Qualitative Research on Labour Market Information Products
Executive Summary

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Earnscliffe Strategy Group (Earnscliffe) is pleased to present this report to Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) summarizing the results of the online communities with Canadians about existing labour market information (LMI) products.

Budget 2015 announced enhancements to labour market information. The 2016 Budget reiterated commitments to provide "access to timely, reliable, and comprehensive LMI…" and to work "collaboratively with PT". The FLMM also announced commitments to improve the collection; quality and dissemination of labour market information (LMI) to enable Canadians make informed labour market decisions and contribute to aligning human capital investment with the needs of the economy. This commitment was reiterated by the FLMM at their meeting in October 2017.

The National Work Plan (NWP) for LMI was developed in 2011 in recognition of the growing importance of providing local/regional LMI that is consistent and comparable across the country, to support both the labour market decisions of Canadian workers and employers, and the delivery of key programs. The NWP initially addressed the asymmetrical quality and quantity of labour market information being produced in the regions at the time. This process introduced the notion of "accountability" and performance standards for the spending of funds on regional labour market information.

Subsequent iterations of the NWP (NWP II, III and IV) sought to further streamline the department's regional LMI offerings to standardized products and services. Those products and services stemmed from five core regional LMI functions:
1. determining labour market outlooks;
2. monitoring Labour Market News;
3. conducting labour market analysis;
4. providing occupational information; and
5. supporting Service Canada operations.

In its current version, the NWP for the production of regional LMI is based on an integrated analytical exercise that starts with a macro-economic scan and culminates with the assessment of employment outlooks for occupations at the local level and the 4-digit NOC level. A core standardized product is generated at each stage and made available to the external public via Job Bank. Similarly, the analytical exercise results in the generation of internal products to support the regional delivery of programs and services.

Currently, six external products are published as part of the NWP integrated exercise conducted through a detailed calendar. These six products are:
1. Wages,
2. Outlooks;
3. Weekly Labour Market News;
4. Labour Market Bulletins (monthly/quarterly/annual);
5. Environmental Scan; and
6. Sectoral Profiles.

In April 2017, the Labour Market Information Council (LMIC) was established. The LMIC is tasked to implement pan-Canadian priorities for the collection, analysis and distribution of Labour Market Information (LMI), including:

- addressing the need for more granular local LMI;
- prioritizing consistency of LMI through alignment of standards and methodologies; and
- working with stakeholders to develop and promote a collaborative platform for disseminating LMI for Canadians.

In addition, a new LMI Dissemination/Visualization Tool is being developed that will allow a wide array of LMI to be presented to the user based on his/her selection of a particular geography and/or theme, thus making the "packaging" of LMI products into small "'tag'-able" sections that could be assembled, based on their relevance, to provide a customized LMI experience for the user.

In light of these emerging and changing environmental factors, a thorough analysis of the current products based on various user's needs and expectations was needed to enable the Department to determine the appropriate suite of LMI products to develop and effectively disseminate to the public. More specifically, the objectives of this research were to:

- ensure LMI products meet user needs (for both format and information);
- determine what gaps exist; and
- determine what, if any, other LMI Canadians need to make informed career/training decisions.

The results of this research will enable ESDC to plan and develop LMI products to meet the needs of users in a more appropriate manner and format, as well as to determine what other products and/or information could be useful to make informed training and job-search decisions.

To meet the objectives outlined, Earnscliffe conducted a comprehensive wave of qualitative research. The research included twelve online communities, one in English and one in French for each of six target audiences:

- Post-Secondary Students (university, college, apprenticeship);
- Employed youth (16-24, working full time and not in school or training);
- Unemployed youth (16-24, not working FT and not in school or training);
- Adults 25+ who are seeking or considering new career opportunities;
- Parents of youth 16-24; and
- Influencers (career counsellors & advisors).

The groups identified above, chosen for this study, are a subset of the overall target audience of the LMI products. Other target audiences, which were not included in this research, are employers, other federal departments, other levels of government, think tanks, and academica, among others.

The online communities were held over the course of six days, from March 15, 2018 to March 20, 2018. The communities were hosted online by Recollective, an industry-leading research tool for developing

robust insights communities and conducting online research studies of any duration and size. Recollective was developed by the Ramius Corporation (Ramius), an enterprise social software and services company.

For the purposes of this report, it is important to note that qualitative research is a form of scientific, social, policy and public opinion research. Qualitative research, such as the online communities conducted for this project, is designed to elicit the full range of ideas, attitudes, experiences and opinions of a selected sample of participants on a defined topic. Because of the small numbers involved the participants cannot be expected to be thoroughly representative in a statistical sense of the six target audiences for LMI products from which they were drawn and findings cannot reliably be generalized beyond their number.

The total cost to conduct this research was $98,613.97 including HST. The key findings from the research are presented below.

Overall Observations

- **Overall, participants felt that the Job Bank site contains valuable and detailed information**. The content presented generally exceeded participants' expectations. There were notable differences from one segment to another, indicating there may not be a "one-size fits all" solution.

- However, as valuable as the content is, **participants did not believe that on the whole, it was the most useful and functional tool for job searching and making decisions about education and training**.

- Participants wished certain types of information were presented in a more user-friendly format, with more visuals, and the ability to sort and search.

- The most useful tools – the Wages and Outlook tabs – were highly rated because they were perceived to be simpler, geographically targeted and relevant.

- The least useful tools – including the EScan – were usually considered less useful due to being text-heavy, making it harder to find relevant information and understand the implications for participants' purposes.

Jobs Report

- Overall, this section of the Job Bank was the most useful for participants.

- **The Wages tab was consistently regarded as the most helpful and relatively clear tool.** Participants appreciated the range of wages, and that they could examine the data for a smaller geographic area and then compare it to the rest of the province or country.
  - Constructive feedback included adding information about health and retirement benefits, and the number of years worked in the field before one could reasonably expect to be paid the maximum salary.

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- The Outlook tab was among the more highly rated elements tested. Participants liked the information about skills and training, and appreciated that tab presented the number of jobs in a specific region. Any information about the potential for employment, rather than historic data, was well-received.

- Suggested improvement largely had to do with getting more specific, including linking to actual job postings, listing employers who are hiring, and clarifying the legend that explains the star ratings, and providing ratings out of five stars, rather than three. Participants were not sure what a particular rating meant, and their responses indicate that they did not notice the link on top of the Outlook page which leads to a detailed explanation of the rating system. It is worth noting that since participants were reviewing an image of the Outlook tab rather than a live webpage, the link would not have worked if they attempted to click on it.

Labour Market News and Bulletin

- The Labour Market News was among the least helpful resources presented. Participants agreed the news stories might contain helpful information, but would not use it because they found that the tool is not organized or easily searchable.
    - Participants felt that the list of news stories should be sortable by province and date, as well as searchable, according to participants. Currently, the news stories are searchable by city and postal code, industry and type of event, but findings indicate that participants either did not find or use this function.
    - The headlines should also be more concise – participants felt they were too long, and often after reading them they did not feel as though they wanted to read further.

- Participants reacted similarly to the Labour Market Bulletin. When made to read through the bulletin, they found valuable information. Over half rated many of the elements, including employment growth over time and employment by industry, as helpful. However, most agreed that reading through the whole document was not an efficient way to find that information.

EScans

- The EScan was the least helpful resource presented.
    - Employed youth and job seekers 25 and older were the least likely to find the EScans helpful.
    - Most participants felt the document was too long and difficult to understand. They felt that the information should be presented through the use of graphs and images, rather than text.

- The key highlights were the most useful component - the summary was generally preferred to reading the whole document.

- Some did find the information interesting, but felt that it was excessive and not entirely appropriate in a job search.
    - Several mentioned that this type of information would be of great use to labour market economists, but not the average job searcher.

Sectoral Profiles

- After the Wage and Outlook tabs, the sectoral profile was the third most helpful resource tested.
    - Post-secondary students were the most likely to find this resource helpful.

- The positive aspects included:
    - The information was interesting, particularly for those who were able to find a sector profile related to their own work, or a field they were familiar in some other way (e.g. their spouse works in the field).
    - The use of charts, graphs and bullet points to better organize the information
    - Forecasting elements were the most helpful of those tested, including the employment outlook.

- Despite finding the Sectoral Profiles more user-friendly than some of the other denser resources, participants offered some constructive criticism and suggestions:
    - Include less data about past trends, and more future projections.
    - Despite finding the information interesting, the consensus was that there was too much of it, minimizing the resource's utility.
    - Though the resource's organization and layout was better than the EScan, many offered solutions to make it more user friendly, including adding a table of contents.

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Signed: _____   Date: May 23, 2018

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