Career Ladders at One:
The Guide Book
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INTRODUCTION

Ontario’s economy continues to grow at a moderate pace in a challenging global environment. Yet despite these gains, recent data paints a picture of a province that faces challenges with economic mobility — particularly for those who have a high school diploma or less. While employment rates and wages for individuals with postsecondary education have returned to pre-recession levels, the rates for the over 2.3 million individuals with a high school diploma or less have continued to decline. Many of these adults, along with their families, face uncertain employment opportunities, have fewer opportunities for career progression and make significantly lower wages.

Recent results from studies released in 2014, including the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development’s (OECD) *Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC)* and the 2011 Canadian Census sheds light on the challenges Ontarians with low-skill sets face. From these surveys, two significant findings have emerged. First, education and skills matter in Ontario and are strongly correlated to employment and earnings. Second, Ontarians with the least skills are getting the least training from both the public and private sector. This evidence highlights the need to find training solutions that support better chances of obtaining sustainable employment for unemployed or low-income workers with lower levels of educational attainment and skills.

The Commission for the Review of Social Assistance in Ontario’s *Brighter Prospects: Transforming Social Assistance in Ontario* (2013) and Don Drummond’s *Commission on the Reform of Ontario’s Public Services* (2012) echo these findings — both note that our employment and training system does not adequately serve our most vulnerable. Their findings indicate that our system is not well-connected to local labour market information, employers are weak at providing services that allow low-skilled individuals and low-income workers to develop marketable skills or begin to work toward postsecondary credentials.

Cathy — a single mother of two — is like many of these Ontarians struggling to attain a better living. Her work week is an exhaustive struggle that doesn’t end on Friday. She begins each day early, dropping off her children at their grandparents before going to her day job as a retail salesperson. The wages are okay — but not great — so a few nights a week and sometimes on weekends, she waitresses at a local restaurant to help make ends meet. She would like to apply for a management position within the company, but she requires either a postsecondary diploma or degree.

Just like Cathy, many Ontarians with low-income would like to go back to school to earn the additional credentials that can help them move their careers and families ahead; however, given the way the system is designed, further education and economic mobility is often a distant dream. For many adults, skills training programs often take too long to complete, do not accommodate their working lives and — most importantly — are not designed around their employment and career advancement needs. Recent
evidence suggests that those with less than a high school attainment level account for less than 15% of those accessing a service provided by Employment Ontario (EO) and nearly 50% of the learners in Ontario’s Literacy and Basic Skills Program already have some postsecondary credentials. This begs the question, how can we better serve the over two million Ontarians without high school diplomas who are commonly over-represented in unemployment and low wage occupations, but not accessing training?

‘Career Ladders’ or ‘Career Pathways’ (see Appendix A) may offer promise, and the model is showing encouraging results in a number of jurisdictions. For communities, workers and employers, career ladders systematically align career advancement and training opportunities to local economic and industry workforce needs. For adults, career ladders allow access to flexible training options that are usually accompanied by wrap-around supports, such as childcare and career counselling, enabling them to more smoothly move and progress with their career goals. Essential Skills Ontario (ESO) and our partners Literacy Link South Central, the Literacy Network of Durham Region and Literacy Northwest, have spent the past year assessing the viability of career ladders in some Ontario communities. Career Ladders at One reflects our experiences, learnings and hopes for addressing the seemingly intractable problems faced by the working poor.

“It is one thing to understand that the working poor are in existence, but it is another thing to be actively involved in an initiative that doesn’t just try to get someone a job, but actually says the local workforce system has moral responsibility to be providing people with a training pathway to a livable wage. The people who are around the table are excited about the possibilities that career ladders offer.”

- Partner, Career Ladders: Helping Communities Toward Integrated and Responsive Service Delivery
What are career ladders?

Career ladders are an education and training approach that is designed to enable low-skilled and low-income workers to enter and ascend up a career pathway in a given industry or occupation, gaining better jobs and higher wages. The central premise of this approach is that training and educational delivery should be organized as a series of incremental and stackable certificates that are aligned to progressive occupational pathways. Career ladders provide numerous entry and exit points in order to address the problems faced by adults working itinerant jobs or scheduling challenges people often face. Through a series of accelerated skill development courses that are aligned to better paying jobs, career ladders allow low-income workers to connect to future employment goals and provide them with the necessary motivation and support to complete training. Career ladder approaches have shown success in the US, Australia, the UK and other countries. Although varying from jurisdiction to jurisdiction, the common denominator remains the same: to help low-skilled low-income workers move up a career ladder after they enter employment.

Why are career ladders important for Ontario’s communities?

Career ladders frameworks are a deliberate and systematic approach that can support job-seekers, under-skilled workers, employers and communities alike. While career ladders initiatives are designed to serve the needs of low-income workers, they are also market-driven and act as an organizing framework that adds value to local economies. Essentially, each ladder acts as a local community industry skills pipeline – one that advances, nurtures and grows workforce talent.

“There is longstanding interest among policy makers and program operators in finding ways to increase the skill levels of low-income individuals, improve their enrollment in and completion of post-secondary education, and improve their economic prospects. The career pathways approach is gaining steady acceptance as a successful strategy to address these challenges and improve post-secondary education and training for low-income and low-skilled adults.”

- Office of Research, Evaluation and Planning U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services
In addition, career ladder approaches often act as catalysts that bring together various community members, employment, education and training service providers to achieve a common goal: trainers are asked to customize and contextualize the content of their materials and teaching strategies to serve the needs of workers in specific sectors or job clusters. Employers are encouraged to make employment more learner-friendly by supporting training during work hours and by facilitating career advancement. Service delivery agencies are enlisted to address other barriers outside the workplace that may impede participants from participating in training — from child care challenges to the development of skills for managing time and domestic budgets. Given the levels of diversity and the different needs of Ontario’s communities and the services within them, career ladder approaches can serve as adaptable frameworks that can address some of our community workforce challenges.

**Why Career Ladders at One?**

This guide builds on the experience of Essential Skills Ontario (ESO) and our partners in the first phase of our work at testing the implementation of career ladders in Ontario, as well as incorporates research on career ladder processes in other jurisdictions. ESO understands that career ladders cannot be developed in a single phase or year. Experience from other jurisdictions shows that developing career ladders or pathways required significant work that required multiple implementation stages over the course of four to six years. These stages can be roughly divided into four phases:

1. Mobilization of community and identification of Career Ladder(s)
2. Mapping of training assets, system redesign and identification of missing pieces
3. Community benchmarking and implementation of an initial Career Ladder
4. Continuous improvement through the use of data and evaluation

As a whole, the exercises, activities and tactics suggested in this document can be used as a way to determine if there are opportunities in aligning employment, education and training in a community through a career ladder which will better support low-skilled, low-income workers living there. These exercises are also designed to build necessary structures and relationships in order to move forward with the career ladder planning process. This guide book is not designed to address all of the steps and actions necessary in order to implement and maintain a local career ladder - just the initial Phase I process - thus it does not cover aspects of designing, building, implementing and evaluating career ladders.
Who is the guide book for?

This guide book is designed for a wide range of employment and education and training system stakeholders in Ontario, including: program managers, trainers, workforce planning agencies, community college faculty, local economic development officers and agencies, employment service providers, people who work with individuals who are on income support and/or other community-based agencies that work with individuals who have multiple barriers to employment and economic mobility.

How to use Career Ladders at One

This guide book is organized into steps - each covering a feature of the first year of the career ladders planning processes. Each section is designed to specifically highlight aspects of the first year of our work, provide insights into common challenges and offer practices to address those challenges.

In different communities, some activities or features will require more resources than others and/or will need to be adapted in order meet the community’s local context. A critical lesson quickly learned is the wide variation in the three communities in terms of environments, training assets and economies. We understood that any career ladder has to be customized to a community’s unique features and context and require a ‘place-based approach’. You may decide, after reviewing this guide book, that a career ladder planning process may not be a viable process for your community or that this form of exercise is not a current priority - nonetheless, certain aspects from this guide book can still be used as a way to assist communities with employment, education and training planning in new and innovative ways. It is often a useful exercise just to examine and reflect on how existing community services are organized and how they can be adjusted in order the better serve the emerging needs of local areas.

1 Place-based approaches are most frequently used as a response to complex community issues that are persistent or structural in nature. They are most commonly described as a collaborative process where stakeholders are engaging and work together to address issues that are experienced within a geographic space, be it a neighbourhood, community or region. While the focus, scope and intensity of place-based approaches vary, they most commonly result in new, locally-made strategies and interventions which use, modify and/or extend existing resources in order to better serve the particular needs of a given community.
Background on the project

On April 1, 2013 Essential Skills Ontario and its partners, Literacy Link South Central, the Literacy Network of Durham Region and Literacy Northwest, began the first phase of an initiative - Career Ladders: Helping Communities Toward Integrated and Responsive Service Delivery (see Appendix B). Funded by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU), the first phase of the project was designed to examine if the emerging concept of career ladders was feasible in three different communities in Ontario. The initiative was specifically designed to see if a career ladder approach would benefit three regions in Ontario: Durham region, Thunder Bay and the Brant, Haldimand and Norfolk regions. The findings from this initiative will be used to inform other communities about career ladders and the planning processes involved. Using a theory of change methodology\(^2\), this initiative was designed to create larger systems changes in how we organize, align and deliver employment, training and education services for low-skilled, low-income workers.

Approach taken

Using a variety of community planning techniques, Phase I of the career ladders project was specifically designed to engage communities in a participatory manner in order to assess the receptiveness to a career laddering initiative in the area and to develop a better understanding of what the local challenges and opportunities are. The following sections indicate the practices and activities that ESO and its partners took in each of the three pilot communities.

\(^2\) As defined on the theoryofchange.org website, a Theory of Change defines all building blocks required to bring about a given long-term goal. This set of connected building blocks — interchangeably referred to as outcomes, results, accomplishments, or preconditions is depicted on a map known as a pathway of change/change framework, which is a graphic representation of the change process.
STEP 1: LEAD ORGANIZATIONS

All career ladder planning processes require a lead organization within a community to drive and take ownership of the initiative. In Ontario, it is often community workforce intermediary organizations that are well positioned to take a leadership role and work with multiple stakeholders to initiate this planning process. Community workforce intermediaries, such as a Regional Learning Networks or local Workforce Planning Boards often have many connections to a wide variety of stakeholders and are well suited towards determining if a career ladder offers promise to the greater community. During the first phase of the Career Ladders: Helping Communities Toward Integrated and Responsive Service Delivery initiative, three Regional Learning Networks took the lead and worked closely with local Workforce Planning Boards to initiate a career ladder planning process.

These organizations were critical in driving the planning process and leading the following steps:

- Defining the goals and objective of the planning progress
- Developing communications materials
- Conducting research on local labour market and industry trends
- Engaging the community through formal and informal conversations
- Delivering presentations and hosting community forums
- Finding local champions
- Creating Career Ladder Planning Committees (see Appendix C)
- Engaging employers
- Identifying industries with opportunities
- Mapping community education and training assets
- Contributing towards assessing the viability of a local career ladder

“...the career ladders represent a real collaborative partnership between the learning network and the local workforce board. They were responsible for the data, but the key decisions in developing the Career Ladders were part of a joint partnership.”

- Member, Career Ladder Planning Committee

3 There are 16 Regional Literacy Networks in Canada that are key resources to literacy services, advice, and information. A key role of the networks is documenting and guiding the development of literacy services within their regions. The networks also help literacy agencies determine what services should be offered and help them determine the effectiveness of their programming.
STEP 2: SETTING CLEAR GOALS + OBJECTIVES

Before beginning a career ladder planning process it is important to have a good sense of what the goals and objectives are. These should be clear from the outset and at the forefront of the minds of all stakeholders throughout the process. While the first phase of the planning process should generally be seen as an emergent learning process, it is good practice to know what you are going do, how you are going to do it, who you are going to need to help you accomplish it and finally, how you will know if this approach would work in your community. While a career ladder planning process can be initiated in different ways or by different actors or institutions, there are some general goals and objectives you way want to focus on achieving during the first phase of the career ladder planning process.

“...this is a marathon, it is not a sprint. So it is something that is going to take a lot of time - and take years...”
- Member, Career Ladder Planning Committee

Goals that ESO and its partners set for our work included:

- Assessing each community’s interest in developing a local career ladder
- Identifying what industries or occupations have potential for developing a local career ladder
- Mobilizing awareness about what career ladders are and the workforce challenge they can address
- Identifying people and institutions that have a common interest in developing a local career ladder
- Identifying barriers, risks and challenges in terms of developing a local career ladder
- Reaching a point where the lead organizations and community partners feel assured that this approach merits further investigation
STEP 3: STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS

Once a clear sense of what the goals and objectives are for the first phase of the career ladder planning process, it is important to craft, hone and refine messaging about what you plan on doing in your community and the purpose of a career ladder planning process. Since the first phase of a career ladder planning process is largely spent building relationships and engaging necessary community members, it is important to have consistent and clear messages. Some potential topics career ladders messaging might address include:

• What are Career Ladders?
• What are they used for?
• Where have they been effective?
• Who will they help?
• How and why career laddering may provide some opportunities for your community
• What do you plan on doing in your community?

You may need to create some materials to highlight your message and/or shed more light about career ladders and your community planning process, which might include:

• One-pagers highlighting the purposes of career ladders (see Appendix D)
• Research briefs with examples of how career ladders have worked in other communities
• Links to other career ladders and career pathways materials
• PowerPoint presentations
• Project announcements sent through communications channels (see Appendix E)
• Website updates and postings on various partner websites

“Basically because we talk about entry level, low skill, low paying jobs and all of that stuff, we wanted to mitigate the sense that we are not promoting low skill jobs. Career ladders is an opportunity to grow from entry level work to better paying work.”

- Partner, Career Ladders: Helping Communities Toward Integrated and Responsive Service Delivery
STEP 4: LABOUR MARKET + INDUSTRY ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN

In order to develop a better understanding of whether a career ladder might be of interest to a community and what kinds of industry and population groups could be potentially targeted, it is useful to gather and analyze a variety of data sets and reports into a labour market and industry environmental scan (see Appendix F) which looks at the current and future labour market in your community. Areas for investigation can include:

- Demographic trends derived from census data
- Recent labour force trends and conditions (e.g. industrial and occupational composition, employment rates, unemployment rates, etc.)
- Income distribution
- Educational attainment trends
- Social assistance demographics
- Recent industry developments

Some other reports and resources that you might want to examine include:

- Workforce Planning Board reports
- Municipal and regional economic development reports
- Local Chamber of Commerce information
- Education and training assets in your community

“In the preliminary stages of the project, the Career Ladder Planning Committee provided meaningful data to ongoing project research including local demographic, labour market, community development and statistical evidence in order to prepare a comprehensive environmental scan of the region.”

- Community Report

During the course of this first phase, we found the process of drafting a labour market and industry environmental scan helped ESO and the committee fully appreciate local factors, contexts and conditions that were impacting each community. Given the nature of career ladders, the labour market reports need to pay particular attention to issues and areas that impact low-income, low-skilled workers and other vulnerable groups in the community.
STEP 5: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Research shows that most successful career ladder planning processes start by building support and engaging community members right from the onset. To build momentum, the career ladder planning process should engage key individuals on how career ladders can provide benefits to the community as a whole. Partners also found it useful to tailor messages about career ladders to the audience they were speaking to (i.e: government, colleges, community services), focusing on different aspects of career ladders that may appeal to or involve different people or organizations. During this process it is important to engage a wide range of community members, stakeholders and institutions.

Ways to engage a community can include:

• Having small formal and informal conversations with key stakeholders in the employment, education and training system (see Appendix G)
• Meeting and gathering support from leaders and influential groups in the community
• Engaging individuals and institutions that may have mutual interest in a career ladder approach and/or have a passion for issues related to income mobility and the challenges that face low skilled and low-income workers
• Organizing presentations and community forums to engage and educate individuals about career ladders
• Disseminating materials that explain what career ladders are and what you are planning on doing

“If people don’t see themselves as part of the process, it doesn’t matter what you have developed or what you are proposing.”

- Member, Career Ladder Planning Committee
STEP 6: RECRUITING LOCAL CHAMPIONS

Many effective community initiatives require the efforts of local champions to build momentum, open doors and add credibility to the work. Local champions can inspire community members, tap strong community networks and influence key decision makers. It is important to actively recruit local champions during the career ladder planning process so that they can be a part of the initiative from the beginning stages. Throughout the entire duration of the initiative, local champions can be used to promote the framework, make connections with elected representatives or other influential decision makers, as well as bring other stakeholders to the table.

To recruit and engage local champions:

• Talk to influential people in your network about the initiative
• Identify people within the community who are influential and are dedicated to improving the lives of vulnerable people and the working poor
• Engage your network to find out who could be valuable to include in this initiative
• Speak to influential groups to identify potential candidates
• Attend other community events and network with potential champions

“It is high profile leadership that takes this out to the community and runs with it. Who is that spokesperson and who can bring all the employers on board and generate more excitement and energy?”

- Member, Career Ladder Planning Committee
STEP 7: ESTABLISHING A CAREER LADDER PLANNING COMMITTEE

For the long term development of a local career ladder, it is important to establish a career ladders planning committee that includes a diversity of committed community members interested in developing solutions for low-skilled and low-income workers. A Career Ladder Planning Committee adds credibility to the initiative, brings a variety of stakeholders together with different skills sets, points of view and resources, and ensures that there is representation from large segments of the community. The career ladders planning committee is responsible for the overall direction of the development, assessment and implementation of a career ladders plan.

This committee ideally should consist of members from the employment, education and training field and well as other key community stakeholders who have roles in social services and/or community and economic development. The committee should be large enough to have a wide range of representatives, but not too large where it becomes difficult to manage. During the first phase of our initiative, each of the three communities had committee sizes that ranged between 6-10 members, which proved to be ideal.

To be part of the committee, members:

• Agreed to a terms of reference
• Attended regular meetings
• Read planning reports including labour market and industry environmental scans
• Contributed to the promotion of the initiative
• Assisted in the selection of an industry
• Assisted in determining if a career ladder was viable in the community
• Utilized their existing network for the promotion and development of the initiative
STEP 8: ORGANIZING PRESENTATIONS + COMMUNITY FORUMS

Presentations and community forums are often an effective way to raise awareness of the initiative, build community support and engage in meaningful conversations about career ladders. Forums and presentations also create potential opportunities to recruit career ladder committee members, develop relationships and partnerships, and get others involved in the career ladder planning process. Two of the three partners involved in Phase I of the initiative held forums to gain input around the initiative.

Topics and activities during the presentations or forums can include:

• Speaking about the issues of low-skilled, low-income workers in the community
• Introducing the concept of career ladders
• Showing examples of how career ladders have worked in other areas
• Highlighting what you plan on doing in your community
• Providing opportunities for community members to provide feedback and thoughts about career ladders in your community

Audiences to target to attend the presentations or forums can include:

• Adult education, employment and training providers
• Community service organizations
• Workforce and economic development representatives
• Municipal representatives
• Local businesses and industry associations

“...working with the economic development groups, we started to go out and discuss the concept and collect a sense of their concerns and their challenges. We made some early observations about the scale and size of the operations we would be working with.”

- Partner, Career Ladders: Helping Communities Toward Integrated and Responsive Service Delivery
STEP 9: ENGAGING EMPLOYERS

The long term success of any career ladders initiative will ultimately depend on the buy-in from local employers. Employers are integral to the initiative, help ensure that the initiative is responsive to the needs of local industry and are critical to ensuring that participants are hired and can ascend up a career ladder. Employers can also leverage connections to other employers and institutions.

Nonetheless, during Phase I, each partner learned that it is critical that employers are not engaged until you have something concrete to ask them and for them to react to. For employers, time is of the essence. Employers should only be engaged when you need specific industry information and when they can contribute to identifying possible solutions that can support them in developing their workforce. They do not need to be engaged when the process is unclear or asked to participate in general meetings and/or committee organizational work.

Informal and formal discussions with employers (see Appendix H) should be focused on specific outcomes and can be used to identify industry-specific issues such as:

- Current and future local workforce skill needs
- Hiring and retention issues being faced by an industry
- How occupational progression occurs in their business
- Possible changes in their industry
- How they currently work with existing employment, education and training services, and any challenges thereof

“We met early on with an agricultural consultant in our area who gave us some advice: you can’t just bring employers to the table; you have to go where they are. This has resulted in us doing all kinds of things that we typically don’t perceive as being necessary. When we did do it employers were much more amenable.”

- Career Ladders: Helping Communities Toward Integrated and Responsive Service Delivery

When reaching out to employers it is important to leverage existing networks. Local Workforce Planning Boards, Chambers of Commerce, employment and training providers, as well as employment services may have existing contacts with employers who will be more open to participating in a career ladder initiative. Furthermore, when engaging employers it is often useful to describe what kinds of workforce opportunities can be created by developing a local career ladder and possible benefits to local employers.
STEP 10: SELECTING AN INDUSTRY

After completing the labour market and industry scan, as well as the formal and informal conversations with local employers, it is time to select a single industry which has potential for a local career ladder initiative. While there is no single indicator that will identify which industry to select, examining a variety of different characteristics, elements and factors to get an overall picture of the industry’s suitability will help. Below are some important factors to consider when determining which industry may have potential for a career ladder approach.

- What is the size of the industry’s local workforce?
- What is the current and future economic climate of that industry in your community, is it growing, are there new job openings, etc?
- Is it accessible to those who have less than a high school diploma and/or vulnerable individuals?
- Is there potential for occupational mobility and progression?
- Is there any industry development?
- Is there training programs already aligned with that industry in your community?
- Is there receptiveness by employers in the industry to a potential career ladder?

When selecting an industry, it is essential that employers are somewhat receptive towards this approach. In addition, the career ladder committee should reach some form of consensus that this industry is the most promising one to move forward with. During the first phase of our initiative, different communities weighed different factors and selected their industry at different points in time during the process. It is important to take your time when selecting an industry and review all the relevant information that you gathered before a final selection is made.
STEP 11: IDENTIFYING + MAPPING OCCUPATIONAL PROGRESSION

Once an industry is selected, the next step is to develop a more thorough understanding of the typical occupations and organizational structures in that specific industry. It is necessary to learn about how people typically enter into the industry, what kinds of training are required and if there are opportunities for occupational progression.

During this part of the process, it is important to map out the types of occupations and the types of occupational movements people commonly make in the industry, such as: if workers make horizontal movements to different jobs that require similar skill sets and/or vertical job movements that require higher levels of skills and occupational requirements. While specific employers may use different job titles, there are often common occupations that run across an entire industry.

The national occupational codes, O*Net online, industry association reports, as well as online job postings are some good sources where researchers can find information on specific occupations. This type of information should ideally also be gathered before you begin engaging employers in the selected industry so they can confirm or give feedback regarding your findings.
STEP 12: COMMUNITY TRAINING ASSETS + COMMUNITY TRAINING MAPS

Once the occupational mapping is completed (this can also happen concurrently), it is essential to identify all education, training and employment services in the community that are related to or work with the selected industry. As you move forward with the career ladder planning process you should develop a detailed list of these services and take note of program features such as entrance requirements, occupational focus, program duration, employers they work with, etc. These programs and services should be engaged at some point during the career ladder planning process.

Once all the related programs and services have been identified you can now analyze the connections between industry occupations and existing services in your community. It is useful to draft a career ladder map which examines the current relationships between education and training services, industry occupations and typical career progression opportunities in the selected industry.

This form of mapping exercise can be used to pinpoint gaps in training for the selected occupations and the existing relationships between credentials and occupational requirements. These maps can also demonstrate if there is a need for new training programs or if current training programs can be altered in a way that is better aligned to local industry occupational progression or if the community is already well equipped to meet the demands of the selected industry.
STEP 13: ASSESSING THE VIABILITY OF LOCAL CAREER LADDERS

Once you and your committee feel assured that a sufficient amount of evidence for this phase of the career ladder planning process has been gathered, it is a good time to digest and review all the feedback, research and information that you have collected, and examine whether it is a worthwhile endeavour to move forward with the next phase of a career ladder planning process. It is useful to organize all the information collected in a brief report (see Appendix I) that allows the planning committee to go over all the information and reach a decision about continuing the process. Below are some questions that you and your committee might want to consider when determining if a career ladder is something your community needs to develop:

- Is a career ladder in the selected industry something that could provide benefits to the community? (In particular, will it benefit low-skilled, low-income workers and can it provide benefits to the selected industry?)
- Is there enough interest in the community to organize around a career ladder?
- Are employers in the selected industry interested enough to potentially participate in the career ladder?
- Are government officials and/or influential decision makers interested in the career ladder approach?
- Are there any major challenges with moving forward with a career ladder and what are they?
- Is there enough dedication and resources in the community to move forward with a career ladder planning process?
- Where might additional resources be secured from?
Career ladder planning and development is often a multi-year effort. There are no short cuts to creating system changes and there will be plenty of unforeseen challenges and obstacles that your community will have to overcome if this is a direction you plan on taking. As you move forward with the career ladder planning process, it will require greater commitments from training providers, will be more technical in nature and will need to be more focused on the necessary program specifications and service redesign required. Below are some suggested next steps as you move forward with the career ladder planning process:

• Formalize the commitment of service providers and local industry
• Conduct a full inventory of existing training assets in each participating community
• Determine which education and training programs can be modified or tailored to support a seamless career ladders framework
• Establish what modifications are required and provide technical assistance to those providers
• Identify what additional supports and programming are required
• Marshal resources to facilitate the development of these career ladder steps
• Gather industry input and validation of a draft career ladder and implementation plan
• Create a career ladder implementation plan which will include timelines and responsibilities

Essential Skills Ontario and our partners have completed the first phase of the career ladder initiative. This year we will move forward with the planning process and further explore the viability of career ladders in selected Ontario communities. Based on our work thus far, and the reception we have received, we believe that career ladders have tremendous potential for communities across Ontario. As we move forward with this initiative, we will share our experiences, learnings and hopes for addressing the seemingly intractable problems faced by the working poor.

“We are really building a model that we know must be transferable to other sectors and different partners as well. Our work is breaking new ground.”

- Member, Career Ladder Planning Committee
APPENDICES
CAREER LADDERS
A Brief on Providing Opportunities for Ontario's Working Adults
For most people, the average work week can be routinely aggravating; but for Cathy – a single mother of two – the work week is an exhaustive struggle that doesn’t end on Friday. She begins each day early, dropping off her children at their grandparents before going to her day job as a retail salesperson. The wages are okay - but not great - so a few nights a week and sometimes on weekends, she waitresses at a local restaurant to help make ends meet. Her spare time is spent with her children, doing housework and running errands. She would like to apply for the manager’s job at her store, but the position requires a specific post-secondary degree and Cathy barely completed high school. She would like to go back to school to earn additional credentials that would qualify her for the position to help her family move ahead – but she cannot afford to put her life on hold for two years. For Cathy, education and economic mobility is a distant dream.

Like most people working in entry-level jobs with families to support, Cathy would prefer to progress in her workplace, make a higher wage and reduce the hours she works in order to spend more time at home, yet she is finding it difficult. For most single mothers, the possibility of taking time away from work to enter a longer-term education and training program is just not realistic. For many adults, skills training programs take too long to complete, do not accommodate their working lives and – most importantly – are not designed around their employment and career advancement needs. Ontario’s education and training system is generating successful outcomes for educated Ontarians, but unfortunately the evidence indicates that low-wage earners and low-skilled individuals have few opportunities for gaining additional skills and economic mobility unless they move on to income support. This is a choice no worker should be asked to make.

And while there is no set formula for creating economic mobility, an approach known as ‘Career Ladders’ or ‘Career Pathways’ is showing promise across a number of jurisdictions. For communities, workers and employers, career ladders have systematically aligned career advancement and training opportunities to local economic and industry workforce needs. For adults, career ladders allow access to flexible training options that are usually accompanied by wrap-around supports, such as childcare and career counselling, enabling them to more smoothly move and progress with their career goals.

THE WHAT & WHY OF CAREER LADDERS

Career ladders is an effort to enable low-skilled, low-income workers to enter and ascend up a career pathway in a given industry or occupation in their own time. The central premise of the approach is that training and educational delivery should be organized as a series of incremental and stackable certificates that are aligned to progressive occupational pathways. They provide numerous entry and exit points in order to address the scheduling challenges working adults often face. Through a series of accelerated skill development courses that are aligned to better paying jobs, career ladders allow low-income workers to connect to future employment goals and provide them with the necessary motivation and support to complete training.
While career ladders initiatives are designed to serve the needs of low-income workers, they are also market-driven and act as a dual-customer service that adds value to local industry. Essentially, each ladder acts as a local industry skills development channel – one that advances and grows new and current workforce talent. In most effective career ladders initiatives, employers keep education and training providers focused and on task as they make sure that what is taught is relevant and in demand. Herein exists the opportunity: if training sequencing is done right, local educational and training providers can work with local industry to provide solutions for employers and low-wage workers. To do this, training services need to be delivered where they are needed, when they are needed and with the specific skills that are in demand.

**CAREER LADDERS DEVELOPMENT**

Developing a career ladder requires community stakeholders and services to come together and mobilize resources in a coherent and systematic manner that is more responsive to local community employment and labour market needs. Ordinarily developed and executed by a consortium of partners involved in education, training and support services, each stakeholder brings different assets, capacities and perspectives to the initiative, which allow for actions and solutions that ultimately strengthen the career ladder in a more dynamic and sustainable way:

- Training opportunities are ‘chunked’ into shorter unit sizes and are offered in a format that is both accessible and manageable for working adults.
- Credentials are broken into small and obtainable units that reflect competencies and skills associated with specific occupations that ascend up a Career Ladder - each stackable certificate has meaning and currency to both participants and employers.
Developing a career ladder requires community stakeholders and services to come together where they are needed, when they are needed and with the specific skills that are in demand. Solutions for employers and low-wage workers. To do this, training services need to be delivered done right, local educational and training providers can work with local industry to provide and grows new and current workforce talent. In most effective career ladders initiatives, Essentially, each ladder acts as a local industry skills development channel also market-driven and act as a dual-customer service that adds value to local industry.

While career ladders initiatives are designed to serve the needs of low-income workers, they are based on labour market needs and what is taught is relevant and in demand. Herein exists the opportunity: if training sequencing is readiness.

**PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS & GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF A CAREER LADDER**

As career ladders initiatives have taken shape in different jurisdictions, some common program characteristics have emerged as predictors of system success which could act as a guide for new community initiatives going forward.

The most successful career ladders get the first step right: they accelerate educational and career advancement of participants by combining occupational skills training with adult literacy and basic skills. Also, well-designed career ladders understand that education and training alone are not enough to meet the needs of low-income workers and place a high priority around a) wrap-around services; b) pre and post employment supports; and c) navigational assistance – all which provide the necessary additional supports to complete training and succeed on the job. What is more, in order for a career ladder program to actually move people into better jobs and higher wages, local employers have to be engaged and laddered occupations have to be in-demand. To achieve this, programs should adopt industry-driven strategies where employers are engaged throughout the development and execution of a career ladder.

More than just a reconfiguration or a realignment of programs and services, career ladders approaches are used to foster systematic change. They allow for education, training, employment and social service providers to come together and create community impacts. Successful career ladders initiatives often use common principles to guide and steer their work forward:

- Partners adopt and articulate a shared vision: this often involves a governance structure that clearly delineates each partner’s roles and responsibilities.
- There is clear leadership and a commitment to getting the career ladder implemented and institutionalized (this is crucial for building, sustaining, and scaling of career ladders initiatives).
Career ladders are demand-driven: employers are deeply engaged throughout the process to ensure programming is responsive to specific and dynamic regional labour market needs – they do not just develop partnerships, but partnerships of substance.

Planners work with government and policy makers to create a robust career ladders environment so that funding, performance and accountability measures can be aligned to the ongoing development and long-term success of these initiatives.

The ongoing use and promotion of data and continuous improvement strategies to improve outcomes and impacts for employers and workers alike.

All too often when workers want to advance in their careers, they have to remove themselves from their current jobs to participate in traditional educational and training opportunities. For many workers this is not a realistic option. They do not have the luxury to forgo wages or have the time to take part in traditional training programs. At the same time, we hear from employers that they are struggling to find skilled workers who can move up and grow with their businesses. As higher-level skills become increasingly necessary to building better careers, better wages and better businesses, we have to find ways to provide the right kinds of training where they are needed, when they are needed. In this context, career ladders approaches offer a promising strategy that can help working adults move into better jobs, provide industry with the skills they need and contribute to local community development.
APPENDIX B: ABOUT THE INITIATIVE

CAREER LADDERS: HELPING COMMUNITIES TOWARD INTEGRATED AND RESPONSIVE SERVICE DELIVERY

All too often when workers want to advance in their careers, they have to remove themselves from their current jobs to participate in traditional educational and training opportunities. For many workers, this is not a realistic option. They do not have the luxury to forgo wages or have the time to take part in traditional training programs.

While there is no set formula for creating economic mobility, an approach known as ‘Career Ladders’ or ‘Career Pathways’ is showing promise in a number of jurisdictions. The central premise of the approach is that training and educational delivery should be organized as a series of incremental and stackable certificates that are aligned to progressive occupational pathways.

For communities and employers, career ladders systematically align career advancement and training opportunities to local economic and industry workforce needs. For low-income adults, career ladders allows them to access flexible training options that are usually accompanied by wrap-around supports, such as childcare and career counselling, enabling them to clearly move and progress with their career goals.

PROJECT PARTNERS

Initiated by Essential Skills Ontario in partnership with Literacy Link South Central (LLSC), the Literacy Network of Durham Region (LiNDR) and Literacy Northwest, Career Ladders: Helping Communities Toward Integrated and Responsive Service Delivery, is an initiative that will examine the applicability of a career ladders approach could be applied in communities across Ontario.

Funded by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU), the initiative focuses on populations currently under-represented in the labour market – particularly job-seekers on income support with a high school diploma or less. The project will examine the applicability of career ladders in three communities and determine whether the framework would support both adults and employers in these communities and create a road map for potentially creating a career ladder for a particular industry.

WHAT COMMUNITIES WILL THIS PROJECT WORK WITH?

The career ladders in this initiative will be specifically designed to benefit three communities in these regions:

- Durham Region
- Thunder Bay Region
- Brant, Haldimand and Norfolk Region
The research and findings of this initiative will also be of value to local industries within each community – specifically employers who are facing skills shortages within their current labour force. The research and findings of this project will be targeted and strategically communicated to all relevant stakeholders in the employment and training field.
APPENDIX C: ABOUT THE CAREER LADDERS PLANNING COMMITTEE

BECOME A MEMBER OF THE [INSERT COMMUNITY] CAREER LADDERS’ CAREER LADDERS PLANNING COMMITTEE

As part of Career Ladders: Helping Communities Toward Integrated and Responsive Service Delivery, Essential Skills Ontario and its partners are looking to consult with community stakeholders in the Durham, Thunder Bay and Brant Haldimand and Norfolk Regions, through local Career Ladders Planning Committees on the topic of local Career Ladders approaches.

Members of the [insert community] Career Ladders Planning Committee will have the opportunity to take part in an innovative project and contribute to the improvement of local employment, training and social services pathways. This will help vision current employment and training services in a more coherent manner - specifically tailored to the needs of working poor adults and local industry in your community. Each member of the Integrated Planning will offer their expertise and experience in order to assess how a career ladder approach can be mapped and developed in your specific community.

WHY GET INVOLVED?

- Through your participation on this project, you will be at the forefront of innovation in the employment and training service provision field. Although career ladder approaches have gained significant traction in many international jurisdictions, such as the United States, Australia and the U.K., this approach has yet to be explored or piloted in the Canadian context.

- The impending skills gap between available jobs and the skills of the current lower-skilled workforce affects all members of every community – and it is these community members who can work together to help make a difference.

- The most effective career ladders approaches involve the expertise and participation of a wide variety of community stakeholders – something that current training and labour market interventions do not always take into consideration.

- It is more important than ever to address this issue by proposing promising solutions.

- Career ladders can help provide lower-skilled workers with the concrete steps they need towards better skills and better jobs - leading to stronger, more self-sustained local economies.

- Career ladders approaches also present a potentially direct means of connecting those looking for work with those employers and industries looking for workers, through customized and contextualized training programs.

- With the approval of provincial government, this project has the potential to become a long-term strategy for facilitating a more responsive employment and training system in Ontario.
WHAT IS REQUIRED?

- As a member of the Career Ladders Planning Committee, you will meet approximately three to six times with your regional partners over a three-month period.
- During these meetings, you will receive an orientation to the concept of career ladders approaches.
- Focusing on each Career Ladders Planning Committee’s respective areas of expertise, you will be asked to participate in discussions (via phone or in-person) as to the current state of your local labour market and skilled labour needs.
- On occasion, you will also be asked to provide feedback (via phone, in-person or email) on key project deliverables from the perspective of your particular field of expertise.

For more information or to become a member of the [Insert Community] Career Ladders Planning Committee, please contact [insert Regional Network contact].
A Potential New Solution

With a skills shortage looming, the projected shortfall of workers in Canada is expected to rise to at least 1.4 million by 2031 - possibly reaching as high as 3.9 million.

Rapid changes in technology and higher employer expectations means that more and more adults find themselves unprepared to compete for a job, advance in their career or succeed in traditional educational and training programs.

For many adults, training programs take too long to complete, do not accommodate their working and family lives and are not designed around their employment and career advancement needs.

Evidence shows that low-wage earners and low-skilled individuals have few opportunities to gain additional skills and improve their economic status unless they move on to income support in order to take time for training.

Career ladders organize regional training into a series of incremental and stackable certificates that are accessible to workers. Each step in a career ladder is explicitly designed to meet the needs of both participants and employers in obtaining necessary workplace skills, thereby improving a student’s career opportunities and providing a skill set needed by an industry or industry sector.

Why Career Ladders?

- Training is tied to high-demand employment opportunities.
- They allow access to flexible training options for adults that enable them to move more smoothly and progress with their career goals step-by-step.
- They provide employers the opportunity to retain and recruit workers with the skills necessary for their business to compete and succeed in a new economy.
- They contribute to local community development by tying together workforce training with industry sectors in a specific region.
- They align local training with local occupations.
Essentially, each ladder acts as a local industry skills development channel – one that advances and grows new and current workforce talent from which employers can draw from. In effective career ladders initiatives, employers keep education and training providers focused and on task as they make sure that what is taught is relevant and in demand while providing vulnerable adults with a realistic and attainable way of gaining better jobs and wages.

The Finger Lakes Food Processing Cluster Initiative is a coordinated effort led by the Center for Integrated Manufacturing Studies at Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT), providing innovative assistance programs, training, and collaborative partnerships to the food processing sector in nine counties. The ultimate goal of the initiative is economic development and job creation for the region.

One of their three programs developed, The Finger Lakes Food Processing Cluster Training Program was established to identify and ultimately bridge the gap between the existing workforce skillset and the qualifications required by food and agriculture businesses in the region. The program provides two areas of training: targeted food industry training to displaced professionals from declining industries that have significantly reduced their employment in the region; and higher-level skills training to prospective employees upgrading skills to meet the 21st century demands of the food processing sector. This partnership has been holding steady for over seven years now.
New initiative introduces ‘Career Ladders’ to Ontario communities

Essential Skills Ontario and its partners, Literacy Link South Central, the Literacy Network of Durham Region and Literacy Northwest, are pleased to announce their collaboration on a new initiative, ‘Career Ladders: Helping Communities Toward Integrated and Responsive Service Delivery.’

Funded by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU), the project will test the emerging concept of Career Ladders in Ontario - an approach that uses a series of sequential education and training programs that explicitly enable individuals to secure employment within a specific industry or occupational sector. Career Ladders incorporates stackable credentials – each recognized by employers in a particular sector – providing workers and job-seekers multiple entry and exit points in training, as well as allowing workers to advance over time to successively higher levels of employment in that sector.

The initiative focuses on populations who are under-represented in the labour market – particularly job-seekers on income support with low educational attainment. Adults with the lowest levels of educational attainment tend to be some of our most vulnerable citizens, as they are most likely to face persistent poverty, be on income support and be caught in a ‘low pay-no pay’ cycle.

This Career Ladders initiative will be specifically designed to benefit three regions: Durham Region, small communities in the Thunder Bay Region and the Brant, Haldimand and Norfolk Region. The research and findings of this initiative will be communicated throughout the duration of the project in the hopes that this or similar models can be replicated in other communities in order to impact larger systems change, rather than just single institutions.

Delivering learning when it is needed, where it is needed, and how it is needed presents many challenges to government, business and delivery providers; however, Career Ladders can provide us with the opportunity to unite around the common goal of providing lower-skilled workers with concrete steps towards better skills and better jobs.

If you’d like to read more about Career Ladders and learnings related to the approaches in other jurisdictions, visit Essential Skills Ontario’s Career Ladders webpage at http://www.essentialskillsontario.ca/career-ladders
APPENDIX F: ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN OUTLINE

Community Labour Market and Industry Environmental Scan Outline

Section 1 – Community Overview

[This section will be 2-3 paragraphs long and will relay the most relevant historical and contextual narrative of the community, as well as the community’s most current economic developments.]

Section 2 – Community Demographic Trends

[This section will consist of a short narrative as well as several charts derived from the latest Census data, focusing on key community demographic trends as well as Ethno-cultural diversity, immigration and emigration rates as they are relevant to the objectives of this project.]

Section 3 – Community Educational Attainment Trends

[This section will consist of a short narrative, as well as a chart based on the latest Census data, focusing on community education attainment trends and their relationship to demographics and labour market outcomes.]

Section 4 – Community Labour Force Trends

[This section will consist of a short narrative as well as several charts derived from the latest Census and Statistics Canada data, focusing on labour force status by overall population and age cohort, as well as top occupational and industry decline, growth and demand trends.]

Section 5 – Community Income Distribution

[This section will focus on income distribution in the community of focus, with particular focus on poverty trends and rates by population subgroups, based on the latest Census data. Information will be presented in a short narrative and charts as appropriate.]

[Responsibility – Essential Skills Ontario]

Section 6 – Social Assistance Access Rates

[Where available, through data provided by local OW/ODSP offices, this section will include a short narrative and charts that outline rates and trends of social assistance access by total numbers, gender, age, educational attainment and family types, as appropriate.]

Section 7 – Community Training Provisions

[This section will include a narrative that outlines the institutions and the types of skills training programs that are available in the community, particularly those designed specifically for in-demand industries and occupations, as well as other programs that are designed for people with less than a high
school diploma. This could include colleges, private career colleges, vocational training programs, school board and other community-based training programs.]

[Note: Given that at least one of this project’s objectives will be to investigate the most optimal range of data/information that needs to be collected within a community for a particular industry/occupation, please identify if and why this section is too broad or too restrictive to be useful to the objectives of this project.]

**Section 8 – Other Community Services**

[This section will include 2-4 paragraphs narrative that outlines the community’s variety and availability of community services (EO, OW, ODSP, Housing and other community-based programs).]

[Note: Given that at least one of this project’s objectives will be to investigate the most optimal range of data/information that needs to be collected within a community for a particular industry/occupation, please identify if and why this section is too broad or too restrictive to be useful to the objectives of this project.]
Education
Age and Education
Gender

SECTION 7: COMMUNITY TRAINING PROVISIONS

7.1. Overview
7.2. Education Works Website
7.3. Educational Institutions
7.4. Private Career Colleges
7.5. Community Training and Education Upgrading
7.6. Computer Upgrading and Training

SECTION 8: OTHER COMMUNITY SERVICES
APPENDIX G: COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDER QUESTIONS

Career Ladders

Key Informant Interview Guide for Community Stakeholders

Date:

Name of Organization:

Name of Interviewee:

Section 1: Employment Challenges

Do you think the challenge of moving low-skilled, low wage entry level workers into better jobs is a significant issue in your community?

Does your organization provide services to help move low-skilled, low wage entry level workers into better jobs?

- If so, what types of entry level occupations do they work in?
- If so, what do you find are the challenges?
- If you have challenges, what additional resources do you feel are necessary to better support them?

Do you think the current employment, training and education system addresses the challenges of moving low-skilled, low wage entry level workers into better jobs?

- If so, how does the system do this effectively?
- If not, what are the challenges?

Section 2: Employer Engagement

Does your organization or department work with employers? (Yes/no)

- If so, what is your relationship with them?

Do you think that your organization or department engages employers well?

- If so, what does your organization or department do that is effective?
- If not, what are the challenges?
- Do you feel there are untapped opportunities to work with employers in your community? If so, what are they?
Section 3: Service Coordination

Does your organization work with other service providers in your community?

- If so, who do you collaborate with them?
- If not, what are the challenges?
- Do you feel there is a need to collaborate more effectively?

Do you feel that better service coordination can help better support low-skilled, low wage entry level workers into better jobs?

- If so, how?
- If not, why?

Section 4: Career Ladders

Do you know what career ladders are? (If not, do not ask any of the questions below)

- If yes, do you think career ladders in your community can help move low-skilled, low-wage entry level workers into better jobs?
- If yes, do you think Career Ladders can act as a platform to enhance service coordination?
- If not, why?

Do you think there would be any hurdles to implementing career ladders in your community? If so, what are they?

Do you think your organization or department would want to be part of a career ladder in your community? If yes, why and what role(s) would your organization or department like to take on?

What additional resources do your think would be needed to implement a career ladder in your community?
APPENDIX H: INDUSTRY KEY INFORMANT QUESTIONS

Career Ladders
Industry Key Informant Interview Guide for Regional Employers

Section 1: Background questions:

1. Please describe the unit where you are situated in your organization? (department and/or level and type of responsibility)
   - How many employees work in your unit?
   - What portion of them are entry-level employees?
   - What is the general range of entry-level jobs in your unit?

Section 2: Sectoral Questions

1. What are the core skill requirements for entry-level positions in your firm? (Please explain for specific jobs)
   - What is the availability of people equipped with these skills in labour market?

2. What are the minimum educational requirements and/or certifications you look for when hiring for an entry-level position in your firm?
   - Does your organization feel that there are any educational and training credentials that clearly show the ability to perform typical entry-level jobs in your industry?
   - What’s the most important thing a credential allows you to tell about potential employees, do credentials (High School Diploma/equivalency) show certain skills or characteristics?
   - If not, why are the currently available credentials not a good reflection of the ability to perform typical entry-level jobs in your industry?

3. How does your organization determine educational and training requirements for entry-level jobs?
   - Are there unmet educational and training demands for entry-level positions in your organization that industry associations, educational institutions, private trainers and/or associations are not currently satisfying? (What are they doing well and what are they not doing well?)

4. Describe the typical employee profile for entry-level positions in your organization?
   - Demographic information, educational and training background etc.
   - Has this profile changed over the past decade? If so, how?
   - Do you think it is going to change in the foreseeable future? If so, why?

5. Where do you typically find your entry-level employees? (Staffing agencies, referrals, school, government programs/agencies, etc.)
   - Do they have the skills you need?
   - How big a problem is retention and training?

6. Is the employment and training system currently meeting your needs in terms of employee recruitment or training? Can you specify what services you have used (e.g. Employment Services, Targeted Wage Subsidies, etc.)
7. How do people progress in your firm (unit)?
   - Are there opportunities for entry level employees to advance? If so what is it based on? (experience, education, in-house training, aptitude etc).
   - Do you look to promote internally?
   - What could the employment and training system do to support occupational progression?
APPENDIX I: CAREER LADDER PLANNING
COMMITTEE REPORT OUTLINE

Career Ladders: Helping Communities toward Responsive and Integrated Service Delivery
Draft Outline: Career Ladder Committee Planning Report Phase 1

The following headings and questions can be used as guideposts to develop a specific career ladder approach in your community. In each community, the research and engagement efforts with key stakeholders will take place at different times according to your resources and schedule. Career Ladder development efforts are often described as a “multifaceted emergent learning process” and as such, the sequence of activities is not necessarily always linear.

Section 1: Brief Community Background and Report Summary

This section will be 1-2 pages long and will relay the most relevant historical and contextual narrative of the community and selected industry.

Section 2: Desk Review and Background Research

2.1 Industry Selection

This section will describe the rationale for selecting your community’s target industry in 4-5 paragraphs. Information can include: potential growth in the selected industry in your community, key employer profiles, significant changes to this industry in your community affecting its labour requirements, the potential strengths and challenges of the selected industry, etc.

2.2 Background Research on specific occupations in this industry, potentially and including a chart of the industry occupations and skill requirements.

Information in this section can include the following information in 3-4 pages: an outlining of entry-level occupations in target industry, intermediate occupations and skilled/managerial occupations and their associated generic skill requirements (See O*Net and NOC codes); examples of existing career ladders in that industry from other jurisdictions (see O*Net and other career ladder/pathway docs); what would occupational mobility look like in this industry (vertical and horizontal movements) (see O*Net and other career ladder/pathway docs and/or sector council docs); as well as potential employee trajectories (wages).

2.3 Background Research on existing training service provision in your community for the selected industry and could include a chart of local training services that are applicable to the selected industry.

Information should include a listing of providers, programs and services that already conduct training for this selected industry (entrance requirements, occupations, program duration, etc.), as well as a mapping of available industry occupations in your community in accordance to typical career progression opportunities in the selected industry. You should then also include an analysis of this mapping to pinpoint gaps in training for the selected occupational progressions and the current relationship between credentials and occupational requirements. This section should be 1-3 pages long.

Section 3: Stakeholder Engagement Activities (6-11 pages)
[In 6-11 pages, this section will consider the career ladder committee activates, town hall forum as well as the in-depth formal and/or informal interviews that will gather information that will develop a well-grounded understanding of how workers are hired, promoted and trained within the selected industry.]

1.1 Career Ladder Planning Committee (1-2 pages)
[Describe the role and contribution of the career ladder planning committee in your community and relationship to project goals, as well as key themes, points and discussions that shaped and emerged from their engagement in this work.]

1.2 Career Ladder Town Hall (1-2 pages) (If applicable)
[Describe the role and contribution of the town hall in your community and relationship to project goals, as well as key themes, points and discussions that shaped and emerged from this community engagement opportunity.]

1.3 Industry conversations (1-2 pages)
[Describe conversations with industry key informants in your community in relationship to project goals, as well as key themes, points and discussions that shaped and emerged from this community engagement opportunity.]

1.4 Service provider conversations (1-2 pages)
[Describe conversations with training and employment key informants in your community in relationship to project goals, as well as key themes, points and discussions that shaped and emerged from this community engagement opportunity.]

Summary of stakeholder engagement (1-2 pages)
[Information should include: Findings, new insights, opportunities, potential barriers, etc.]

Section 4: Feasibility and Next Steps (2-3 pages)
[Based on the information gathered from the background research, stakeholder engagement activities and career ladder planning committee discussions, each community will need to determine if it is feasible and appropriate to develop a career ladder for the selected industry in your community. Is a career ladders approach feasible for the selected industry in your community? What would be required to develop this industry-specific career ladder? Who would need to be involved? What next steps can you identify?]
For more information please visit essentialskillsontario.ca/career-ladders