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Practitioners' guides on employment service centres

Providing effective counselling services

Volume 3



**Practitioners' guides on
employment service centres**

**Providing effective
counselling services**

(Volume 3)

Donna C. Koeltz and Carmela I. Torres

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Preface

Public employment services (PES) have been recognized in the mandate of the ILO since its creation. The ILO Convention on Unemployment, 1919 (No. 2) recognized the role of employment services and promoted the establishment of national employment services in all member States. The role of public employment services was fully elaborated at the international level with the adoption of the ILO Employment Service Convention, 1948 (No. 88). Both jobseekers and employers are customers of employment services, both public and private, and most national employment services are guided by an advisory body that reinforces the principles of social dialogue between government, employers, and workers.

The *Practitioners' guides on employment service centres* (hereafter referred to as “the Guides”) are designed to assist member States, including within Asia and the Pacific, to improve labour market efficiency and participation, reduce unemployment, and enhance linkages and information flows between jobseekers and employers. This is consistent with the core elements of the ILO’s Decent Work Agenda, which emphasizes the creation of productive employment and skills development to increase the employability of workers, the competitiveness of enterprises, and the inclusiveness of growth.

The Guides draw upon content originally published in the *Facilitator’s training guide on employment services* (2015), by the Employment Policy Department, with the

current Guides focusing more specifically on the practical operations of employment service centres and the delivery of employer and counselling services. The Guides also reflect the authors' professional experiences and international good practices of public employment services (PES) worldwide.

The Guides are a collection of resource manuals on public employment services delivery. There are four volumes in this collection. *Training of trainers on operations, counselling, and employer services (Volume 1)* is a companion to the three other procedural manuals on employment services: *Operating employment service centres (Volume 2)*; *Providing effective counselling services (Volume 3)*; and *Providing effective employer services (Volume 4)*.

It is hoped that the Guides will assist member States to enhance their employment services, a core component in the promotion of decent and productive work opportunities for women and men.



Tomoko Nishimoto
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Abbreviations and acronyms

CAMFEBA	Cambodian Federation of Employers and Business Associations
ESC	employment service centre
GIS	group information session
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education
ISCO	International Standard Classification of Occupations
LMI	labour market information
NOC	national occupational classification



Introduction

Providing effective counselling services (Volume 3) is the second of three procedural manuals on employment services which, when used together, are intended to guide management and staff in delivering effective and efficient assistance to jobseeker clients. It aims to assist employment service staff to develop a clear understanding of:

- a. the elements and flow of employment service functions;
- b. interviewing and counselling techniques; and
- c. factors to consider when providing counselling services to clients.

This guide was initially prepared as a key output of the ILO/China South-South Cooperation Project to Expand Employment Services and Enhance Labour Market Information in Cambodia and the Lao People's Democratic Republic (Project). Following its introduction in October 2015, and based on specific requests from other countries in Asia and the Pacific, a decision was taken to publish the guide for use within this region as ministries work towards developing and enhancing their employment service operations. The preparation of the guide was facilitated by a review of existing resource materials developed through capacity building activities funded by the ILO Decent Work Technical Support Team for East and South-East Asia and the Pacific (DWT-Bangkok), and utilized by job centres in Cambodia and the Lao People's Democratic Republic. The guide presents updated and enhanced information reflecting international good practices in counselling services offered through public employment service centres (ESC).

Providing effective counselling services (Volume 3) is intended to be used as an ongoing resource guide by the managers and staff of ESC as they execute their mandate to provide fair and accessible employment services to all jobseekers and enterprises who seek their assistance. It can also be used as a self-help instruction guide for new staff as they become oriented in their new job.

While much of the information contained in this guide will be universally applicable for ESC operations, some sections may require some customization in order to accurately reflect procedures within individual countries. This adaptation would most appropriately occur at the national level in each country.

The other two guides in this collection focus on providing guidance to assist managers and staff develop a clear understanding of employment service concepts, systems, and procedures; how to organize and manage these services efficiently; to ensure uniformity in the application of procedures in all ESC by all staff; and how to deliver services to employers – *Operating employment service centres (Volume 2)* and *Providing effective employer services (Volume 4)*, respectively.

The development of *Providing effective counselling services (Volume 3)* is a continuous process as the ESC strive to respond to the changing needs of society and jobseekers. The overall responsibility for maintaining this manual should rest at the national headquarters level within the appropriate department of a ministry providing oversight and technical guidance in the area of skills development and employment services. When changes or improvements in the procedures outlined in this manual are required, recommendations should be forwarded to this office. Recommendations for change will be considered, and the department will issue amendments to all ESC as appropriate.

As information is updated or enhanced, these amendments should be reviewed by the ESC management and staff, and incorporated in this manual. It is the responsibility of the director or manager of each ESC to ensure that this manual is accessible to all staff, and is kept up to date. In order to facilitate this process, it is recommended that this manual, as well as the other procedural manuals on employment services in this collection, be published in a format that makes it possible to add or delete sections of the guide without the need to reproduce the full document. Producing the guide in a loose-leaf binder format would be an ideal way to ensure maximum flexibility.



1. The elements of counselling services

Operating employment service centres (Volume 2) describes a delivery framework that summarizes the full range of employment services that should be available within a labour market. In many cases, some degree of these services are delivered directly through government-run employment centres. In some countries, the ministry responsible for the provision of employment services has chosen to develop partnerships with other stakeholders to ensure that all three elements in the framework are covered in the most effective and efficient manner.

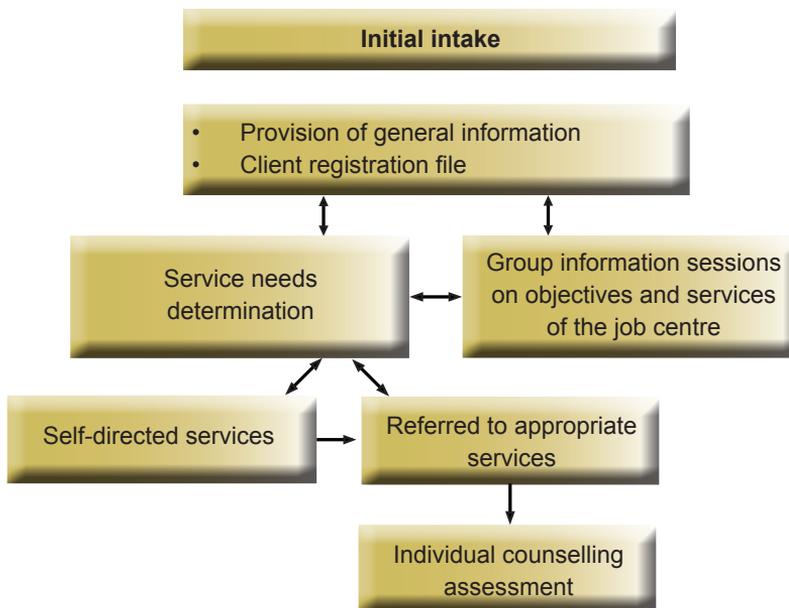
Regardless of how governments choose to deliver these services, these three elements continue to be evident in all delivery models currently in use throughout the world.

This guide will focus on the first two elements of the framework: the initial intake process, and the employability improvement process. The third element, performance management, is discussed in section 5 of *Operating employment services centres (Volume 2)* in this collection.

1.1 Initial intake process

Whenever a jobseeker approaches an employment office, he or she can expect to go through a similar process during the first visit, regardless of goals, reasons for approaching the employment office, or current level of employability. There are a number of steps in this process, normally referred to as the **initial intake**, which are outlined in figure 1.

Figure 1. Number of steps involved during an initial intake



The process should take between 15 and 20 minutes, discounting any waiting time spent before receiving the services – which are normally provided by a receptionist or a junior employment officer, often called the initial intake officer.

The first step is for the jobseeker to complete the registration, and this may be done manually or electronically depending on the office and the level of technological development on either side. In some countries, employment offices request that jobseekers complete the registration form manually, and later have a member of staff enter the data into a computer. This may occur if the office does not have sufficient computers for jobseekers to access, or if the jobseeker does not have sufficient computer skills in order to manage an electronic format.



Regardless of the method used for registration, the information collected in this step should be the same, and will become part of the administrative data collected by the employment office in order to determine how to best serve jobseekers' needs. In addition to this, the data collected in the registration process will have many other uses, such as providing important demographic information for the office management to use when forecasting human and financial resource requirements, as well as to make more informed decisions related to the type and magnitude of labour market programmes that might be developed for the area.

It can readily be understood that with so many potential uses, it is essential that the information be verified as soon as possible following completion of the registration. It is also critical that the completed jobseeker registration forms be regarded as confidential, and handled and stored accordingly.

It is desirable that jobseekers complete their own registration forms; however, in some circumstances it may be necessary for the initial intake officer to provide some assistance with this task.

Once the registration has been completed, it will be reviewed with the jobseeker to ensure it is complete and accurate. During this brief interview, which should take no more than 15 minutes, the jobseeker will also be provided with general information about the employment office and the services available, including both the self-service options and more intensive assistance provided through individual counselling. A list of steps in the initial intake interview can be found in Annex 1. Many offices also offer group information sessions (GIS), which are scheduled frequently and according to demand, in order to provide more of the generic information and to answer frequent questions and concerns the newly unemployed may face. If this is an option in the employment office, an appointment for such a session will also be offered and scheduled. GIS of this nature typically last no longer than one hour, are delivered by a junior-level employment officer, and provide ample time for questions from the participants.

There are considerable benefits to offering these GIS as a means of providing jobseekers with information on standard areas of service. They ensure that all jobseekers have the opportunity to hear exactly the same message, and also result in significant time savings by avoiding repeating the same message for many jobseekers during the individual intake interviews. GIS also offer opportunities for jobseekers to share their experiences, both good and problematic, and benefit from peer learning. Finally, some jobseekers are more outgoing than others, and will be

more likely to ask relevant questions that will lead to answers that can benefit all of the participants in the group. Attending a GIS can also help jobseekers realize that they are not alone in their unemployment, and this can help avoid a loss of self-esteem, which often accompanies periods of unemployment.

The registration process, the initial intake interview, and, if available, the GIS, all provide the jobseeker and the employment officer with opportunities to determine the most appropriate level of service required to assist the jobseeker make a smooth and rapid transition into the labour market.

During the process, the jobseeker, with assistance from the employment officer, may choose to take advantage of the self-service features of the ESC, such as job vacancy postings, self-help tools on preparing a resumé or curriculum vitae, self-directed interest and aptitude tests, and a wide range of information on industries within the office area and throughout the country and the world. In addition to this, most employment offices also have information on local training providers who offer short seminars and courses aimed at increasing a jobseeker's employability. The amount and quality of information in the resource section of the waiting area in the ESC is very important, and can result in considerable time saved for jobseekers and employment officers, who are then able to focus more of their time on clients who most need their assistance.

Generally when a jobseeker first approaches the ESC, the initial intake process, plus frequent follow-up visits to the self-service area of the office, will be sufficient to meet their needs as they search for a new job. It is estimated that at least 25 per cent of all jobseekers who use the services of an ESC will be successful in their job search using these methods.

However, after a period of time, usually between six and eight weeks into their unemployment, the jobseeker and employment officer may determine that the jobseeker could benefit from more individualized help in one or more areas, to improve the chances of employment. In this case, the jobseeker will be scheduled for an individual counselling assessment.

During an individualized counselling assessment, the jobseeker is assisted in evaluating employment difficulty, setting goals, and developing a return-to-work or a transition-from-school-to-work action plan, including activities and interventions in one or more employability dimensions.



While this is the normal procedure recommended for most jobseekers in order to operate the ESC as efficiently as possible, there are times when jobseekers will be scheduled for an individual counselling assessment as soon as they register. This will be the case if a jobseeker appears to be a member of a target group, for example a group of jobseekers which experience has shown may have more than the normal amount of difficulty in entering or re-entering the labour market. This would be the case for persons with disabilities, many young jobseekers, and in particular youth who have little or no marketable skills, as well as others whose past work history may signal barriers to employment. These jobseekers may be encouraged to schedule an individual counselling assessment within one or two weeks of first registering with the ESC, in order to begin to address possible issues as quickly as possible.

1.2 Individual counselling assessment

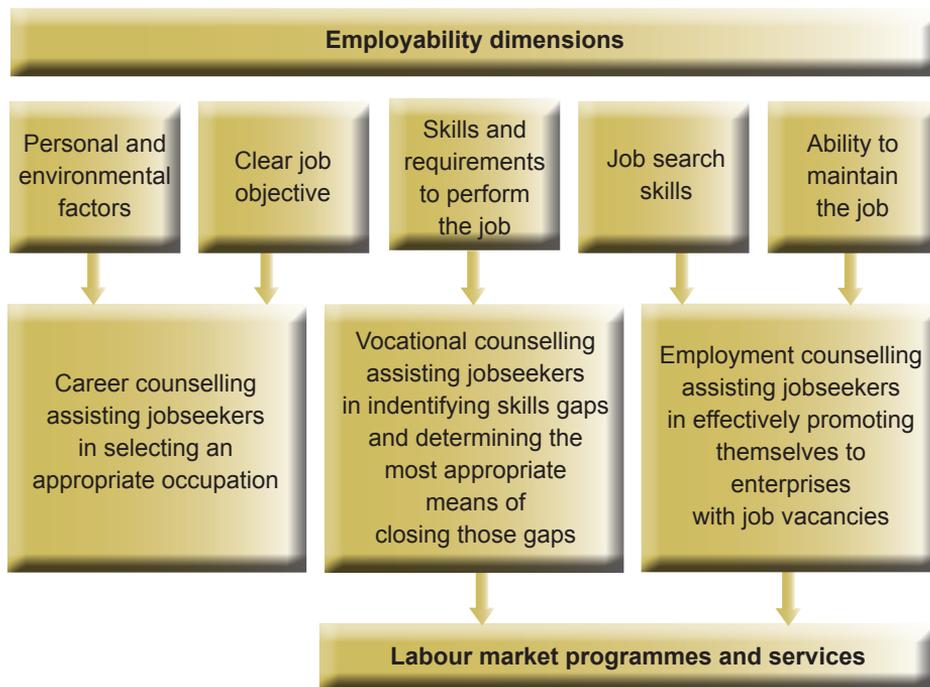
The **individual counselling assessment** is based on five employability dimensions, and determines the nature and extent of more focused assistance required to increase the jobseeker's employability, to a level where it is possible for him or her to become an active participant in the labour market.

A key component of the assessment is to determine at which level the jobseeker currently is, and to facilitate the development of a realistic transition-to-work action plan (see Annex 2). During this assessment process, the jobseeker is assisted in evaluating employment barriers, setting goals, and developing an action plan, including activities and interventions to overcome the barriers.

The individual counselling assessment is done by an experienced employment officer, and should be scheduled within a 45-minute time slot. This will provide 30 to 35 minutes for discussion with the jobseeker, and the final 10 to 15 minutes for the employment officer to document the discussion, including key decisions made.

The interview should be designed in such a way as to move through the employability dimensions sequentially from the left hand side of the diagram shown in figure 2 (personal/environmental factors) through to the far right hand side of the diagram (ability to maintain a job). All of these dimensions are equally important, and while it is possible at times to include activities related to several of them in the action plan, this will depend on the degree of gap between the current status of the jobseeker and the desired level for employability.

Figure 2. Employability dimensions



Depending on the point in the employability dimension scale that is found to be lacking, the jobseeker may require career counselling, vocational counselling, or employment counselling. Figure 2 illustrates these three processes, and identifies which of the counselling methods will best address the various employability dimensions.

Now let's look at this process more carefully by reviewing each of the three phases of counselling in more depth, explaining the elements and incorporating examples to illustrate the various factors to be considered.



Career counselling assists jobseekers to select an appropriate occupation. The process will examine and address issues related to both personal and environmental factors, in order to help the jobseeker set a clear job objective. For example, a sole-support parent may first need to make arrangements for child care, and this should be done before applying for jobs. There may also be other environmental factors to consider, such as the geographical area, the maximum distance the jobseeker is able to travel to and from work, and the actual working conditions.

Some jobseekers, while not considered to have a disability, may not be able to tolerate long periods of standing, repetitive motion, or dusty environments. Some people find it easier to work on their own, while others are only happy when working as part of a team. These are factors that need to be considered when making a career choice. Tools such as aptitude and interest tests, as well as self-reflection, can assist jobseekers in identifying these factors. The employment officer can facilitate this process by engaging the jobseeker in a discussion to identify many of these factors, and can also assist by providing suggestions as to how the jobseeker might address these issues in a productive way.

It is important that the jobseeker considers these personal and environmental factors when making occupational decisions, as some choices may be eliminated based on their personal situation. In other cases, it will be important to ensure that the issue has been resolved satisfactorily before progressing to more focused employment discussions.

Making a decision on a career path also requires specific information on the occupations under consideration. Labour market information (LMI) on jobs currently in demand and foreseen for future demand is also very important in career counselling. Equally important is information related to the actual job duties attached to a specific occupation, as well as the conditions of work normally attached to the occupation. Most employment offices have a range of publications providing this information, as well as access to the Internet, in order to enable jobseekers to research this information on their own.

Once the jobseeker has narrowed down the list of possible occupations, the employment officer may suggest that he or she speak to friends and family who may already work in these occupations, to find out firsthand what the work is actually like. These types of activities not only serve to de-mystify occupations for the jobseeker, but also demonstrate their real degree of interest and commitment to the process.

This process of reviewing the first two dimensions can take different amounts of time for different jobseekers. In some cases, the first interview will remain focused on the first dimensions, and develop a plan to overcome these issues before moving further along the employability matrix. In other cases, however, the jobseeker will have already addressed the personal factors; they may have a good awareness of any environmental limitations they may face; and they may have been able to arrive at an appropriate occupational goal. In this situation, the interview will continue to the next employability dimension.

By the time the jobseeker and employment officer have worked through the first two employability dimensions and undertaken all necessary actions to resolve any potential barriers that these areas may present, the jobseeker should have arrived at an informed occupational goal to pursue.

This stage of the process will involve **vocational counselling**. During this process, the employment officer will help the jobseeker to assess current skills and work experience against the normal entry-level requirements for jobs within the chosen occupational field, to identify any skills gaps and determine the most appropriate means to close those gaps. Since there are often various entry points within any given occupation, this is an important step, not only in defining the immediate career path, but also to assist the jobseeker develop a longer-term plan that may lead to more sustainable work in the future.

It is during this stage in the counselling process that the application of one or more active labour market programmes can have a significant effect on the success of the integration plan.

Depending on the personal factors identified during the counselling, different solutions may be selected to close the gap between the jobseeker's existing skills and experience, and those required for the career choice. Not all jobseekers will be able to consider lengthy periods of formal education, nor are all jobseekers suited to this form of learning. Therefore, vocational counselling involves the development of individual plans suited to individual needs and circumstances.

Options other than formal classroom training may include on-the-job training to upgrade or enhance existing skills; apprenticeship training, providing a source of



income while acquiring the skills and practical experience necessary for a skilled trade; or an internship programme to provide work experience to supplement technical training for new graduates.

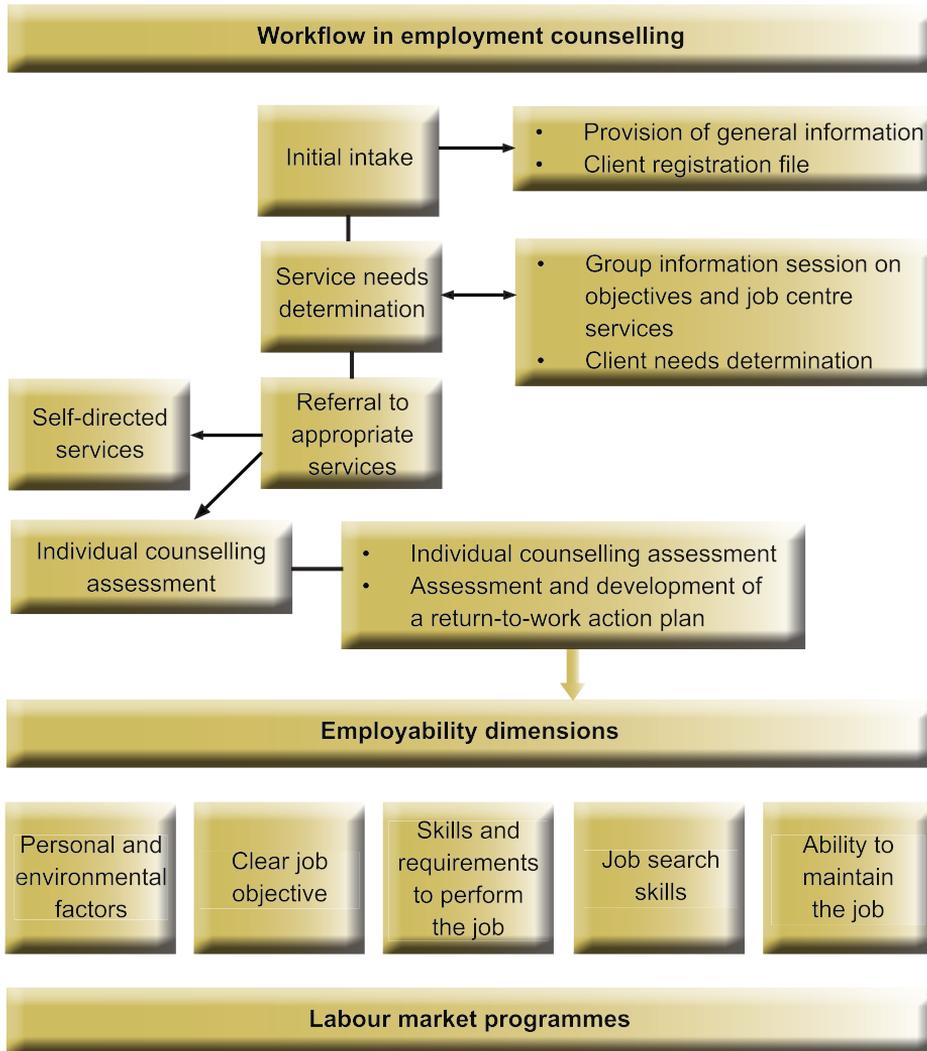
When jobseekers do require periods of formal education in order to acquire necessary entry-level skills, they need information on the various training options available. Many occupations have various entry levels, some requiring a technical and vocational certificate, others requiring a university degree, and during the vocational counselling phase, jobseekers are provided with occupational information that will assist them in determining which solution is best suited to both their immediate and longer-term aspirations.

Again, the amount of time required for the jobseeker to move beyond this employability dimension will vary individually, and it is important that the employment officer allow each individual sufficient time and assistance in order to ensure that the barriers to employability are fully resolved before moving along to the final stage – **employment counselling**.

During this stage, the jobseeker is provided with the necessary tools and skills to search out job opportunities and to successfully market his or her abilities to potential employers. While other stages in the counselling process are, out of necessity, done in a one-on-one setting, many of the services provided during employment counselling can be managed, often more successfully, in a group setting. Services typically offered as part of employment counselling include basic job-search techniques; assistance in preparing an effective resume or curriculum vitae; information on where to search for job openings; how to prepare for interviews; and what to do by way of follow-up once the job interview has taken place. **Enhanced employment services** may include enrolment in job-finding clubs, or inclusion in job fairs focusing on specific industries and occupations, or on particular target groups.

It is also important to note that, in most offices, employment counselling does not end with the provision of information on how to get a job, but will extend to information that is needed in order to retain the job, as well as to advance in the job. To this end, employment offices provide information on basic life skills and work habits, such as developing good interpersonal relations, the importance of reliability and timeliness in the workplace, and how to respond appropriately to supervision. It is also at this stage in the counselling process where the importance of selecting a realistic occupational career path is evident.

Figure 3. Workflow in employment counselling



In conclusion, figure 3 illustrates the entire process of employment services for clients. In buoyant economic conditions, many of the clients who approach employment offices for assistance will only require the first stage of the delivery framework – initial intake. They will register for employment, apply for income support if it is available, and make use of the self-service options offered through the ESC.



If the jobseeker finds that the self-service options do not result in a job, he or she may return to the employment office seeking further assistance through individual counselling. Other clients may determine from the outset that more individualized assistance is required. Still others may be identified by the initial intake officer as likely to benefit from special attention, and be immediately directed into the counselling process.

1.3 Principles of counselling services

Throughout this process, and regardless of the path that each jobseeker must take, there are a number of service principles that should guide the employment officer in the task.

Employment officers should always use a client-centred approach when dealing with jobseekers, while providing an environment where jobseekers feel comfortable expressing their employment needs and their expectation of the level of service they will receive. Employment officers should ensure that their clients receive the appropriate type and level of service required to overcome their barriers to employment and their individual needs. Throughout the entire process, from the jobseeker's first contact with the employment centre until he or she is successfully employed, the employment officer must demonstrate respect for jobseekers and their ability to make appropriate choices.

A client-centred approach to counselling is one in which the employment officer facilitates a situation in which the jobseeker is empowered to find his or her own solutions to employability issues

It is important to remember that, depending on the individual jobseeker and the starting level of employability, this may be a lengthy process. Some employment barriers will require actions that may create gaps in the jobseeker's direct involvement with the employment centre, as he or she works towards increased employability. It can happen that while the individualized counselling is done with the goal of assisting the jobseeker to move into employment, it may not result in immediate employment once the action plan is fully implemented. It will, however, put the jobseeker at a job-

ready level of employability, providing them with a fair chance of getting a job when the right match can be made. The importance of the jobseeker reaching a certain level of employability to even have a chance of competing on an equal footing with other jobseekers cannot be overstated. Therefore the completion of the counselling process, and the full implementation of the return-to-work plan can be considered an intermediate outcome, or an output in an environment where the only measure of success for the ESC will be job placement.

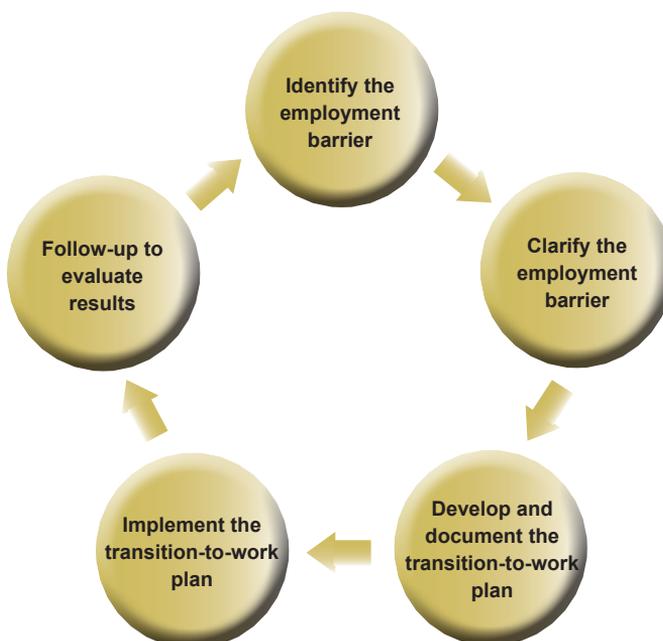
Now that we have covered the initial intake process and the individual counselling services, it is important to discuss techniques that will help the employment officer undertake the role in these processes.



2. Using a problem-solving approach to counselling

It is helpful to follow the problem-solving model when providing counselling services to jobseekers. Figure 4 illustrates this as a cyclical process.

Figure 4. Problem-solving model



The first step will be to identify the level of employment difficulty, which is done using the employability dimensions described earlier. If there is more than one potential employment barrier, the employment officer and jobseeker will need to agree on which barrier should be addressed first, according to the level of effect this barrier will have on the ability to enter the workforce.

Once the barrier has been identified, it is important to fully understand the situation, in particular clarifying any underlying root causes for this difficulty, in order to ensure that actions undertaken to resolve the barrier will be suitable. It is then time to decide on the most appropriate plan of action to reduce or eliminate the barrier, in order for the jobseeker to move towards employability and job readiness. This action plan may be quite simple and straightforward, or it might be quite complex, requiring a number of actions in order to achieve the desired goal. The action plan should be fully documented on the jobseeker's registration record, and updated as actions are taken. This will ensure that if other employment officers meet with the jobseeker, or if the jobseeker requests a referral to a job vacancy, all employment centre staff will be fully aware of the plan and the progress made to date.

As the plan is implemented, the jobseeker should continue to maintain contact with the ESC, and keep the employment officer up to date on progress. The frequency of contact should be discussed at the time of agreement to the action plan. These regular contacts to provide updates on progress not only demonstrate the jobseeker's commitment to the plan, but also provide opportunities for the employment officer and jobseeker to evaluate the suitability of the action plan. If the plan does not appear to be leading to the desired results, it may be necessary for the employment officer and jobseeker to take another look at the barrier; further clarify the situation; consider additional or initially rejected options; and adjust the action plan accordingly.

For example, a young female jobseeker with a two-year-old child and a baby attends her first counselling interview with the employment officer. The officer has advised the jobseeker that before she can be referred to any job interview, it will be necessary for her to make childcare arrangements so that she is able to go to the interview on her own. During the discussion, she reports that her husband works in a low-paying job and wants her to work to earn additional income, but she cannot afford to pay a babysitter until she finds a job.

In exploring possible options, the employment officer will need to determine if there are family members or close friends who might be willing to help care for the children



while the jobseeker is looking for work. This would mean she would not have to make a long-term commitment for childcare until she has a clearer indication of what type of job she might get, and what she could expect in terms of wages and working hours. It appears from what she has said that, while she has personal support to find a job, from her husband, she will likely not be able to depend on his financial support for childcare, and therefore must ensure that any job she accepts will cover the cost of childcare and still make it possible for her to contribute to the household income. This financial constraint may limit the options she can consider for childcare. It may also influence the type of work she will be most interested in pursuing. Another issue will be the availability of suitable day care facilities in her locality.

Answers to these questions will help the jobseeker and the employment officer develop a realistic action plan to resolve the barrier. The action plan may include more than one option. For example, while still searching for work, the jobseeker may arrange for a family member or friend to look after the children when she needs to attend a job interview. There may also be not-for-profit agencies that offer temporary or low-cost childcare within her area while she searches for work. Once she has been offered a job, she could then enroll the children in a day care centre, but may still need some limited support from her family in terms of getting the children to and from the day care centre. Or she may still choose to enlist the help of a not-for-profit day care option. If no day care centres are available, she may choose to hire someone to care for the children in her home. The employment officer will document the options they agree upon, and will assist the jobseeker to outline a more specific plan to implement these options.

This detailed implementation plan may include such activities as consulting with family members and friends to determine if they would be willing and able to help with childcare when she needs to attend a job interview; ensuring that she has all the information she needs to quickly contact them should she need their help; investigating the availability of low-cost or free day care facilities; and gathering information on for-profit day care centres as well. As she works through the implementation plan, she will report back to the employment officer, who will determine when her plans for childcare are sufficiently in place that it is possible proceed to the next step in the employability continuum. While there are a number of steps that the jobseeker will need to take as she implements the plan for arranging childcare, it is a fairly straightforward action plan that should not take very long to implement. Therefore, follow-up reports should be done on a weekly basis. This will encourage the jobseeker to act on the plan immediately, and will ensure that little time is lost in her job search.

Other plans may take longer. For example, if the barrier to employment is a lack of the appropriate level or kind of skills required for a particular occupation, the action plan may involve a period of classroom training. In this case, follow-up reporting would be scheduled to coordinate with training semesters, so that the employment officer is aware of the progress and is able to assist with any problems that may arise, as well as begin to prepare the jobseeker for the next step in the plan near the end of the training course.



3. Interviewing and counselling techniques

It is important that both initial intake officers and employment officers are able to conduct effective and efficient interviews. A key factor in a successful interview is how well the officer is able to draw information from the jobseeker in an effort to better understand them, and thereby be able to assist them re-enter the labour market. This requires effective communication skills, and involves both verbal and non-verbal techniques.

There are a number of techniques utilized in **verbal communications** and understanding, and using as many of these as appropriate will result in much more effective and productive interviews and counselling sessions. In an interview situation, verbal communications will nearly always focus primarily on a dialogue initiated through the use of questions.

There are basically two different questioning styles, and the most effective interviews will normally include a mixture of both. Good questioning techniques should result in the jobseeker providing information that is either factual, expressing an opinion, or sharing feelings on a topic.

Some questions are designed to quickly and precisely draw out the most relevant facts, and these will often be best handled by the use of **closed questions** – which can be used to break the ice and help the jobseeker relax and feel comfortable with

the interview. They are also used by interviewers to get the information deemed to be most important. These are questions that require simple, straightforward responses – “yes” or “no” – or ones that have only one correct answer, like “How many applications did you send out last week?” They are useful in quickly getting factual information, and can help focus the conversation when the jobseeker is being vague or uncertain.

During the initial intake process, it is likely that the employment officer will primarily use closed questions, to verify factual information provided on the registration form. However, in the review of the registration form, there will be opportunities to occasionally draw the jobseeker out through open questions, in order to obtain thoughts and feelings that can be useful when considering the jobseeker for possible job opportunities, as well as in making a determination as to the potential need for more in-depth, individualized counselling.

Employment officers will make greater use of open questions aimed at assisting the jobseeker to undertake self-reflection as they work through the employability dimensions in the enhanced counselling services, but will still need to ask some closed questions in order to determine the current fit on the continuum, and the correct type of counselling and assistance required.

As another example, when reviewing the jobseeker’s work experience, the officer might ask a question such as “Did you enjoy your last job?” The answer to this closed question could lead to a follow-up question such as “What did or didn’t you enjoy about your last job?” This is an example of an **open question**, which encourages the jobseeker to elaborate on the topic and provide information that he or she feels is significant. The use of an open question also allows the jobseeker to express opinions and views on the job, and may provide clues as to where he or she currently fits emotionally in terms of the job-loss cycle. (Annex 3 discusses the emotional stages experienced by the loss of a job and the resulting effect it may have on the jobseeker.)

The response can then lead to the use of one or more follow-up questions, both open and closed, to get more information from the jobseeker, allowing the employment officer to seek clarification on these opinions and feelings to ensure a common understanding. This is a **probing technique** that can be used to gain additional information or to clarify information that has already been provided but remains unclear. In the example above, the ensuing discussion may be helpful in determining a suitable occupational goal for continued participation in the labour market.



When asking open questions and by probing into the responses more deeply, it is important that the employment officer is still able to control the interview and keep the discussion on track and focused on the goal of assisting the jobseeker make a successful transition into the labour market. There is a risk, however, that when given the opportunity to express feelings and opinions, the jobseeker will use this as an opportunity to vent about perceived injustices that may have been experienced in previous work. It is okay to allow the jobseeker to express this, as it may help that person move on, but it is essential that the employment officer encourages this moving on to take place. The employment officer should wait for a pause in the conversation and then interject with another question such as, “How do you feel you might avoid a similar situation from occurring in your next job?” This will serve a couple of purposes. First, it clearly shows the jobseeker that the officer has heard and acknowledged the concern from the past. Second, it sends the message that the jobseeker should now focus on the next job rather than dwelling on the past. And, finally, it encourages the jobseeker to begin to reflect on how to take responsibility for ensuring that similar situations do not recur. This technique of bringing the interview back on track without discouraging the jobseeker from continuing to share information and express views is called **verbal tracking**. This is a skill that takes some practice in order to avoid rudely interrupting the speaker, but can be highly effective in controlling the interview, when used with care.

Since the purpose of the interview is to gain more information to better understand the situation, needs, and expectations of the jobseeker, it is important that at appropriate points in the discussion, the officer check with the jobseeker to ensure that the officer is getting his or her message correctly. There are three techniques that can be used to achieve this: **paraphrasing**, in which the officer repeats in his or her own words, the verbal message conveyed by the jobseeker; **reflecting**, in which the officer states an understanding of what the jobseeker has conveyed both through verbal responses and non-verbal communications while speaking to the officer; or **summarizing**, in which the officer ties together and highlights the key points, both in content and feelings, at appropriate times during the interview.

All three of these techniques can be very effective in checking to ensure that the employment officer and jobseeker both have the same understanding of the key points under discussion; to reinforce or illustrate progress made during the interview; and particularly in the case of summarizing, help bring the interview to a productive conclusion, highlighting issues discussed and agreements for action that may have been reached.

The other side of communication is **non-verbal** behaviour, which when linked with a verbal message can provide a complete picture of what the jobseeker is really conveying. Examples of non-verbal behaviour include body movements and gestures; posture; eye contact; the tone, pitch, and volume of the voice; physical space maintained between the communicators; and facial expressions and physiological changes such as extreme nervousness. It is estimated that more than half of what we communicate is done silently through body language; therefore, a basic understanding of non-verbal communication strategies, beyond what is actually said, can improve interaction with jobseekers. Being attuned to these signs can provide opportunities to explore a jobseeker's concerns in more depth, leading to a greater common understanding – the purpose of communication. This will be discussed in more detail in the next section on listening techniques.

Non-verbal communication consists of a complete package of expressions, hand and eye movements, postures, and gestures, which should be interpreted along with speech (verbal communication).



4. Listening techniques

Listening to and interpreting answers is as important as asking the right questions. Clues to opinions and feelings can come from not only what the client says, but how they say it, and jobseekers will also be taking cues from the employment officer and will respond not only to what the officer is saying but also how they are saying it.

First, it is important to understand the difference between simply hearing a message, which happens whenever you are present when something is said, and actually listening to that message. Listening does not occur automatically, but rather is an active process that happens when a person makes a conscious decision to pay careful attention in order to correctly understand the message.

Good listeners remain non-judgemental, exhibit patience, and allow the jobseeker to explore thoughts and feelings. It is important to respect pauses in the conversation without interrupting with questions or comments, or seeming to try to rush the conversation.

As mentioned in the previous section, much of what we communicate is done silently through body language, and these non-verbal cues can be as important as, or even more important than, what we are actually saying to the jobseeker. It is very important, therefore, that employment officers are aware of the impact their body language has on the jobseeker, and the eventual outcome of their communications.

There are numerous ways that employment officers can demonstrate to the jobseeker that they are actively listening to them as they speak.

As the jobseeker is speaking, it is possible for the employment officer to use **non-verbal methods** to signal that he or she is listening attentively, without interrupting the jobseeker. Examples of non-verbal signs of active listening include: smiling pleasantly; maintaining eye contact without staring; maintaining an open and receptive posture; and avoiding restless behaviour, which may signal that the employment officer is distracted. Experienced employment officers use many of these techniques automatically when interacting in conversations, and consciously being aware of the message being sent to the jobseeker by these actions will significantly improve the quality and outcome of all communications with clients.

In section 2 we mentioned several **verbal signs of active listening** such as questioning, paraphrasing, and reflection; clarification; and summarizing on problem solving. Other verbal signs may include the use of positive reinforcement and the employment officer simply demonstrating through comments that he or she remembers the key points made by the jobseeker. All of these verbal signals of active listening to the jobseeker will keep the jobseeker engaged in the conversation and potentially prompt the sharing of more information.

It is also important for employment officers to be attentive to, and understand, the non-verbal messages being communicated by the jobseeker during their conversation.

The jobseeker's body language may reinforce what he or she is saying, and provide additional insight into the intensity of emotions and attitudes, or it may send a conflicting message to what is being said. As one example, a jobseeker may verbally agree with an option being discussed and show enthusiasm by a vigorous nod of the head and a smile, or may shrug while looking disinterested or even confused. In this example, an attentive employment officer should get entirely different signals as to the degree of commitment the jobseeker may have for the option.

Much has been written about body language, and figure 5 lists the different categories often used to describe various body movements and the purpose they serve in non-verbal communications. While it is not essential to know the various terms, an awareness of the techniques is important for effective communications.



Figure 5. Categories of body language

Emblems: Common signals or gestures that replace words, such as a “thumbs up” signal for “okay.”

Illustrators: Physical movements such as a sweeping hand movement to indicate that the speaker should continue.

Affect displays: Facial expressions or gestures that show emotions.

Regulators: Feedback indicators such as nodding, short comments or sounds (uh-huh), or maintaining an interested expression.

Adaptors: Unconscious movements such as scratching or adjusting eye glasses, tapping a foot, or biting fingernails when nervous.

In summary, a basic awareness of non-verbal communication strategies, over and above what the jobseeker is saying, can help to improve the interaction. Knowledge of these signs can be used to encourage the jobseeker to talk about concerns, and can lead to a greater shared understanding, which is the main purpose of the counselling process. Experienced employment officers continuously observe the jobseeker’s posture, amount of eye contact, the tone and pitch of voice, as well as how quickly he or she is speaking, for clues as to how the jobseeker is feeling about the discussion.



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5. Occupational information

In addition to effective communication techniques, employment officers require a solid understanding of the labour market in order to effectively assist jobseekers. Having access to comprehensive and reliable LMI is a key element towards understanding the labour market. However, to truly understand the labour market, employment officers must also have access to sound occupational information. The most effective tool related to occupational information will be a reliable occupational classification system. Many countries begin the development of their national occupational classification (NOC) system by using the ILO's International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO) as a structural model.

The ILO describes the purpose of the ISCO classification¹ as a tool for organizing jobs into a clearly defined set of groups according to the tasks and duties undertaken in the job. It is intended for use in statistical applications and in a variety of client-oriented applications, including the matching of jobseekers with job vacancies; the management of short- or long-term migration of workers between countries; and the development of vocational training programmes and guidance. NOC systems are used for similar purposes, and when they are based on the same standards and structure as the ISCO, cross-referencing between countries is much more easily accomplished.

1. <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/stat/isco/>

This can have significant benefits when facilitating the migration of workers, as well as in assessing the qualifications of foreign workers seeking work within the country.

ISCO-08 classifies all occupations into ten major groups, each of which is designated by a unique one-digit code. These are listed under column A in figure 6. Column B in figure 6 shows the relationship between the ten major groups and the four skills levels used throughout ISCO, and these skills levels are cross-referenced in column C to the educational levels according to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED-97).

Figure 6. Occupational classifications

A	B		C
ISCO-08 major groups	Skill level	ISCO-08 skill level	ISCED-97 educational levels
1. Managers, senior officials, and legislators	3 + 4	4	
2. Professionals	4		6 – Second stage of tertiary education (leading to an advanced research qualification) 5a – First stage of tertiary education, first degree (medium duration)
3. Technicians and associate professionals	3	3	5b – First stage of tertiary education (short or medium duration)
4. Clerks 5. Service and sales workers 6. Skilled agricultural and fishery workers 7. Craft and related trades workers 8. Plant and machine operators and assemblers	2	2	4 – Post-secondary, non-tertiary education 3 – Upper-secondary level of education 2 – Lower-secondary level of education
9. Elementary occupations	1	1	1 – Primary level of education
10. Military occupations	1 + 4		



Each of the **ten major groups** represents an occupational field, and is then further broken down into 43 **sub-major groups** that are designated by a second numerical digit. The sub-major groups are divided into 130 **minor groups** at the three-digit level, and these are subsequently aggregated into 436 **unit groups** coded at the four-digit level. Figure 7 illustrates this coding using the occupation of general medical practitioner – 2211 – as an example.

Figure 7. Breakdown of ISCO code 2211

Occupation	Title	Code
Major group	Professionals	2
Sub-major group	Health professionals	22
Minor group	Medical doctors	221
Unit group	General medical practitioner	2211

When countries develop their NOC system, they often go beyond the four-digit ISCO system and add two additional digits to the right of a decimal place to more specifically describe unique differences between occupations at the unit group level. While this will add more occupations to the overall system, it may also result in greater precision when categorizing both the qualifications of jobseekers and the occupational requirements of employers. It is important, however, that there is a balance between greater precision of the information and creating such narrow occupational classifications that jobseekers are limited in their opportunities within the labour market.

In addition to the logical assignment of unique codes for each of the occupations in ISCO, this tool also provides details on each of the occupations, making it much easier to use it for registering jobseekers as well as job vacancy notices. Each ISCO level contains concise lead statements describing, in a few sentences, the main characteristics and purpose of the occupation; more detailed listings of the normal tasks performed by people in that occupation; and also lists examples of other occupations within the group, as well as related occupations that are classified elsewhere in ISCO.

5.1 Using the national occupational classification in counselling services

While the overall structure of an ISCO-based NOC system may seem complex, with practice it is very easy to use as a counselling services tool. Its application is also very broad, and can be useful in nearly every element of the ESC's activities.

During the initial intake process, the employment officer will assign an occupational code to the jobseeker registration, which best fits the **current** work experience and educational background of the jobseeker. This can be done in a quick and efficient way by using the information provided in column A in figure 6. The first step will be to determine from the information on the registration form which of the ten major groups best characterizes the occupational field of the jobseeker. Based on the major group selected, the employment officer will have the first digit of the occupational code. From this code, he or she will be able to refer to the NOC description for that major group, and quickly review the list of sub-major groups listed for that occupational grouping, to select the one which again best fits the skills and work background of the jobseeker. The officer will repeat this process of reviewing occupational choices while moving through the NOC from major group to sub-major group, to minor group, and finally to the four-digit unit groups. With each digit that is added to the code, the officer will become more specific in terms of the suitability of the jobseeker for the occupation.

Job vacancy notices will be classified using a similar methodology – beginning by determining the most suitable major group for the vacancy, and then systematically narrowing down the choices of occupational codes based on information related to the job requirements provided by the employer. More information on this process of classifying job vacancies will be discussed in the final guide in this collection, *Providing effective employer services (Volume 4)*.

While there is no question that having an NOC system in place for use in classifying jobseekers and job vacancies is very important, particularly in facilitating the job matching services, the information available in the NOC is invaluable when it comes to providing individualized counselling to jobseekers.

When an employment officer is discussing the jobseeker's occupational goal, information contained in the job descriptions in the NOC system will provide considerable insight into the realities of occupations under consideration. In this



case, the information contained in columns B and C in figure 6 will be extremely useful, since this information will provide an indication of how much of a gap may exist between the jobseeker's current skills and experience compared to what is required for entry into each occupation. It will also be useful to review the list of other occupations that fall into the same occupational group, as well as to consider related occupations that might be classified elsewhere within the NOC system. This may provide the jobseeker with other potentially more suitable occupational choices than what he or she was originally considering.

Essentially, a well-structured and reliable occupational classification system will provide a wealth of information for the jobseeker to consider when making a decision on a career path. This information, when combined with reliable, up-to-date LMI, will help to ensure that the jobseeker is able to make an informed career decision.





6. Additional factors to consider

6.1 Ethics in counselling

Employment officers must at all times maintain the strictest level of confidentiality regarding all aspects of their discussions with jobseekers. They should only obtain information that is essential in assisting the jobseeker make the labour market transition, and this information must remain confidential even after the counselling relationship has ended. Care must be taken to ensure that all documentation, including electronic files, is stored securely.

6.2 Boundaries of counselling services

It is essential that employment officers clearly understand their roles and recognize their professional limitations. Just as other professionals will at times refer a client to an appropriate specialist for more advanced expertise and assistance, there will be occasions when the best service the employment officer may provide the jobseeker is to refer them to a more specialized source of help at a certain stage in the counselling relationship.

Similarly, it is important to ensure that jobseekers clearly understand what they can expect in terms of services from the ESC. It should be clearly communicated to the

jobseeker early in the counselling relationship what the employment officer can do: provide reliable information about the labour market; assist in learning more about occupations the jobseeker may pursue; advising on vocational training options that may help improve employability; and provide guidance on successful job-search techniques.

Employment officers should avoid accepting sole responsibility for the jobseeker, and instead strive to empower the jobseeker to take responsibility for his or her own job search and career. Employment officers should always concentrate on what is most important to the jobseeker, and offer practical suggestions aimed at empowering the jobseeker to plan and act alone. Most jobseekers will be perfectly capable of taking responsibility and control over their lives, and it will very rarely be in the jobseeker's best interest for the employment officer to assume responsibility for actions that in fact could, should, and normally would be, undertaken by the jobseeker themselves.

It is also important that the employment officer remain responsive and flexible throughout the counselling process. No two jobseekers are alike, and therefore it is important to remember that the models and techniques discussed in this manual will only provide a framework that will need to be adapted to fit the individual needs of each jobseeker.



Annex 1

Steps in the initial intake interview



Open the interview

1. Greet the jobseeker.
2. Establish the purpose of the interview.



Gather information required

3. Review the registration form and resume or curriculum vitae (if provided).

4. Verify the tombstone information as required, ensuring that contact information is up to date.
5. Identify if the client already has a job and is simply registering for a new employer. If yes, the service needs determination process is completed at this point.
6. If the client is looking for a job, does the jobseeker have a clear employment goal?
7. Does he or she require help identifying an employment goal?
8. Does he or she meet the normal job skills requirements for the job goal?
9. Does he or she need help determining the training or education to obtain the skills required for the job?
10. Does the jobseeker have adequate job-search skills to get a job?
11. Does the jobseeker need help in developing better job-search skills?
12. Does the jobseeker have the ability to maintain a job?
13. Does the jobseeker need help in developing job maintenance skills or behaviour?
14. Does the jobseeker have personal, family, or community support to maintain a job (e.g. childcare)?
15. Does the jobseeker need help in arranging this support?



Summarize client/service needs

16. Based on the information gathered, summarize and agree with the jobseeker on what he or she needs to become employed.
17. Identify if the jobseeker is job-ready. If the jobseeker is job-ready, there will be no need for referral to individualized counselling at this time.



Examine employment office service options



18. Review employment office options, outlining what services the jobseeker can access.
19. Assist the jobseeker in deciding which service options might be useful in the job search.
20. Depending on the labour market conditions and occupational goals of the jobseeker, try to immediately identify one priority service referral.



Agree on next steps

21. Outline the next steps for the client to either:
22. carry out a job search alone, using the employment office information and resources; or
23. be referred to individual employment counselling.
24. Verify the jobseeker's commitment to the plan outlined.



Complete documentation

25. Document the key points and outcomes of the service needs determination interview, either on the hard copy of the registration form, or electronically.



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Annex 2

Transition-to-work action plan

Family name:
Given name:
Address:
City: Telephone:

Personal/environmental issues (e.g. childcare, health, housing):

.....
.....

Needs identified:

Employment goal(s) (short term/long term, if applicable):

Needs Identified:

Education and training (including licenses, certifications, diplomas):

Employment history (including related volunteer experience):

Company name	Position held	Duration of employment
(1)		
(2)		
(3)		

Major skills/strengths:

Major skills needed to get back to work:

Job search strengths

- Résumé
- Cover letter
- Interview skills
- Internet
- Networking
- Labour market trends
- Other:

Job search skills/tools needed to get back to work:

Job maintenance issues (if any):

Needs identified:

Assessment summary

Notes:

Dimensions discussed

- Personal/environmental
- Career decision-making
- Job search assistance
- Skills enhancement
- Employment maintenance

Notes on dimensions discussed:

Options discussed:



Option(s) chosen/rationale:
.....
.....

Date	Update information



Providing effective counselling services



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Annex 3

The job loss cycle

For most people, the experience of losing a job can be similar to other kinds of loss we experience in life, and there will be a certain “grieving” process involved. It is important for employment officers to be aware of this, and to watch for signs of the emotional stages when dealing with jobseekers. These stages were originally proposed by Elisabeth Kubler-Ross in her 1969 book *On Death and Dying*, but have since been adapted to encompass the emotions accompanying change of any kind.

There are typically five stages in this process, and a version adapted to the emotions experienced after the loss of a job are illustrated in figure 8. Being aware of these stages will help employment officers better understand the needs of jobseekers.

Figure 8. Emotional stages after job loss



Even when the loss of job has nothing to do with the actual performance of the employee, such as when a business is forced to reduce its staff for economic reasons, it can feel very personal to the person being laid off. He or she may feel lonely, singled out, and isolated, and at the same time continue to hope that something will happen to change the situation. When this doesn't happen, the jobseeker may begin to feel anger toward the employer, particularly if the jobseeker has been loyal and hardworking. He or she may also begin to feel as if all the hard work was not appreciated, and this can affect the attitude towards employment in general, creating the potential for a poor work ethic in future jobs.

At this stage, the jobseeker is still confident about quickly finding other employment opportunities, and will often rely on family, friends, and other contacts to learn of job openings, rather than approaching an ESC. However, as time goes on, and particularly if there is still some of the denial and anger over the job loss, he or she may not be able to move back into the labour market. The jobseeker then begins to worry about how to pay bills and support his or her family. This is when he or she may begin to desperately apply for every job vacancy, regardless of the requirements of the position, and with little regard to his or her own interests and occupational goals. However, applying for jobs one is not qualified for will lead to rejections, and this in turn will result in the eventual loss of confidence and self-esteem, which will in turn, make the jobseeker even less employable from an employer's perspective.

Often, this is when the jobseeker will either take the initiative, either alone or at the advice and prompting of friends and family, to seek assistance through the ESC. Taking the step of asking for assistance, regardless of the motivation, is the first step towards accepting the present situation of joblessness, and beginning the long and often tumultuous process of a more organized job search. As the jobseeker continues to look for work, he or she will continue to experience a range of emotions – fear of rejection; anger over the unfairness of the situation; and frustration over rejections from employers. However, at this stage, he or she will have begun the more positive process of coming to terms with the job loss, and focusing energy on moving on. With the support and expertise of the employment officer, as well as continued caring support from family and friends, the jobseeker will now be able to take charge of the situation, systematically identify and overcome any potential employment barriers, and eventually make a successful transition back into the labour market.



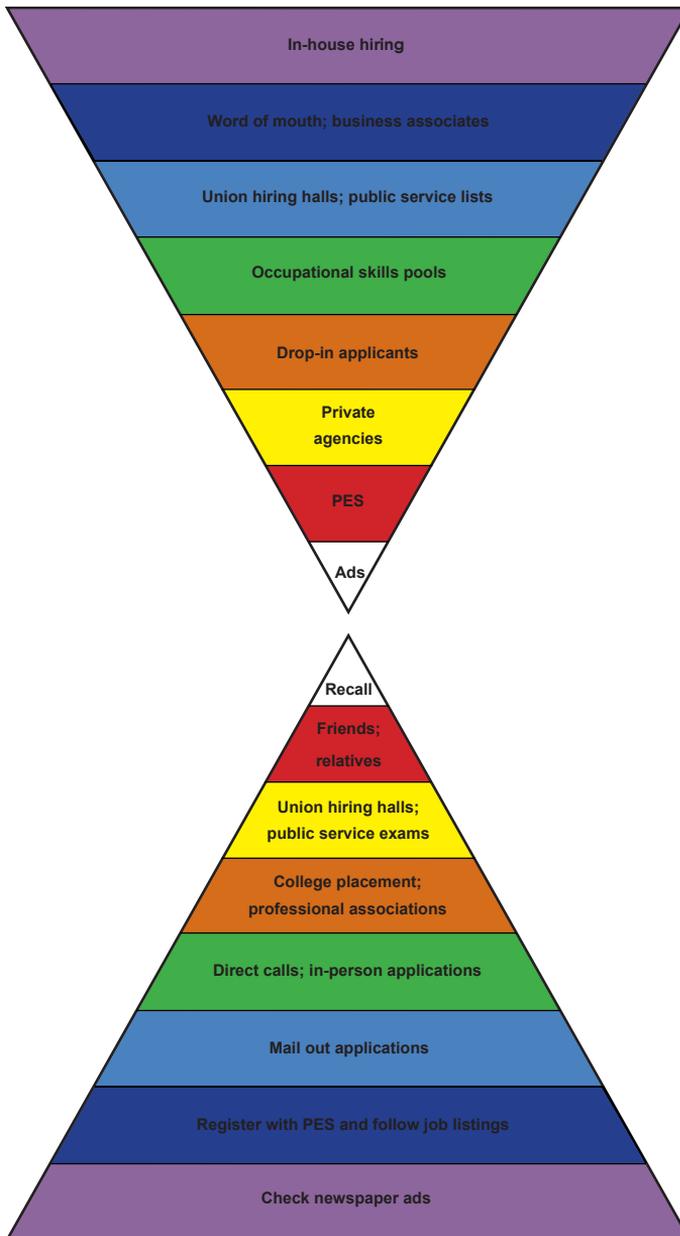
Annex 4

A recruitment and job search model

How employers with job openings, and potential workers, learn of and find each other is of crucial concern to employment officers. The job-search model consists of two triangles. The inverted triangle in figure 9 represents the method used by the employer to announce the vacancy. The matching coloured area on the upright triangle in figure 9 represents the place the jobseeker must be, or the action that must be taken, in order to become aware of the announced vacancy.

The sequence of levels is generally ordered according to the degree of openness of the announcement, and the exclusiveness of the audience, with the most exclusive, i.e. in-house opportunities, at the top of the figure. The various levels do not represent number of vacancies, size of the audience, or the frequency with which the matches occur.

Figure 9. How employers announce vacancies, and how jobseekers hear of vacancies





Annex 5

Role of the facilitator

In addition to the self-service options available to jobseekers who do not require individualized counselling, many ESCs find that offering periodic GIS on useful topics such as job-search techniques can be an effective way to convey the same message to a group of jobseekers in a short period of time. This will result in employment officers conserving more of their time for providing individualized counselling to those jobseekers who are most in need. GIS will also provide an atmosphere in which jobseekers will interact with others who are also seeking employment, which may help them feel less isolated and alone. Sometimes the very act of expressing frustration with a job search to others who are experiencing the same emotions can be helpful in dealing with these frustrations.

Employment officers will take the role of facilitator during these GIS. Before conducting a GIS, the facilitator must either be trained in the delivery of group sessions, or demonstrate equivalent competencies such as strong counselling skills and experience in assisting unemployed individuals. The facilitator must always have excellent knowledge of the specific topics to be covered in the GIS – for example, labour market trends, employment classifications, and occupational information resources. A knowledgeable facilitator will instill confidence in the group and assure jobseekers of the validity and practicality of the techniques being taught.

Generally, one facilitator is sufficient to lead a GIS, although an inexperienced facilitator may be paired with a trained facilitator as a means to develop skills both as an employment officer and a future facilitator. If this is the case, the inexperienced facilitator may provide assistance during exercises designed to complement the technical presentation.

The facilitator's role begins even before the participants arrive for the session, and the success of the session is often dependent on careful advance planning and preparation.

The **set-up of the room** is very important in establishing the proper tone for the session. Ideally, participants should be seated at tables with sufficient space at each place for them to arrange any materials provided, and to be able to take notes if they wish. If at all possible, avoid a traditional classroom layout of rows of tables and chairs, in favour of a less-structured configuration. It is preferable that the facilitator is able to move easily amongst the group during the session, taking care not to have his or her back to any of the participants for a prolonged period. Setting up a circular arrangement of tables, or a U-shaped arrangement, is conducive to greater eye contact between all participants and the facilitator.

If the GIS will include slides to be projected on a screen, ensure that all seats are positioned for ease of viewing the screen. When technology will be used – for example, computers and projection and other audio visual devices – the facilitator should ensure that everything is working properly and that he or she knows how to operate the devices, well in advance of the session. Also remember that even with the most thorough advance planning, a sudden loss of power can turn a hi-tech presentation into a very low-tech one, so always be prepared with back-up notes.

Even the most experienced facilitator can benefit from a **quick review of the materials** to be used during the session, and spending five or ten minutes to do this before participants arrive will result in a much smoother, more polished presentation. In the interest of efficiency, this review can be combined with checking that the technology works properly, and further ensures that not only is the equipment working and the facilitator can operate it, but also guarantees that the presentation slides are set up and ready to go.

It will also be useful for the facilitator to have a **quick review of the list of expected participants**, to become familiar with key facts about each one. While it would be



inappropriate for the facilitator to single out any of the participants during the session, it may be possible to include some examples during the presentation that would be applicable to situations or barriers experienced by some participants. This can increase the usefulness of the session for these participants, and also will make them feel as though they are not alone in facing this particular issue.

Of course, the principle role of the facilitator involves activities during the GIS. It is important for the facilitator to begin the session by **establishing a relationship of equality** amongst the participants, and to highlight some **rules of engagement** for the session. The facilitator should also acknowledge that every participant has important things to contribute to the session. It should be explained that the success of the session will depend not only on the technical presentation, but even more so on the willingness of each person to actively participate in discussions. The participants should be encouraged to interact with one another during the session, with the goal of perhaps establishing links to support each other's job search beyond the GIS. To facilitate this, the facilitator may wish to begin the session with a short ice-breaker session, and then, depending on the length of the session, include an energizing activity midway through.

Rules of engagement may include keeping cell phones set to "silent," respecting others' opinions, providing only positive feedback, active participation from all members of the group, and limiting their interventions to key points so as not to dominate the discussion.

The facilitator is also the **key resource person** during the session – providing information and ideas; introducing and directing activities; managing the time effectively; stimulating interactive discussions amongst the participants by using a range of questioning techniques; and, in some situations, modelling techniques or demonstrating processes. This role of resource person may also continue beyond the GIS for any follow-up actions that may be necessary.

As part of managing the time well, the facilitator should **avoid becoming side-tracked** into discussions specifically related to individual cases or of a more philosophical nature – for example, poor labour market conditions. While acknowledging the situation, and in some cases suggesting a one-on-one appointment to discuss the issue privately with the participant, the facilitator should **encourage participants to**

take responsibility for their own job search by helping them to use the information provided and the skills being taught.

A good facilitator will **tailor the programme information to the needs of the group** by providing examples that relate to the employment they are seeking – this is where reviewing the list of participants before the GIS will be particularly helpful. In order to prevent losing the participant's interest, the facilitator should **avoid using a continuous lecturing approach** and instead include many examples, employ modelling techniques, and incorporate short role-play situations, where appropriate, into the presentation.

Practitioners' guides on employment service centres

Providing effective counselling services

Volume 3

Providing effective counselling services (Volume 3) is the second of three procedural manuals in the collection entitled *Practitioners' guides on employment service centres*, which is intended to provide guidance to management and staff in delivering effective and efficient services to jobseekers and employers.

Providing effective counselling services (Volume 3) aims to assist employment service staff in developing a clear understanding of: the elements and flow of employment service functions; interviewing and counselling techniques; and factors to consider when providing counselling services to clients.

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