
 - safety issues related to including personal information in online postings.
- It may be helpful for some individuals to review the types of personal information that is not required in their resume because of Human Rights laws, for example, age,

marital status, religious affiliation, height, weight, inclusion of a picture.
(*Working in Alberta: A Guide for Internationally Trained and Educated Immigrants*, 2007)

Sample Questions to Consider:

- Do you presently have a resume?
 - When did last update it?
 - When did you last use it?

- What are the key skills, background and experience required in the type of work you are seeking?
 - How do your skills, background and experience relate?
 - How are these key areas represented in your resume?

- Tell me about some of your accomplishments in your previous work. (Identify skills and knowledge demonstrated in the accomplishments and give this information back to individual.)
 - How might you include these skills in your resume?

Interview Skills

- The interview skills factor involves having an understanding of current interviewing practices and the ability to prepare effectively for an interview.

Background Information and Areas to Explore with the Individual:

- Individuals are frequently nervous about job interviews and it may be helpful for them to remember that job interviews are a two-way street. Individuals have skills and are looking for work while employers have work and are looking for someone with the skills to do it. The interview serves as a meeting to determine if there might be a match. This leaves individuals with two main tasks in the interview: (*Job Seeker's Handbook, 2004*)
 - to demonstrate that they have the skills the employer is looking for
 - to find out if the work and the employer might be what they are looking for.
- Given the highly mobile workforce that now exists, interviews may be completed in a variety of ways, for example:
 - in person, one-on-one or with a panel of interviewers
 - by telephone with one or more interviewers
 - electronically when interviewees are required to complete various assessments and tests
- Key points on interview skills that may be helpful to individuals include four P's; prepare, practise, participate and be positive: (*The 4 P's of a Successful Interview, ALIS, Employment Tips*)
 - Prepare by knowing what skills and assets you have to offer, what the company needs and how you can help them with that.
 - Practise how you will respond to questions you anticipate being asked.
 - Participate actively in the interview, take time to think before responding and be direct in your responses.
 - Be positive, keeping in mind your strengths and the skills that you can offer the employer.
- An additional point that individuals can be reminded of includes follow-up after the interview.
- Individuals will also benefit from being prepared for behaviour descriptive interviews where they will be required to describe how they have handled specific situations previously. Anticipating the skills required in the desired position and being ready to describe how they have used these skills in various situations will

be helpful. (*Be Prepared for Behaviour Descriptive Interviews, ALIS, Employment Tips*)

- For some individuals, for example, immigrants, it will be useful to review what employers may and may not ask them in an interview as determined by Human Rights laws. Generally, questions about personal circumstances such as age, marital status, number of children, religious affiliation are not acceptable. (*Advanced Techniques for Work Search, 2007*)

Sample Questions to Consider:

- Tell me about some of the work that you have done previously, both paid and volunteer.
 - What were the three most important skills that you needed in each of those positions?
- What are the top five skills that you bring to an employer?
- What positions have you recently applied for?
 - What appeals to you about the work involved in each?
 - What skills do you anticipate are needed for each position?
 - Explain how your skills relate to those needed in these positions.
- Tell me about a time that you felt very good about something that you accomplished at work either paid or volunteer. (Identify skills and knowledge demonstrated in the accomplishments and give this information back to the individual.)
 - How might you use these skills and knowledge areas in the positions that you are applying for?
- Are there any areas you anticipate might be problematic in an interview?
 - How might you prepare to handle those most effectively?
- How do you usually prepare for interviews?
 - What has worked well for you in that approach?
 - What, if anything, might you want to change to enhance your interview preparation?

Personal Presentation Skills

- Personal presentation skills involve the ability to present one's self appropriately for training, interviews and employment situations.

Background Information and Areas to Explore with the Individual:

- Personal presentation skills include such things as dress, communication, both verbal and non-verbal, and personal attitudes as demonstrated in responses. It is helpful for individuals to consider how employers might view their general appearance, hygiene, clothing, verbal and non-verbal communication. It may be useful to discuss with the individual how their presentation during the assessment compares with what might be expected in a job interview and the importance of first impressions, especially with regard to interviews and other work search activities.
- Self-confidence and experience are important factors underlying the ability to present one's self appropriately in a variety of training, interview and employment situations. Candidates are more likely to demonstrate confidence and appropriate behaviour when they:
 - know what to expect in these situations
 - practise appropriate responses in advance.
- Individuals lacking in confidence will benefit from participating in activities that help them become aware of their transferable skills and strengths. Discussing these skills and strengths and identifying how they can be applied in new work settings is a confidence builder for most individuals.
- Personal and cultural experiences and ethnic background may affect an individual's personal presentation. It will be helpful to discuss this if the individual's resulting personal presentation is not appropriate in training, interview or employment settings.
- Individuals who have not experienced much success in training, interview or employment situations may send non-verbal messages that detract from their personal presentation in these settings. For example, such an individual might project a discouraged or even defeated attitude. It may be helpful to discuss the concept of personal presentation and the impact it might have on creating first impressions in these settings.

Sample Questions to Consider:

- Tell me about the type of work you are hoping to gain.
 - Describe someone who might be successful in such work, including their skills and strengths.
 - How do you and your strengths and skills relate to your description?
- If you asked three different friends or colleagues to describe you, what might they say about you?
- What is your strongest point in terms of your personal presentation?

Labour Market Knowledge

- Labour market knowledge involves knowing and understanding information about the world of work, including information about different types of work and learning opportunities. It also includes being aware of labour market trends and forecasts about future employment growth.

Background Information and Areas to Explore with the Individual:

- The ability to take advantage of labour market information and incorporate it into career and life decisions is an important skill that assists people in managing change and in seizing career building opportunities. Benefits include the ability to: (*Making Sense of Labour Market Information*, 2003)
 - identify relevant information
 - gain information about work sectors of interest
 - identify appropriate training and education sources
 - tap into the hidden job market and predict potential work opportunities
- Some examples of sources of labour market information include: (*Labour Market Information: Sources, ALIS, Employment Tips*)
 - people: those working in sectors of interest, family members, representatives at trade shows
 - print sources: newspapers, books, Chamber of Commerce reports, trade magazines
 - electronic, audio, video sources: internet, television, radio.
- Individuals gain from learning how to use labour market information as it helps them make more informed decisions and become more self-sufficient in managing their careers. Some tips for using labour market information follow: (*Making Sense of Labour Market Information*, 2003)
 - Check sources for credibility and ensure information is accurate and current.
 - Consult a variety of sources and compare information.
 - Check sources and ensure information applies to the geographic area targeted for work.
 - For trends identified, ask: How could this trend affect me? What opportunities grow out of this trend? Might there be some exceptions to this trend?
- Many individuals may be unaware of the value of labour market knowledge. It will be helpful to check their understanding of the term labour market information, the sources they commonly use and how they incorporate the information into their career building process.

Sample Questions to Consider:

- What do you understand by the term, labour market information?
- What are some of your best ways to pick up labour market information?
- Tell me about a time that you used labour information in a way that was helpful to you in making a career decision.
- How might you use labour market information to access the hidden job market?
- What labour market information are you aware of that might impact on the type of work you are considering?
 - Given your understanding of the labour market at this point, what information seems to support the viability of the type of work you are targeting?
 - Are there any downsides to this type of work that you can predict, given your understanding of the labour market, at this point?

Networking Skills

- Networking skills provide an organized way to make links from the people an individual knows to the people they know, resulting in a ‘net’ of personal contacts who can provide support and information. (*I’m Shy – How do I Network? ALIS Employment Tips*)

Background Information and Areas to Explore with the Individual:

- Estimates suggest that 70 to 80 per cent of jobs are filled through networking, either learning about the job through a contact or connecting with the employer directly. (*Advanced Techniques for Work Search, 2007*)
- Networking is an important part of the overall skill of building and maintaining relationships. Relationships are one of our most valuable assets and accessing our network can be a powerful career building tool. Networking can be helpful in the following ways:
 - accessing labour market information
 - marketing yourself and identifying unadvertised work opportunities
 - identifying sources of support and potential mentors.
- Networking can be done informally and formally, in person and on-line:
 - Informally: Talk to people around you; friends, relatives, acquaintances. Tell them the type of work you are looking for and give them a brief summary of your qualifications. Ask them for referrals to personal contacts who might also be helpful.
 - Formally: Attend organized events such as meetings and functions sponsored by social and career-related groups and talk to those attending as described in the previous point. (*I’m Shy – How do I Network? ALIS Employment Tips*)
 - On-line: Join and participate in online groups and forums related to the field of work you are targeting. (*Advanced Techniques for Work Search, 2007*)
- Some individuals may see networking as “taking advantage” of people. It will be helpful to discuss this perspective with them and to help them explore how they can offer help and support to others, as well. They may not always be able to reciprocate directly to someone who has assisted them, but when they assist others, a helping climate flourishes resulting in the give and take of healthy relationships.

Sample Questions to Consider:

- Tell me what the term networking means to you.
- Rate your networking skills on a scale of 1 to 5.
 - How might you move your skills up one notch?
- How might the skill of networking fitting into your career planning research?
 - Your work search?
- List ten people that you can think of that you could talk to about the type of work you are looking for.
 - What might you say to them about you and your qualifications?

Work References

- Work references are former and/or current employers who would be willing and able to speak to an individual's experience, skills, accomplishments and work ethic.

Background Information and Areas to Explore with the Individual:

- Solid work references can be an important part of a work search toolkit. References provide potential employers with reassurance that applicants are reliable and have performed effectively in previous employment. Work references should be employers, supervisors or colleagues who: (*Advanced Techniques for Work Search, 2007*)
 - know the applicant well enough to be able to comment on skills, work ethic and character
 - can recommend the applicant without any reservations
 - are good communicators especially using the telephone as most references are checked this way.
- Some individuals, for a variety of reasons, may not have work references readily available (*Unavailable or Problem References? What You Can Do, ALIS, Employment Tips*). Some examples include applicants who:
 - have references from outside of Canada
 - are entering the job market for the first time or after a long absence
 - have worked for a company that is no longer in business or whose references have moved or retired
 - have been fired or left a job on bad terms
 - don't want their current employer to know that they are looking for work.
- While not having effective work references presents a challenge, it can be managed. It may be helpful to brainstorm strategies to address the challenge with individuals. Some examples of strategies follow: (*Unavailable or Problem References? What You Can Do, ALIS, Employment Tips*)
 - Provide email contacts, if available, for references outside the country.
 - Locate former employers and contact them at home, as appropriate.
 - Provide volunteer work or other non-work contacts such as teachers, religious leaders, landlords who can attest to your character and skills.
 - Present a portfolio reflecting skills, strengths and accomplishments.
 - Explain to potential employers about keeping your work search confidential. If they must contact your current employer, ask to be notified and talk to your employer before the reference check is made.

- Provide alternate work references when you've left a job on bad terms. If the potential employer must contact a reference from the problem job, describe the situation honestly without blaming the previous employer.
- It will also be helpful to encourage individuals to:
 - Always get permission from people to provide their names as references and thank them after they have been contacted.
 - Coach their references including providing them with their resume, information about the position and the skills and strengths the employer is looking for.

Sample Questions to Consider:

- List three work references that you can provide to a potential employer.
 - What might each of these references say about you and your skills and strengths?
- List five of the most important skills and/or strengths that will be required for the type of work you are targeting.
 - What jobs have you held that have involved these skills and strengths?
 - Which of your work references will be best suited to recommend your abilities in these areas?
- Do you have any concerns about providing work references and what they might say?
 - What are your concerns?
 - How might you address these concerns?

Job Seeking and Finding Techniques

- Job seeking and finding techniques involve the understanding of and ability to use various work search methods.

Background Information and Areas to Explore with the Individual:

- Conducting an effective job search builds on the base individuals have established by engaging in a process of self-assessment and visioning. From this base of knowing themselves, where they have been and what they want in the future, they are better able to identify the type of work that might be satisfying and move them in the direction of their vision.
- It will be helpful to check with individuals what career planning process they have engaged in so far. If they do not have an adequate level of self-awareness including their skills and strengths, values, beliefs, areas of passion and a vision for their future, they should be encouraged to fill any of those gaps in self-knowledge. It is also useful to let individuals know that they are participating in an ongoing process that often involves re-assessing and re-thinking and that is what career planning is all about!
- Assuming individuals are ready to proceed with job searching, it may be helpful to discuss with them the job search methods that they are familiar with and what has worked for them in the past. If they have not experienced much success in their previous work searches, it will also be helpful to explore that and any related issues.
- In general, the best pay-off for energy invested in work search comes from networking. It is estimated that 70 to 80 percent of jobs are filled through networking by: (*Advanced Techniques for Work Search*, 2007)
 - learning about the job through a contact
 - connecting with the employer directly.
- Job seeking is a challenging process and one of the biggest challenges can be remaining positive and confident. Individuals may become discouraged and taking time to discuss how they are feeling and brainstorming options to help them manage the ups and downs of job seeking may be a relief to them.

Sample Questions to Consider:

- What have you done so far in your work search?

- Describe the type of work are you looking for.
 - What has led you to focus on that particular area of work?
 - What is it that appeals to you in this type of work?
- How are you feeling about your work search?
 - What kinds of things might you do to feel better, if you get discouraged or down with your job search?
- What has worked for you before to find a job?

Self-Awareness and Confidence

- Self awareness involves self-knowledge regarding personal assets that can include personal attributes such as strengths, skills, attitudes, values and interests as well as personal relationships and material assets.
- Confidence relates to possessing a feeling of self-assurance or belief in oneself.

Background Information and Areas to Explore with the Individual:

- Self-awareness and confidence are keys to effective work search and interviews.
- Successful applicants are those who can identify their attributes and explain how they relate to the work they are seeking.
 - People frequently take the skills that they use every day at work and home and in the community, for granted.
 - Individuals will benefit from engaging in a variety of activities that help them increase their self-awareness by identifying the skills and strengths and other personal attributes that they have built through previous experiences, both work and non-work related.
 - Simply becoming aware of skills and strengths that were previously unrecognized can be a boost to individual confidence.
- Learning and practising proven interview techniques including practice in identifying and talking about their skills may help individuals to build confidence.
 - Individuals who have been unemployed for any length of time may lack confidence and will particularly benefit from participating in self-awareness activities and interview skills practice.
 - Individuals who are not accustomed to speaking positively about their accomplishments or who have difficulty expressing themselves will also benefit from practice to develop those skills.
 - Individuals for whom English is their second language will benefit from interview skills practice, particularly where the concept of ‘selling’ themselves is unfamiliar.
 - The impression applicants create in the first few minutes of an interview is a strong factor in determining their success in that interview. Individuals may benefit from a discussion and practice regarding what they might do to make an immediate favourable impression.
- Rejections and disappointments related to work search can be difficult to deal with, especially for people lacking in confidence. It may help to remind individuals that rejections in work search are part of the process. A helpful re-frame regarding work search and rejection is that, “It takes a certain number of

‘no’s’ to get a ‘yes’, and with each ‘no’ a person gets that much closer to the eventual yes!”

- Some additional areas to explore with individuals include:
 - What is the individual’s general appearance? Is the individual’s presentation similar to what could be expected in a job interview?
 - What non-verbal messages is the individual sending (mannerisms, gestures, posture, demonstrating an attitude)?

Sample Questions to Consider:

- What are your top three skills and how have you used them in the past?
- Tell me about something that you have had to do that you have found challenging and how you followed through with it.
- What have you done in the past couple of years that was new to you and how did it go for you?

Stress Management

- Stress is the feeling experienced when perceived demands exceed the personal and social resources that the individual is able to mobilize. People tend to feel little, if any stress, when they are able to meet the incoming demands on their time and energy. However, as these demands exceed what they believe they can handle, they experience stress. In this context, stress is seen as a negative factor.

Background Information and Areas to Explore with the Individual:

- Stress management is an important skill in today's workplace. Stress may be related to work, family or other issues or a combination of several. In any case, many employers have identified that stress-related illness is a significant contributing factor to workplace absenteeism.
- Most people are aware of stress but may find it hard to articulate how they handle it. Asking them to describe stressful situations and how they handled them may generate examples of stress management skills.
- An awareness of resources that can be accessed to effectively deal with stress-related issues is an asset. Exploring such awareness with individuals and acknowledging it as a strength may be relevant in interviews.

Sample Questions to Consider:

- Tell me about a time that you experienced stress either at work or in other parts of your life.
 - What did you do to manage this stress?
 - If you were in the same situation again, what might you do differently to manage the stress that you experienced?
- What areas of the work/training that you are planning to enter might cause you some stress?
 - What might you do to minimize the stress that you anticipate could come up?

Time Management

- Time management refers to the ability to set priorities and complete daily activities both work and non-work in a timely fashion. Effective time management may include making decisions regarding scheduling and completing urgent and/or important activities. An additional aspect of time management may include the skill of delegation.

Background Information and Areas to Explore with the Individual:

- Time management, typically, is an important skill for those planning on attending training or re-entering the workforce in order to meet deadlines and to plan and accomplish tasks. It will be helpful to explore how individuals presently manage such commitments.
 - Time management information may provide an insight into individuals' broader personal management skills.
 - The ability to set priorities in personal, work, and/or school life is essential to balancing the various demands of individual and family life.
 - Questions that relate to time management and priority setting are often used in job interviews.
 - Employers may view punctuality in getting to an appointment or interview as an indication of one's ability to plan and manage time.
- Time management skills may reflect cultural differences. It will be helpful to review the predominant view of time management in the dominant culture with individuals from other cultures where punctuality is not stressed as much or is treated differently.

Sample Questions to Consider:

- Tell me about a time and how you managed, when it was important for you to manage your time effectively.
- What challenges do you have in organizing tasks, meeting deadlines?
- What might be the positive and negative impacts of your time management skills in relation to your work and/or training goals?
- What are some ideas on how to get things done when there is so much to do and not enough time?
 - Which of those ideas do you find most useful for your own time management?

Child Care

- Child care refers to the arrangements made to provide supervision and care to children. Child care options include private babysitting, daycare centres, family day homes and before and after school care.

Background Information and Areas to Explore with the Individual:

- For individuals with dependent children, the availability of appropriate and reliable child care is essential for successful participation in training, work seeking or for job maintenance. Back-up child care, covering situations when the child or caregiver is ill, is also extremely important.
 - It is sometimes more difficult to find care for infants and toddlers who are not toilet trained.
 - Parents of more than one child may have to resort to different types of child care for their children of different ages and needs.
- The transition from being a full-time parent and the primary caregiver to children to being a working parent can be a challenge for the parent, as well as the children. It is likely that both will undergo an adjustment period and it will be helpful to discuss this with individuals.
- Some additional considerations regarding childcare include:
 - school schedules, including early dismissals, professional development days, spring break, holidays at Christmas and summer vacation
 - early mornings, late nights, shift work and out of town travel. Such demands may eliminate the viability of some types of child care. Discussions with individuals regarding work hours and their compatibility with available child care will be important.
 - location of child care in relation to home and work, bus routes and/or a manageable walking distance
- A Child Care Subsidy Program may be available for individuals with children in licensed day care centre or approved family day homes.

Sample Questions to Consider:

- What arrangements have you made for child care?

- Tell me about the arrangements you have in place for child care for times when the school schedule changes, for example, early dismissals, teacher's convention, and so on.
- What child care is available to you when your child is ill?
- How will your work schedule fit with your caregiver's schedule especially with regard to drop-off and pick-up times for your children?
- Where is your caregiver located in relation to your home and work?

Accommodation/Telephone

- Accommodation refers to where one lives or in other words one's home, lodgings, room and board or accommodation. Ideally, a home provides comfort, stability, security and opportunities to be part of a community and interact with neighbours. An individual who is concerned about the safety, cost or adequacy of accommodation/housing is likely less able to concentrate on training or employment.
- Housing too far from public transit or from training institutions or worksites can sabotage a person's efforts to participate in work or training.
- A telephone and message system is essential to job search and acceptance into training programs.

Background Information and Areas to Explore with the Individual:

- The following comments may provide some leads to pursue with your job seeking individuals who are working toward obtaining interviews.
 - Efficient message taking is crucial and can be a challenge if not everyone in a household speaks or writes English. Explore whether the individual has an effective way to collect messages.
 - An individual would be wise to include on their resume, applications and any other documentation, the specific hours when they can be reached by telephone.
 - As a voice mail message provides yet another impression of a job seeker, it must be up to date and businesslike in tone. Have you listened to the individual's voice mail message?
 - Some communities have message services for job seekers. If an individual has no telephone or way to receive messages, this may be a solution if the individual checks for messages regularly.
- In what ways might inadequate housing or poor access to a telephone impact upon the individual's employment or training efforts?

Sample Questions to Consider:

- Tell me about your housing situation.
- Are your living arrangements suitable for you at this time?
- What changes would you like to make in your housing?

Criminal Record

- Various websites define a criminal record as a list of crimes for which an accused person has previously been convicted.
- Individuals with criminal records may face serious employment barriers. The unemployment rate for ex-offenders is about three times the national average. An individual on parole is four times more likely to return to prison if unemployed.
- Some types of employment require criminal record checks and bonding applications. Crimes involving property may make bonding costs prohibitive, thus preventing employment in fields such as security, finance, retail sales, janitorial and housecleaning.

Background Information and Areas to Explore with the Individual:

- In what ways does the individual think his/her criminal record (or charges pending) might affect training or job search efforts?
- Some employers are reluctant to hire individuals with criminal records. Questions about a criminal record on an application form or during an interview are legal. It is important that individuals are able to handle this type of questioning in an open and honest manner. It may be helpful to practice some typical questions and replies with the individual.
- If the individual has a history of criminal convictions, what has he/she done that demonstrates a lifestyle change? What evidence can the individual provide that he/she has successfully integrated back into the community after being incarcerated? These are adjustments and changes to ask the individual to describe to you.
- If it is appropriate, explore how the individual can apply for a pardon.

Sample Questions to Consider:

- What challenges do you face in managing a criminal record?
- Tell me what you have been doing to become a part of the community?
- How has your criminal record influenced your job search so far?

- What do you think an employer needs to hear from you in order to consider you for the job?
 - Are you in touch with people by telephone, cell phone, fax or e-mail?
 - How do employers contact you now?
 - How do you receive messages?

Positive Attitude Toward Learning, Work and Health

- Attitudes toward learning, work and health include individuals' beliefs, values and related feelings and thoughts with regard to these issues. Individuals' attitudes towards these areas of their lives are related to past experiences, family and cultural influences.

Background Information and Areas to Explore with the Individual:

- The individual's view of financial independence, values about employment and self-esteem impact on training, job seeking and employment potential.
 - The degree to which employment and independence are important to the individuals may relate to the level of initiative they take to make changes and undertake training and/or work search.
 - Individual attitudes regarding work may also relate to their successful job maintenance once employed.
- Lifelong learning is a reality in today's society. Workers constantly will be challenged to expand their skills. A positive attitude to learning on the job is something that many employers look for.
- Individuals who have previously experienced educational or health barriers may come to believe that they are unlikely to ever get work, a self-defeating and, very likely, inaccurate belief. Non-verbal communication can convey such a message even when the verbal message is different and that apparent contradiction may need to be explored.
- Some additional areas to explore with individuals include:
 - reactions to discussions of the future
 - ability to accept the consequences of their own actions

Sample Questions to Consider:

- If things go really well for you with regard to work and the rest of your life, what does the future look like for you?
- How is your health?
 - How has your health affected your work in the past?
 - How might it affect your work and life in the future?
- Tell me about something new that you have learned in the past month.

Financial Management

- Personal financial management involves the skill of managing financial resources in order to meet financial obligations such as payments and to cover ongoing expenses such as food, housing and personal items. Effectively managing debt as well as disposable money is another facet of financial management.

Background Information and Areas to Explore with the Individual:

- When looking at individual income needs, it is necessary to consider:
 - earning potential versus expectations
 - prevailing wage rate for the type of work they seek and personal income needs
 - importance of financial independence
- Many individuals feel that how much they earn will impact society's view of them and, as a result, may avoid low paying jobs in order to protect their self image.
- It is important to determine if individuals see themselves as financially able to support their families. A prolonged time period out of the workforce may impact the individuals' perception of their ability to maintain financial independence.
- Individuals who are experiencing financial pressure may benefit from further discussion regarding their financial situation.
 - A debt load can work as a motivator or a disincentive depending on the ability of the individual to manage it. It is important to analyze whether present monthly payments are within the individual's ability to pay.
 - Information regarding the availability of financial counselling services may also be helpful.
 - Creditors who forgo payments while an individual is receiving income support may demand payment once employment begins. This payment may take the form of garnisheed wages where the creditor is authorized to take a certain amount of money each month from the individual's bank account.

Sample Questions to Consider:

- What monthly income do you require to meet your present financial needs?
 - How does that amount relate to the amount of money you anticipate earning in the work that you are seeking?

Transportation

- Transportation refers to all the various methods people use to travel around, with attention being focused on getting to training or to workplaces. In urban centres public transportation is usually reliable and cost-effective. However, shift work and worksites not located on public transit routes can create difficulties for individuals. Small towns and rural areas can be a greater challenge for people without a vehicle or the use of a vehicle.

Background Information and Areas to Explore with the Individual:

- In what ways will the individual's accessibility to appropriate transportation impact work or training? Issues to explore with individuals usually revolve around firstly, public versus private transportation. Secondly, their driving skills and having a license to drive and finally, vehicle related concerns.
- Individuals who have their own vehicle need to have a plan to cope with all the operating, repairing and insurance costs. Do the individuals have plans and contingency plans in place?
- A suspended driver's license may affect an individual's ability to obtain employment in certain fields. Employers may ask to see a driver's abstract if a position requires driving.
- An individual who has lost his/her driver's license for speeding or impairment is required to take a defensive driving course. These courses help to reduce demerit points or regain the license. Impaired driving is a criminal offence and a conviction can impact insurance availability and rates. A conviction can prevent employment where driving is required.

Sample Questions to Consider:

- How will you get to college or work?
- What is your usual method of transportation?
- How reliable is your current way of getting from here to there?
- Have you looked into all the alternative modes of transportation that are available?
- What is your back-up plan in case your car breaks down or isn't available to you?

Support Systems

- Relationships or support systems refer to the family, friends and acquaintances that make up a web of people with whom each person interacts.
- Relationships play a pivotal role in an individual's success. They can provide leads and introductions to other people who can help with employment or information gathering. Relationships can also support and sustain, advise, tutor or instruct, inform and help in other ways. Important relationships may provide some financial assistance in emergencies, may help with child or elder care and may contribute a calming influence.
- Of course, family support is important when individuals are taking the major step of returning to school, looking for employment, starting a new job or moving between employment opportunities. Relocation is often a major strain on family relationships.
- Those that individuals look to for support can also sabotage training or employment endeavours. Individuals need to be aware of signs of sabotage and consider how they might deal with them.

Background Information and Areas to Explore with the Individual:

- What support systems does the individual indicate he/she currently has? Explore what kinds of support are available to the individual at this time. Support may be an area that the individual needs to spend a great deal of time and energy on – either to build it up, or to extricate themselves from negative or destructive relationships.
- What ideas does the individual have for creating additional support? Hopefully, the individual will be able to point out where her support system is weak. With your clarification, and with an appropriate referral, an individual may decide to work on a marriage or partnership, family relationships, or friendships.
- Work relationships often need additional attention as they can strengthen an individual's net. Whether looking for new opportunities, or exiting a current work position, relationships can help or hinder the individual. Explore how the individual is seeking to make the workplace better because they were there. Explore how the individual could approach former work relationships in order to get leads, information or references.
- One approach often recommended is to encourage the individual to create a virtual advisory board to help them reach their goals as if they were a business. As

in creating a board of directors, the individual will need a variety of people who can offer an assortment of support. Often drawing up such a board of directors can help people determine who they can count on for support, and where they can start to improve their circle of relationships.

Sample Questions to Consider:

- Tell me about the support that you have in your life right now.
- How might your family or friends help you in your job search?
- What sort of support are you good at providing to important people in your life?
 - How do you receive that kind of support from them?
- What steps could you take now to start to widen your circle of support?

Ability to Manage Change

- Change management refers to the ability to effectively respond to changes both personal and environmental that impact on work and life. It includes the skill of taking control of events related to change, as much as possible, and planning and organizing life and work activities to maximize opportunities and to minimize challenges arising through change.

Background Information and Areas to Explore with the Individual:

- Frequently, negative responses to change are provoked by fear of the unknown and the sense of loss of control that may result from the change.
 - Individuals who believe they have a degree of control over their lives can influence events around them by taking responsible action based on research. A certain level of preparedness is needed in order to take advantage of emerging opportunities, such as training programs or work placements.
 - Another important aspect of managing change effectively includes the ability to recognize and accept factors that are not within the individual's control.
- Most work situations demand the ability to manage change, some to a higher degree than others. Some work arrangements involve frequent changes in schedules and/or multi-tasking. Contract or temporary assignments require the ability to handle change and adapt to different situations.
- It will be helpful to explore and, as appropriate, challenge, individuals' beliefs regarding change. Individuals who embrace change can be encouraged to seize the opportunities it presents. Individuals who have experienced little success and believe that people cannot change, may view their current situation as permanent. Such individuals will benefit from help in reframing their view and in building a more positive vision of their future including their school and/or employment situation.
 - Individuals who have experienced little success with school or training will benefit from further exploration regarding their experiences. Specific referrals or strategies can be identified and discussed based on the nature of their difficulties.

Sample Questions to Consider:

- Tell me about some changes that you have experienced, either in your work or other parts of your life and tell me how you have dealt with them.

- What changes do you anticipate will arise as you enter your preferred work? Or... your preferred training program?
 - How will you manage these changes?

- If things go really well for you with regard to work and the rest of your life, what does the future look like for you?
 - What are some of the things that you might do to work towards the future that you envision?
 - What might get in the way of achieving your vision?
 - What might you do to get around those obstacles?

Study Skills

- Effective study skills include the ability to plan, set priorities, organize and complete both assigned and supplementary schoolwork. Time management skills contribute to effective study skills. In addition, knowing how to spend time effectively while studying, is an important skill. The following study skills represent some of many that students should be aware of: how to read textbooks and assigned readings, taking notes in class and making study notes, preparing for various types of exams, writing essays, completing group projects.

Background Information and Areas to Explore with the Individual:

- It will be important to let individuals planning to return to school know that most training providers have counsellors or teachers who can advise them on study skills and habits.
- Many individuals, adults in particular, have a variety of responsibilities with studying being only one. Knowing how to study and prepare for tests while continuing to balance their other responsibilities is a skill in itself. Some areas for exploration with individuals include:
 - having a quiet place to study
 - having back-up child care
 - previous experience with education/training
 - time management skills

Sample Questions to Consider:

- Tell me about the last time you were in school or training and how it went for you.
 - What did you do outside of class time related to studying, homework, etc?
 - What did you do to prepare for your tests/exams?
- Give me your five best study skill tips.
 - What do you think you need to focus on /do to be an effective student/learner?

Pre-requisites Required for Training

- Pre-requisites required for training are related to one's current educational level. Students who do not have the required educational level to enter training must complete the specified pre-requisites to qualify for entry.

Background Information and Areas to Explore with the Individual:

- Individuals may identify career goals that require additional training or education. If they do not have the required education or experience to qualify for direct entry, they may have to complete pre-requisite training or courses. It will be helpful for individuals to be aware of books and online resources that identify education, training and certification required for a variety of occupations.
- It will be helpful to discuss with individuals their understanding of the training and related pre-requisites required to enter their chosen field of work including consideration of some of the following points:
 - training required to engage in the chosen field of work
 - required level of education and experience to enter the training and related pre-requisites needed
 - availability, location and cost of pre-requisites
 - length of time required to complete pre-requisites.
- It is assumed that individuals have engaged in an effective career planning process and that the field of work they are targeting is meaningful to them. Some individuals may become discouraged with the extra time that they are required to invest in pre-requisites for training. Such individuals will benefit from revisiting their vision and remembering how their career goals relate to it and are meaningful to them.

Sample Questions to Consider:

- What is the field of work that you choose to enter?
 - What is it about this work that is appealing?
 - How does getting involved in this type of work relate to your vision?
- Describe the training required to enter this type of work.
 - What background in terms of education and experience do you need to qualify for entry into this training?
 - How does your background relate to those requirements?
 - What pre-requisites must you complete to enter the training?
 - Do you have these pre-requisites?

- What have you found out about how you might go about completing these pre-requisites?
Including:
 - availability and location
 - cost and length of time
- What action will you have to take to successfully complete these pre-requisites?

Relevant Occupational Training/ Certification for Employment Goals

- Relevant occupational training and/or certification is related to an individual's employment goals and related background. Many occupations require specific levels of training and/or certification in order to gain employment.

Background Information and Areas to Explore with the Individual:

- In order to gain work in their desired job or field, individuals may need to take specific training and/or gain certification. It will be helpful for individuals to be aware of books and online resources that identify the education, training and certification required for a variety of occupations. In general, they will benefit from a discussion of requirements including:
 - their understanding of the specific training or certification required for entry into the field
 - availability of training/certification including location, cost, duration
 - how they plan to complete the training/certification
- Some individuals may find a requirement to invest time and money in training and/or certification challenging and even discouraging. Discussing this with individuals including consideration of the following points may be helpful:
 - what appeals to them about their chosen field
 - how it relates to their vision
 - what concerns they have related to the training/certification
 - strategies they can brainstorm to address concerns
 - where they might find support to continue on this career path.

Sample Questions to Consider:

- What is the field of work that you choose to enter?
 - What is it about this work that is appealing?
 - How does getting involved in this type of work relate to your vision?
- Describe the training/certification that you must complete to enter this field of employment.
 - How does your background relate to those requirements?
 - What have you learned about the availability of the training/certification required including location, cost and duration?
- Do you have any concerns about completing any required training/certification?

- Tell me about them.
 - How might you deal with these concerns?
- Where might you find the support that you need to help you complete this training/certification?

Financial Capacity

- Financial capacity involves the financial resources that are available to the individual.

Background Information and Areas to Explore with the Individual:

- Whatever career path individuals choose, they frequently require a financial investment to move forward. This investment can include costs related to the following examples:
 - further education, training or certification including tuition, books, equipment
 - relocation for schooling or a job
 - appropriate clothing
 - special equipment including tools, safety clothing
 - document evaluation
 - transportation
 - food and shelter while pursuing employment or course of study
- Financial resources available to each individual will vary, often based on their own personal resourcefulness or their previous work history. Some individuals may therefore qualify for financial sponsorship from AEII or other sources, which will need to be explored.
- Some individuals may be embarrassed about their lack of funds to cover employment or training costs while others are not aware of such costs. In either case, individuals will benefit from a straight-forward discussion about their financial capacity to meet potential costs of seeking or entering directly into work in their chosen field or the related training required.

Sample Questions to Consider:

- What is the field of work that you are choosing to enter?
- Do you anticipate having to complete some education, training or certification before you enter the field?
 - Describe this training, where you can get it, how long it will take and so on.
 - What have you been able to find out about the cost of the training?
 - List all the costs that might come up for you related to completing the training?
 - Do you have enough funds to cover these costs?
 - What is the shortfall that you face to cover these costs?

- If entering directly into employment: What costs do you anticipate facing related to obtaining the work you choose as well as costs of employment once you have this work?
 - Do you have enough funds to cover these costs?
 - What is the shortfall that you face to cover these costs?

- Tell me about the financial resources that you have in your life right now that could support you while you follow through on your plan of action.

Work Experience Including Volunteer

- Work experience includes self-employment, full-time, part-time, casual and summer employment, as well as volunteer activities. Volunteer work involves exchanging one's labour not for money but for other reasons and purposes.

Background Information and Areas to Explore with the Individual:

- Work history is often viewed as an indicator of the applicant's stability and reliability.
 - Employers will review the length and continuity of an applicant's work history. A sporadic work history may be viewed differently depending on the employer, the industry and the labour market conditions. A pattern of quitting after short periods is, generally, not seen to be favourable.
 - A spotty work history may indicate attitude or attendance problems or possibly functional impairments that interfered with work performance. Further probing may help identify the actual reasons.
- Lack of work experience can be a problem for individuals who have completed training but do not have on-the-job experience. Employers often view immigrants who do not have experience in the Canadian labour market in the same way as they view applicants who have no work history.
 - Many people focus on technical skills developed at work and overlook skills they have acquired through school, hobbies, volunteer activities and homemaking. It is helpful to remind individuals that these transferable skills, as well as self-management skills that reflect attitude and motivation, are valuable and marketable.
- Work references reflect employers' opinions of an individual's skills, work habits and interpersonal relationships on the job.
 - The names of references may be requested on application forms or during interviews. Individuals can be prepared in advance, to provide names of references by asking each person for permission to use their name as a reference. Individuals can also assist their references by letting them know the type of employment being sought, enabling references to be specific regarding individuals' skills and abilities in relation to the job.
 - Individuals with no work references can be coached to identify other reliable sources who might provide references. These may include people who know them through school, community or volunteer experiences.

Sample Questions to Consider:

- Tell me about the work that you have done in the past.
 - How might the skills that you developed in your past work relate to the work you are seeking now?
- Tell me about any volunteer work that you have done, responsibilities you have for your family, community work.
 - How might the skills you have built through volunteer, family and/or community work relate to the work you are seeking now?
- It seems that you have changed jobs fairly frequently (or) have had some gaps in your work periods. Tell me more about that.
- Who might you ask for a reference regarding your skills?
- What do you think your references might say?

Physical Health

- Physical health is impacted by a variety of factors including genetic and environmental, as well as personal choices made regarding diet and nutrition, exercise and other life activities.

Background Information and Areas to Explore with the Individual:

- Physical well-being may impact the type of employment or training that individuals are able to undertake. For example, health conditions involving vision, hearing, mobility, dexterity, strength, endurance, chronic illness or allergies might impact the individuals' ability to perform specific types of work. It will be important to consider whether the work can be adapted or whether aids to work are available that will assist individuals in the performance of the related work.
 - Individuals may encounter bias on the part of employers against hiring individuals with health problems. In job interviews, employers can only ask if an individual's general health is good but cannot ask about physical disability or prior WCB claims.
 - Individuals who might have been considered unemployable in the past have greater opportunity for integration into the labour market. Support programs and specialized technology are available for severely disabled workers.
 - Individual and employer perceptions of health problems are important factors in employment success.
- Generally individuals should be encouraged to return to work as soon as possible after an illness or injury. They may benefit from career planning to identify their skills, knowledge and interests and to identify work and life goals that take their physical health and any special conditions into account.
 - The literature reflects that, for most people, the longer they are unemployed, the harder it is to find work and get re-established in the workforce. This can apply to individuals who are off work on Worker's Compensation for a long period of time as well as those receiving Income Support.
 - Helping individuals focus on their strengths and abilities rather than limitations related to physical and/or mental conditions will be important in these situations.

Sample Questions to Consider:

- How would you rate your health and energy level right now?

- What could you do this week that would improve your health or increase your energy levels?
- How do you think your physical condition might affect your ability to achieve success in the training or work that you are interested in?
 - How might the work environment be altered to accommodate your condition?
 - What are some related areas of work that you might consider that would offer greater opportunities for success?
 - What kind of assistance might you require to be successful in the training program you hope to pursue?

Family Health

- Family health focuses on the well-being of dependents and/or a spouse/partner. The physical, emotional and mental health of family members can affect the ability of a person to attend and perform at work or school. Care of dependants can impose restrictions on the availability for work with the added stress affecting concentration and the attention paid to work and training.

Background Information and Areas to Explore with the Individual:

- People moving into training programs, employment or self-employment benefit a great deal from family support. As individuals plan for training and employment it is important to help them identify and plan for anticipated family responses to their plans.
- Having a large family, several young children or being a single parent can be very draining, especially when new demands of a job or going to school are added to an already demanding situation. Exploring how individuals handle this and who they turn to when they need help will be useful. Providing information on related community resources will also be important.
- Some additional areas to explore with individuals include the following. Referrals can be made, as appropriate.
 - concerns such as spousal abuse, substance abuse by family members, school problems, truancy, and elderly parent care
 - change in family composition either by loss or birth
 - chronic health problems of family members including physical, mental and emotional

Sample Questions to Consider:

- Tell me about your family and your responsibilities for your family.
 - How might these responsibilities impact on the work or training that you are planning to enter?
- How has your family impacted on your work or training in the past?
- What does your family do to support you?

Mental Health

- Mental health reflects a balance among all aspects of life; social, physical, emotional and spiritual. It is an integral part of the individual's overall health and well-being and has an impact on how they manage their surroundings and their life choices. Mental health goes beyond the absence of mental illness and is related to self-concept, relationships with others and ability to manage life effectively on a day-to-day basis.

Background Information and Areas to Explore with the Individual:

- Mental health issues cover a wide spectrum including anxiety, depression, anti-social personality, loss of memory and awareness, and schizophrenia. Only about 10% of those with mental health symptoms are seriously mentally ill.
 - Identification of a mental health problem indicates a functional impairment and/or disability. Appropriate strategies for dealing with this disability should be developed as part of the service plan.
- Individuals referred for an assessment may have experienced serious mental health problems in the past but may have their situations under control. They may be on medication, in which case it is important for them to keep up their prescription regimen.
- It is important to consider the individual's level of ability to cope with present circumstances and everyday life issues. This ability may be an indicator of their ability to deal with changes associated with employment or training. A related discussion regarding support systems may be appropriate.
 - Depression, especially situational depression, is common among unemployed people. Acknowledging the depression and talking about how individuals deal with these feelings can be helpful. Assisting individuals to identify sources of help or support will also be helpful.
- Some additional areas to explore with individuals include:
 - What evidence do they provide indicating that mental health symptoms have ever interfered with their employment?
 - Do they have symptoms that may point to suspected mental illness (hallucinations, delusions, extreme mood swings, poor reality testing, thought disorder, preoccupations, violent or aggressive behaviour, extreme restlessness, social withdrawal)?

Sample Questions to Consider:

- Have you ever had any concerns regarding your mental health?
If yes:
 - Tell me about those concerns.
 - What effect did this have on your work and life?
 - What have you done to address the concerns you had regarding your mental health?

- What kinds of things do you do that help you get some work/life balance?

Addictions

- Addiction involves a psychological and/or physiological dependence on a drug. Severe symptoms may present when the addicted person stops taking the drug. Addictive behaviour functions to produce pleasure and/or relief from internal discomfort and is characterized by powerlessness to control the behaviour as well as continuation of the behaviour in the face of significant negative consequences.

Background Information and Areas to Explore with the Individual:

- Addictive behaviour is frequently related to underlying issues for the addicted person. These issues are further complicated when the person continues to drink alcohol, take drugs or gamble, often causing difficulties in the areas of work or school, relationships, health, the law and how they feel about themselves.
 - Mood-altering drugs, or psychoactive drugs, change or affect the way people think, feel or act. They usually have physical effects as well, but it is their effect on the mind that sets them apart from other drugs. Prescription drugs (e.g. Valium, Tylenol 3), over-the-counter drugs (e.g. Gravol) and street drugs (e.g. cannabis, cocaine) are all mood-altering drugs.
 - Gambling addiction can involve bingo, betting, playing cards for money, playing VLTs, slot machines or overspending on lottery tickets.
 - The abuse of substances may be related to other assessment factors that impact employability, for example, a criminal record.
 - Drug and alcohol abuse and gambling affects not only the addicted person, but also family and friends. Coping behaviours, resentment, fear and hurt caused by such addictions may contribute to further abuse. Family members, including children, learn to adapt to meet the needs of the substance abuser or gambling addict.
 - Individuals and their families can be referred to AADAC for information, assessment and treatment for addictions.
- Identification of an addiction indicates a functional impairment and/or disability. Appropriate strategies for dealing with this disability should be developed as part of the investment plan.
 - Current participation in AADAC treatment programs does not make an individual ineligible for referral to AEII programs and services. Control of the addiction and a maintenance strategy are critical factors in successful program completion.
 - It is important for those who are addicted to know that you accept them as worthwhile with the potential for health improvement. It should be clearly stated that treatment is readily available and is likely to be more successful if started early.

Sample Questions to Consider:

- How does your drinking...(or use of drugs)...(or gambling) affect your work and your life?
- What steps have you taken to deal with your addiction?
- How might your participation in a treatment plan impact on your participation in the work or training that you plan to enter?

Disability Factors

- A functional impairment or disability is a loss of some ability to function independently. A functional impairment may result in personal limitations of activities as well as barriers to gaining or maintaining employment.
- Functional impairments, either visible or invisible, are major factors to consider when helping an individual research and prepare learning and work paths.

Background Information and Areas to Explore with the Individual:

- It is important to identify whether the individual has any functional impairments and how they impact the individual. It is also important to balance this with an emphasis on the individual's skills and abilities and her potential to be part of the workforce.
- If a disability is identified, additional specialized diagnostic services may be required to confirm the nature of the disability and to assist in the development of strategies that will accommodate for the disability and allow the individual to succeed.
- Resource lists are available to assist with referrals for specialized diagnostic services.

Questions for the counsellor might include:

- What functional impairments or disabilities does the individual identify for him/herself?
- What further documentation or diagnostic services might be required?
- What support(s) might help the individual in school, training, or on the job?
- Are accommodation supports required?

Sample Questions to Consider:

- Tell me more about the kinds of things you find difficult to do.
- How have you managed to carry on with this disability that you have described in your past studies/activities/work?

- How have you been using any assistive technology on-the-job or at your courses?
- What kinds of work arrangements are the best for you?

Identified Needs

When entering/recording Service Needs Determination Assessment or Employability Assessment in Mobius, you are asked to identify the initial reason the individual made contact **and**, as a result of your assessment, what the individual's needs are. There are six generic options from which you can choose:

- 1. Information Services** – includes labour market, occupational, training and educational information; AEII programs and services; and resources available in the community. Information Services may be provided to an individual as part of needs identification and assessment processes. These services are also accessed through visiting Labour Market Information Centres (LMICs) calling the Career Information Hotline, accessing the Alberta Learning Information Service (ALIS) website and attending Delivery Events.
- 2. Career Services** – assists individuals to clarify occupational and career goals and make career decisions through services such as career advising, career counselling and career planning workshops.
- 3. Employment Services** – services to individuals to prepare for, find and maintain employment through work search workshops, job placement and exposure courses.
- 4. Skills Development** – full-time and part-time training opportunities to enable individuals to find work and substantially improve their employment situation or adapt to changing labour conditions and skill requirements to sustain employment. This includes Work Foundations and Training for Work.
- 5. Support – Non-Financial** - referral services that enable individuals to improve their circumstances in order to attain goals. Services may include mental health services, parenting supports, housing assistance, and addiction supports.
- 6. Support – Financial** – AEII financial assistance and benefits and other financial supports such as Employment Insurance, AISH and WCB.

Only one reason for contact and one identified need is required, but Mobius allows you to capture up to three: Primary, Secondary and Tertiary. The identified need(s) form the basis for the Service Plan.