



# **Career Ladders: Helping Communities Toward Responsive and Integrated Service Delivery**

*Integrated Planning Group Report*

Submitted by the Literacy Network of Durham Region, Durham Workforce Authority  
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## **Section 1: Brief Community Background & Report Summary**

The Region of Durham is situated just east of the City of Toronto and is one of several regions making up the highly populated and economically developed Greater Toronto Area. It is comprised of the five urban municipalities of Pickering, Ajax, Whitby, Oshawa and Clarington as well as the three rural areas of Scugog, Brock and Uxbridge. According to the 2011 census, Durham Region encompasses an area of approximately 2,590 square kilometers, containing a population of 608,124 citizens. It is considered an increasingly culturally diverse and economically expanding region. Durham is endowed with all the utility, transportation and social infrastructure associated with thriving metropolitan communities.

The area was historically regarded for the strength of its automotive manufacturing workforce that has undergone an overall reduction of related employment in Durham. It is expected that this sector will continue to trend towards more complex, advanced manufacturing in the future. This shift has partially contributed to the stagnating local unemployment rate of 7.1% overall recorded for the Oshawa Census Metropolitan Area in January 2014. While Durham has a young, skilled employment pool, it is also considered to possess a skills gap that exists between precariously employed adults and unfilled higher skill jobs in various employment sectors.

In so much that Durham is a region that has a recent history of shifts in economic development, it is a community characterized by the strength of its local education system. With several post-secondary institutions situated within its boundaries, Durham has been able to attract and retain highly skilled, well-educated citizens capable of filling complex occupations. However, Durham is also populated by displaced workers characterized as “precariously employed” in addition to those individuals who fall outside of the workforce altogether. A portion of the unemployed population contributes to the Ontario Works Durham caseload of over 9,400 benefit units. This dichotomy between skilled and unskilled labour force represents an ongoing challenge for the region's economic prosperity. Over the past several years, various strategies to improve the skills of the unemployed population have been instituted, including programs such as the Ministry of Training Colleges & Universities' Second Career program and Targeted Initiative for Older Workers. Having observed varying success in addressing the local skills- gap, the Literacy Network of Durham Region and Durham Workforce Authority have partnered with Essential Skills Ontario, Literacy Link South Central and Literacy Northwest to investigate the feasibility of adopting the Career Ladders model in local Ontario communities.

According to Essential Skills Ontario, the concept of Career Ladders arranges post-secondary level training into a series of incremental certificates that workers can access

in a flexible manner. These small certificates can be stacked into larger credentials such as college diplomas. Each certificate, or rung, in a Career Ladder is designed to meet the particular needs of both participants and local employers through the development of necessary workplace skills. To further the practicality of this process, Literacy and Essential Skills training and extensive personal wraparound supports are embedded in the delivery of stacked post-secondary certificates allowing for supportive and seamless career upgrading. Essential Skills Ontario outlines the following key factors in the model:

- 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.
- Training providers are asked to customize the content of training materials so that they meet the needs of workers in specific job contexts. Training curriculum reflects local industry and employer skills requirements.
- Employers are encouraged to create work that is learner-friendly by supporting training during working hours, providing space for instruction and by facilitating career advancement.
- Social agencies are enlisted to address other barriers outside of the workplace that may impede participants – from childcare challenges to the development of skills for managing time and domestic budgets.

Upon implementation, Career Ladders accomplishes the following:

- Program alignment with industry and economic development.
- Increased participation of low-income, lower-skilled workers in training (including persistence and completion).
- Accelerated learning and skill building.
- Stackable learning aligned with local industry and occupations.
- A coherent system for both workers and employers.
- Increased private and public investment for those who would most benefit.

The concept of Career Ladders to date has been embraced in Durham Region by educators, industry and community service agencies. Ongoing consultation has demonstrated that there is an appetite for restructuring the delivery of training to meet the skills needs of both workers and local employers. This initiative is seen as a potential solution to the difficulty many adults have in merging the requirement for up-skilling and academic credentials with the simultaneous need for entry level, stable employment

opportunities. It also follows that Career Ladders provides a system that aims to address higher skilled jobs that can be difficult to fill with existing low-skilled workforce participants.

From an education standpoint there is compelling statistical evidence to support the introduction of a local Career Ladders model. In regards to skills attainment, approximately 36% of the adult population in Durham does not possess post-secondary credentials, with approximately 9% of that group also having failed to attain a high school diploma or equivalent. These rates are similar to those of the population of Ontario as a whole. The rate of post-secondary completion in Durham is also similar to that of the Province, with 64% of the adult population in Durham having achieved some level of post-secondary completion. With respect to the types of post-secondary education pursued among adults in Durham, a higher proportion of post-secondary graduates pursued college or university degrees/diplomas than apprenticeship or trade certificates.

In assembling an Integrated Planning Group to steer the initiative, it has been clear that Career Ladders resonates with secondary school and post-secondary representatives as well as social service agencies. In addition, discussion among Literacy & Basic Skills, Employment Services and community stakeholders have confirmed an overall interest in pursuing a model that may address local needs. Preliminary intelligence suggests that this model should be community-based, flexible and geared to the needs of targeted marginalized populations as well as expanding employment sectors such as food processing, agri-food and agriculture. The impetus for Career Ladders in Durham has been validated by research included in the annual Local Labour Market Plan published by Durham Workforce Authority, the Community Adjustment and Sustainability Strategy published by the Regional Municipality of Durham and social planning research carried out by Community Development Council Durham.

As the first pilot phase concludes, the Durham Career Ladders planning group anticipates pursuing an approach that meets the needs of the local food processing and agri-food/agriculture sectors. This focus was determined through a multi-faceted approach that included extensive research of the local labour market landscape as well as dialogue with community stakeholders and employers. It is anticipated that future project activities will align with the needs of this aspect of the local economy. In considering this particular sector focus, the Integrated Planning Group wished to focus on industries present and crucial in all of Durham, including the under-represented rural north. Food processing and agriculture are domains that also represent the potential development of horizontal Career Ladders across sectors - for instance Quality Assurance credentials that may be applicable to multiple industries. As a value-added aspect, horizontal ladders are considered especially beneficial to local immigrant

populations requiring foreign-trained credential recognition. The enthusiasm of the selected employment sectors has been gauged and verified through continuous community consultation and a Town Hall event hosted at the newly established Durham College Centre for Food in February 2014.

Currently, the Durham pilot is led by an Integrated Planning Group comprised of representatives from the public and separate school boards, the local college and university, regional social planning council, workforce planning board, literacy network, municipal economic development, employment programming and social services. This team continues to move forward a local Career Ladders approach governed by the principle of meeting the overarching needs of both marginalized, under-skilled adults and locally based food processing and agricultural sector employers by providing a creative, locally responsive and targeted approach.

## Section 2: Industry Selection

The Literacy Network of Durham Region and Durham Workforce Authority discussed potential industries for Career Ladders from the earliest phase of the project. Initial informal conversations were based on local intelligence and anecdotal information. Locally, most discussions about industry growth and economic development are based on the 2009 Community Adjustment and Sustainability Strategy prepared by McSweeney & Associates Management Consultants for the Regional Municipality of Durham and City of Oshawa. The Community Adjustment and Sustainability Strategy outlines six emerging sectors in Durham Region including sustainable energy, transportation and automotive, information technologies, health and wellness, bioscience and agriculture and research, development and advanced manufacturing. In addition, the Durham Workforce Authority's Local Labour Market Plan is a regularly consulted report identifying emerging industry trends. The initial conversations recognized six potential industries within Durham Region that could be selected for this project. The industries identified included food processing and agriculture, retail trade, professional, scientific and technical services, construction, health care and social assistance and public administration.

The Literacy Network of Durham Region and Durham Workforce Authority conducted detailed research and analysis into the six potential industries. Research collected included employment by industry and top occupations within the selected industries, in addition, sector specific reports were consulted to identify training gaps, skill shortages and future growth. The information collected indicated that food processing and agriculture was the most viable option for Durham Region. The other industries presented many perceived problems related to implementation. Most notably these potential barriers included a lack of upward mobility, a lack of educational requirements, small enterprises that are not yet in a position for growth, industry clusters located outside of Durham Region, regulatory framework that would inhibit the abilities of the Career Ladders model and cyclical employment. For verification, the Literacy Network of Durham Region and the Durham Workforce Authority compiled this information and presented it to the Integrated Planning Group.

Defined broadly, food processing is the transformation of raw ingredients into food, or of food into other forms. Food processing typically takes clean, harvested crops or butchered animal products and uses these to produce attractive, marketable and often long shelf-life food products. The last five years have seen increased interest in the food processing sector. On a federal and provincial level the agri-food sector is creating opportunities in subsectors such as meat, dairy and grains. Locally, the Golden Horseshoe comprised of the Regions of Durham, Halton, Niagara, Peel, York and the Cities of Hamilton and Toronto produces over 200 types of agricultural crops and

contains the majority of Ontario's food processing operations. Food processing businesses in the Golden Horseshoe now employ more workers than the automotive industry. The annual economic activity in the food and farming cluster in the Golden Horseshoe is estimated to be \$12.3 billion.<sup>1</sup> Durham Region leads the Greater Toronto Area in farm production.<sup>2</sup> Currently, in Durham Region, there are 1,454 operating farms with 2,130 farm operators. There are a total of 2,975 individuals employed in agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting in Durham Region.<sup>3</sup> Despite urbanization, 40% of Durham Region remains agricultural land mass.<sup>4</sup>

The Durham Region Food Processing Action Plan endorsed by Regional Council in 2011 targets the development of a value chain that includes business in the agriculture and agri-food industries. It places emphasis on capitalizing on opportunities to attract businesses that would complement those already in Durham Region such as public cold storage, abattoirs and post-harvest handling facilities. There are several new developments in Durham Region related to the food processing industry most notably Durham College's Centre for Food training facility in Whitby, which opened its doors in September 2013 and the scheduled opening of the 108,000 square-foot Del Monte food processing and distribution plant in late 2014.<sup>5</sup> In addition to these major developments there continues to be growth in small and medium enterprises related to local, sustainable food (i.e. organic butchers) and specialized food products (i.e. confectionaries, specialized sauces and oils and gluten-free bakeries).

In 2011, the Regional Municipality of Durham commissioned a Business Retention and Expansion (BR&E) Project for the agri-food and agri-business sectors. The BR&E was completed by Millier Dickinson Blais Inc. The findings of the study provide additional evidence to support the sector selection. Over half of the employers surveyed were small and medium enterprises with 20 employees or less. In the next three years however, 40% of employers surveyed indicated plans for expansion and 25% projected an increase of employees leading to an increased workforce and additional investments in equipment and technology. Skilled and unskilled labourers were the two most common employee needs by the businesses surveyed. Further, employers indicated supervisory skills and health and safety were the top two areas for workforce skill development. While employers indicated many barriers to expansion, including available space, business taxes and public transit one of the top obstacles was the availability of skilled labour. Employers indicated that training for new and current employees would be required with upgrading skills a necessity. The two primary barriers to employees receiving the necessary training were cost and loss of productivity.

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<sup>1</sup> Food and Farming: An Action Plan 2021

<sup>2</sup> Region of Durham: Food Processing Action Plan

<sup>3</sup> StatsCan

<sup>4</sup> StatsCan

<sup>5</sup> Durham Workforce Authority. *Construction Sector Study*. 2011



The food processing sector in Durham Region is well situated for growth in the next five years. Efforts are being made at all levels of government to assist in this development and employers in Durham Region are prepared for growth and expansion. Despite these efforts, the fundamental requirement remains the availability of workers. Career Ladders presents an opportunity to provide this sector with access to workers and training to assist in future growth plans.

## 2.1 Background Research on Specific Occupations in Food Processing, Agri-food/Agriculture Industry

The following chart depicts entry, intermediate and skilled/managerial occupations within the food processing industry. These occupations were selected based on their prevalence within the food processing industry specific to Durham Region.

Occupation	NOC	Occupation Description	Experience/Training	Skill Requirements	Local Education Availability	Number of Durham Region Residents Employed <sup>1</sup>	Number of Employed Persons in Durham Region <sup>2</sup>	Durham Region Average Salary <sup>3</sup>
Labourers in food, beverage and associated products processing	9617	Perform material handling, clean-up, packaging and other elemental activities related to food, beverage and associated products processing.	Little or no previous work-related skill, knowledge, or experience is needed for these occupations.	Watching gauges, dials, or other indicators to ensure machine is functioning; remove filled containers from conveyors and pack goods into bags, boxes or other containers; check products and packaging for basic quality defects; controlling operations of equipment	OSSD or equivalent may be required depending on employer			

Process control operator food, beverage and associated products processing	9461	Operate multi-function process control machinery to process and package food, beverage and associated products.	On-the-job training is provided. Experience as a machine operator in food, beverage or associated products processing is usually required for industrial process control operators. Experience as a labourer may be required for machine operators.	Operate multi-function process control machinery through control panels, computer terminals or other control systems; observe gauges, computer printouts and video monitors to verify specified processing conditions and make adjustments to process variables; maintain shift log of production and other data.				
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Occupation	NOC	Occupation Description	Experience/Training	Skill Requirements	Local Education Availability	Number of Durham Region Residents Employed <sup>1</sup>	Number of Employed Persons in Durham Region <sup>2</sup>	Durham Region Average Salary <sup>3</sup>
Labourers in food, beverage and associated products processing	9617	Perform material handling, clean-up, packaging and other elemental activities related to food, beverage and associated products processing.	Little or no previous work-related skill, knowledge, or experience is needed for these occupations. Completion of secondary school may be required.	Watching gauges, dials, or other indicators to ensure machine is functioning; remove filled containers from conveyors and pack goods into bags, boxes or other containers; check products and packaging for basic quality defects; controlling operations of equipment				
Process control operator	9461	Operate multi-function process	On-the-job training is provided. Experience as a	Operate multi-function process control				

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Machine operators food, beverage and associated products processing	9461	Operate single-function machines to process and package food, beverage and associated products.	On-the-job training is provided. Experience as a labourer may be required for machine operators.	Set up and adjust processing and packaging machines preparatory to operation; operate single-function machines; check products to ensure conformance to company standards and clear machine blockages as required; Record production information such as quantity, weight, size, date and type of products packaged.				
Supervisors, food,	9213	Supervise and co-ordinate	Several years of experience in the	Supervise, co-ordinate and	Post-secondary			

beverage and associated products processing		the activities of workers who operate processing and packaging machines, and workers who grade food, beverage and associated products.	food, beverage or associated products processing industry are required.	schedule the activities of workers; establish methods to meet work schedules and co-ordinate work activities with other departments; resolve work problems and recommend measures to improve productivity and product quality; requisition materials and supplies; train staff in job duties, safety procedures and company policy.	education in microbiology or chemistry may be required (UOIT)  Durham College  Conestoga College			
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Occupation	NOC	Occupation Description	Experience/Training	Skill Requirements	Local Education Availability	Number of Durham Region Residents Employed <sup>1</sup>	Number of Employed Persons in Durham Region <sup>2</sup>	Durham Region Average Salary <sup>3</sup>
Manufacturing managers	0911	Manufacturing managers	Five to ten years of supervisory	Plan, organize, direct, control	Completion of a college or			

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		plan, organize, direct, control and evaluate the operations of a manufacturing establishment or of a production department within a manufacturing establishment.	experience in manufacturing are required.	and evaluate the operations of a manufacturing establishment or the operations or production department of a manufacturing establishment; develop and implement plans to efficiently use materials, labour and equipment to meet production targets;  Plan and manage the establishment	university program in engineering or business administration is usually required.  Durham College  Conestoga College			

Occupation	NOC	Occupation Description	Experience/Training	Skill Requirements	Local Education Availability	Number of Durham Region Residents Employed <sup>1</sup>	Number of Employed Persons in Durham Region <sup>2</sup>	Durham Region Average Salary <sup>3</sup>
				of departmental budget; plan and implement changes to machinery and equipment, production systems and methods of work.				
Testers and graders, food, beverage and associated products processing	9465	Testers and graders test or grade ingredients and finished food, beverage or associated products to ensure conformance to company	Completion of secondary school may be required. Experience as a machine operator or labourer in the food, beverage and associated products processing industry may be required. On-the-job training is usually	Take samples of products at various stages of processing; Examine ingredients or finished products by sight, touch, taste and smell or weigh materials to	Durham College			



Occupation	NOC	Occupation Description	Experience/Training	Skill Requirements	Local Education Availability	Number of Durham Region Residents Employed <sup>1</sup>	Number of Employed Persons in Durham Region <sup>2</sup>	Durham Region Average Salary <sup>3</sup>
		standards.	provided.	ensure conformance; conduct routine tests for product specifications; inform supervisors of deficiencies.				
Shipper and Receivers	1521	Shippers and receivers ship, receive and record the movement of parts, supplies, materials, equipment and stock to and from an establishment.	Completion of secondary school is usually required. Experience as a warehouse worker may be required. A forklift certificate may be required. A driver's licence may be required.	Determine method of shipment and arrange shipping; prepare bills of lading, customs forms, invoices; assemble containers and crates, pack goods to be shipped and affix identifying information				

Occupation	NOC	Occupation Description	Experience/Training	Skill Requirements	Local Education Availability	Number of Durham Region Residents Employed <sup>1</sup>	Number of Employed Persons in Durham Region <sup>2</sup>	Durham Region Average Salary <sup>3</sup>
				and shipping instructions; oversee loading and unloading of goods from trucks or other conveyances; inspect and verify incoming goods against invoices or other documents, record shortages and reject damaged goods				
Industrial butchers and meat cutters, poultry preparers and related	9462	Workers prepare meat and poultry for further processing, for packaging or	Completion of secondary school may be required.	Industrial butchers slaughter livestock using stunning devices and				

Occupation	NOC	Occupation Description	Experience/Training	Skill Requirements	Local Education Availability	Number of Durham Region Residents Employed <sup>1</sup>	Number of Employed Persons in Durham Region <sup>2</sup>	Durham Region Average Salary <sup>3</sup>
workers		for marketing.	<p>For industrial meat cutters, completion of a program in industrial meat cutting or experience as an industrial butcher or trimmer is required.</p> <p>On-the-job training is provided for industrial butchers, poultry preparers and trimmers.</p>	<p>knives; skin, clean and trim carcasses; split carcasses into smaller portions to facilitate handling. Industrial meat cutters cut carcasses or sides or quarters of carcasses into primal cuts for further cutting, processing or packaging. Poultry preparers slaughter poultry and remove inedible parts.</p>				

Occupation	NOC	Occupation Description	Experience/Training	Skill Requirements	Local Education Availability	Number of Durham Region Residents Employed <sup>1</sup>	Number of Employed Persons in Durham Region <sup>2</sup>	Durham Region Average Salary <sup>3</sup>
Butchers, meat cutters and fishmongers – retail and wholesale	6331	Butchers, meat cutters and fishmongers, retail and wholesale, prepare standard cuts of meat, poultry, fish and shellfish for sale in retail or wholesale food establishments.	<p>Completion of secondary school may be required.</p> <p>Completion of a college or other meat-and-fish-cutting training program may be required.</p> <p>On-the-job training in food stores is usually provided for retail butchers, meat cutters and fishmongers.</p>	<p>Cut, trim, and otherwise prepare standard cuts of meat, poultry, fish and shellfish; grind meats and slice cooked meats using powered grinders and slicing machines; shape, lace and tie roasts and other meats, poultry or fish and may wrap prepared meats, poultry, fish and shellfish</p>				

Occupation	NOC	Occupation Description	Experience/Training	Skill Requirements	Local Education Availability	Number of Durham Region Residents Employed <sup>1</sup>	Number of Employed Persons in Durham Region <sup>2</sup>	Durham Region Average Salary <sup>3</sup>
Agricultural and fish products inspectors	2222	Agricultural and fish products inspectors inspect agricultural and fish products for conformity to prescribed production, storage and transportation standards.	<p>Completion of secondary school is required.</p> <p>Inspectors may require a bachelor's degree or college diploma in a related discipline.</p> <p>Several years of experience in agricultural production or fish processing are usually required.</p> <p>Completion of in-house training courses is required.</p>	<p>Inspect fish, fruit and vegetables, grain, meat and/or plant products; prepare reports on crop production and market conditions; ensure regulations are followed; monitor shipping and handling; ensure sanitation standards are met.</p>	Durham College			

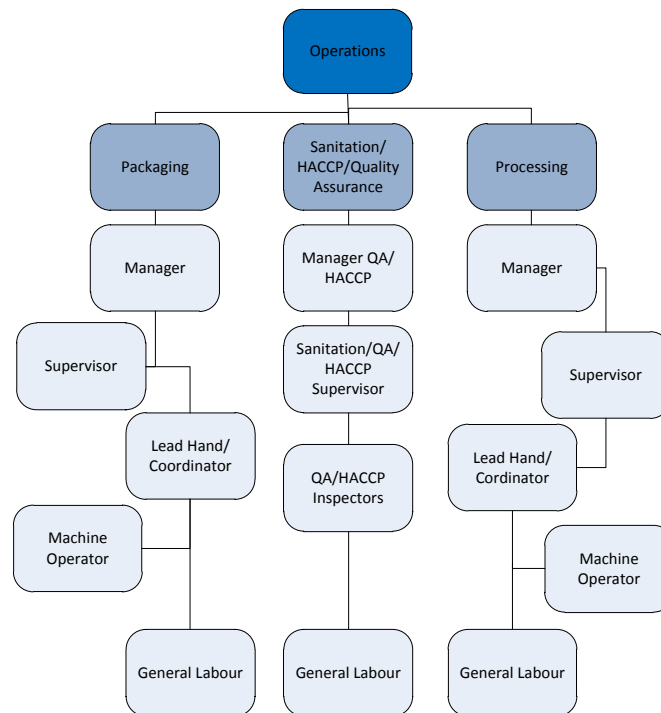
Occupation	NOC	Occupation Description	Experience/Training	Skill Requirements	Local Education Availability	Number of Durham Region Residents Employed <sup>1</sup>	Number of Employed Persons in Durham Region <sup>2</sup>	Durham Region Average Salary <sup>3</sup>
Baker	6332	Bakers prepare bread, rolls, muffins, pies, pastries, cakes and cookies in retail and wholesale bakeries and dining establishments.	<p>Completion of secondary school is usually required.</p> <p>Completion of a 5,280 hour apprenticeship program and/or completion of a college or other program for bakers is usually required.</p> <p>On-the-job training may be provided.</p> <p>Trade certification is available, but voluntary Ontario</p> <p>Red Seal endorsement is also</p>	<p>Prepare dough for pies, bread, rolls and sweet goods, batters for muffins, cookies and cakes and icings and frostings according to recipes or special customer orders;</p> <p>operate machinery;</p> <p>bake mixed doughs and batters; frost and decorate cakes or other baked goods;</p> <p>ensure quality of products meets established</p>	<p>Centennial College</p> <p>George Brown College</p> <p>Loyalist College</p>			
Baker								

Occupation	NOC	Occupation Description	Experience/Training	Skill Requirements	Local Education Availability	Number of Durham Region Residents Employed <sup>1</sup>	Number of Employed Persons in Durham Region <sup>2</sup>	Durham Region Average Salary <sup>3</sup>
			available to qualified bakers upon successful completion of the interprovincial Red Seal examination.	standards				

Essential Skills Ontario's initiative Elevate Canada: Raising the Grade for Food Processing is currently investigating food processing firms in Ontario. Based on initial intelligence, there appears to be commonalities in regards to organizational structures between firms and in different subsectors within the industry. While titles and job specific skills differ based on the firm and subsector, their roles are often common. General labourers, packers, material handlers, production workers and machine operators perform job tasks that vary slightly regardless of the type of product. Within many firms, entry-level production and packaging employees are cross-trained and take on many different but similar skilled job functions. Depending on the nature and size of the food processing firm, there are variations in hierarchical positions.

Some food processing occupations require little formal education or training. A high school diploma is often not required for most entry-level general labour positions. There are specific requirements that all workers must meet pertaining to safety training however, employers generally provide these courses to their employees during employee orientation. As the food processing industry modernizes and safety regulations increase, training is becoming more available for upper level management and those who are involved in Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points or HACCP, quality assurance and sanitation.

Workers tend to advance in the food processing industry as a result of experience and ambition. Historically, initiative and seniority has resulted in employee career advancement to positions such as lead hand, coordinators, machine operators and supervisors. New trends in the sector have resulted in formal education and training requirements for technical and higher level positions.



The organizational chart above generally focuses on packaging and processing occupations. It does not reflect all food processing firms and does not include sales, marketing, logistics, administration, maintenance or trade occupations that exist within the food processing industry.



## 2.2 Background Research on Existing Training Service Provision

Program	Educational Institution	Entry Level Requirements	Duration	Related Occupations
Culinary Skills	Durham College	OSSD or Mature Student Status and  Grade 12 English, Grade 12 Mathematics	1 Academic Year (Period of 8 months)	Baker, cook, butcher
Horticulture - Food and Farming	Durham College	OSSD or Mature Student Status <u>and</u>  Grade 12 English, Grade 12 Mathematics	2 Academic Years (Periods of 8 months)	Food technologist, agri-business, food inspection, agri-tourism, self-employment, niche preservation/processing of local food
Pharmaceutical and Food Science Technology	Durham College	OSSD or Mature Student Status <u>and</u>  Grade 12 English, Grade 12 Mathematics, Grade 11 or 12 biology and chemistry (highly recommended)	6 Semesters – Fast track option available 4 Semesters	Food technologist, quality assurance technician, manufacturing, marketing, sales or administration in the food industry
Sustainable Agriculture	Sir Sandford Fleming College	A two-year Ontario College diploma <u>or</u> two years of university level undergraduate study <u>or</u> a combination of farm-related work experience, formal and informal education and/or service learning such as	3 Semesters	Small-scale farm operations, managing farmers' markets, agri-tourism, agri-business

		international work		
Food Processing Techniques	Conestoga College	OSSD or Mature Student Status <u>and</u> Grade 12 English, Grade 11 Mathematics	1 Academic Year (Period of 8 months)	Entry level positions such as line worker, plant sanitation worker, and "batcher" in the Food and Beverage Processing Industry.
Food Processing Technician	Conestoga College	OSSD or Mature Student Status <u>and</u> Grade 12 English, Grade 11 Mathematics	4 Semesters	Highly skilled positions such as, machine operator, maintenance mechanic or millwright apprentice.

Program	Educational Institution	Entry Level Requirements	Duration	Related Occupations
Baking – Commercial Bakeries	Centennial College	OSSD or Mature Student Status <u>and</u> Grade 12 English	2 Semesters	Entry level positions in retail bakeries and supermarkets
Baking and Pastry Arts Management	George Brown College	OSSD or Mature Student Status <u>and</u>  Grade 12 English, Grade 11 Mathematics	4 Semesters	Commercial baker, entrepreneur
Enhanced Baking for Cooks	Loyalist College	Ontario College Diploma in Culinary Management, or equivalent <u>or</u> Red Seal Cook/Chef, or international equivalent <u>or</u>  Applicants with significant related work experience will be considered on an individual basis	14 Weeks	Chef, cook, baker, pastry chef
Mechanical Technician – Mechanical Maintenance and Control	Durham College	OSSD or Mature Student Status <u>and</u>  Grade 12 English, Grade 12 Mathematics	2 Academic Years (Periods of 8 months)	Machine builder, junior mechanic/technician, salesperson, apprenticeship as an industrial mechanic millwright
Manufacturing Engineering / Manufacturing	University of Ontario Institute of Technology	OSSD and six 4U or 4M credits including English with a minimum average of 60 per	4/5 Years	Design and development of products and processes, production planning and

Engineering and Management		cent, Advanced Functions, Calculus and Vectors, Chemistry, and Physics		control, system and facility design and analysis, operations management and plant maintenance, engineering marketing and sales, economic analysis and accounting, and research and development
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In addition to the programs listed above, Durham College indicated that through consultation with the food processing industry, a program had been designed. To date, this program has not been offered. The curriculum was removed from the full-time program schedule due to a lack of enrolment. It has since been moved into Corporate Training and presently resides within Continuing Education. Durham College noted that while employers were heavily consulted during the development, there has been minimal interest from students. Timing and delivery modes have posed a problem with regards to offering the course through Corporate Training. Moving forward, Durham College has indicated that they would be willing to share lessons learned as well as course materials.

While only one degree program was outlined above, it should be noted that further investigation into Durham Region food processing training requirements would accurately outline other degree pathways. As food processing becomes increasingly automated there will be a need for additional engineers either employed full time or on a consultative basis. In addition, as food processing firms in Durham Region expand there will be a continued demand for business professionals to assume roles including, but not limited to, human resources, accounting, marketing and research and development. It is expected that throughout the life cycle of this project additional educational opportunities will be identified.

## Section 3: Integrated Planning Groups

In order to establish the pilot initiative in Durham, the project team comprised of the Literacy Network of Durham Region and Durham Workforce Authority considered not only the requirement for strategic partnership but also the core principles of Career Ladders. By virtue of its focus on assisting highly barriered, marginalized individuals, the model represents a community development initiative that is inclusive, supportive and innovative. In establishing an Integrated Planning Group to steer the pilot activities it was important to adhere to the key principles governing Career Ladders as listed below.

- Clear connection between economic and social strategies.
- Open dialogue across local community stakeholders (government, education, industry, etc.).
- Local engagement in determining potential hurdles, as well as possible solutions.
- Increased capacity development at the local level as well as within government institutions.
- Funding, measurement and accountability mechanisms that are adaptable to the local environment.

Rather than utilizing existing community training or employment committees, the Literacy Network of Durham Region and Durham Workforce Authority identified local organizations that would fully contribute to a successful Career Ladders implementation. This meant that in addition to creating ties to employers, it was imperative to obtain representatives specifically from the local education, community, economic development and social services systems. Once the agencies were chosen, project staff began to engage with possible candidates through individual briefing meetings. These meetings provided a chance to gauge individual interest and enthusiasm as well as share critical information on the model and anticipated project outcomes. It was important throughout this process to attract potential Integrated Planning Group members who would act as champions for the concept of Career Ladders but who could also fill the role of intelligence broker within their own organizations in order to help the pilot roll out successfully in future phases.

Specifically the role of broker was intended to achieve several objectives as follows.

- Members were expected to support the pilot initiative through engaged participation in all pilot phases.
- The group would make appropriate and strategic connections within sector organizations.
- Members would advocate within their organizations and externally in the community for the purposes of adapting Career Ladders for local use.

- The group would engage in meaningful and thoughtful guidance to establish a potential targeted industry sector.
- The group would assist in identifying barriers, challenges, opportunities and risks in adopting the Career Ladders model.

The community broker approach assisted the project team in mapping out complex employment, education and social service systems. Initial members were sought out according to their ability within their organizations to efficiently and accurately identify other staff or agency resources that could contribute to the project at different phases. Furthermore, brokers were best exemplified by those individuals who passionately supported the intent of Career Ladders and possessed a strong investment in developing a local strategy not only for their own organizations' benefit but also for that of the Durham community as a whole. It is fair to say that the personal enthusiasm of local Integrated Planning Group members has contributed significantly to the success of the first project phase. Additional members will be recruited in the future as required in much the same manner.

Meetings of the committee have served to establish the direction of the local pilot initiative through a variety of activities. In the preliminary stages of the project, the group 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. In some cases, this data was customized specifically for the needs of the project. Following this, the committee worked with the project staff to identify a potential industry focus. In reviewing additional intelligence, including expert research produced by the Durham Workforce Authority, the Integrated Planning Group validated the selection of the food processing and agriculture industry sectors. Additionally, the group utilized their knowledge of the secondary and -secondary system to map out preliminary education pathways. The group also engaged in the initial identification of potential worker target populations. Finally, members contributed significantly to organizing and facilitating an employer Town Hall meeting to validate project findings.

To date the Integrated Planning Group has proven itself to be a highly functioning team of established professionals. The members currently include:

- Jennine Agnew-Kata, Executive Director, Literacy Network of Durham Region
- Darrin Caron, Dean/Principal, Durham College School of Skilled Trades, Apprenticeship & Renewable Technology
- Lindsay Coolidge, Manager, Government and Community Relations, University of Ontario Institute of Technology
- Benjamin Earle, Executive Director, Community Development Council Durham

- Alison Hountalas, Employment Supports Supervisor, Ontario Works Durham
- Rhonda Keenan, Business Development Manager, Oshawa - Economic Development Services
- Anne Marie Laginski, Superintendent of Education, Durham Continuing Education / Durham Alternative Secondary Schools
- Paige Marlow, Researcher, Durham Workforce Authority
- Heather McMillan, Executive Director, Durham Workforce Authority
- Stacey Ritchie, Student Success Coordinator, Durham Catholic District School Board
- Maralyn Tassone, Executive Director, Durham Region Unemployed Help Centre

### **3.1 Career Ladder Town Hall**

The Literacy Network of Durham Region and Durham Workforce Authority hosted a Town Hall meeting on Wednesday, February 26, 2014 at the new Durham College Centre for Food located in Whitby. The objective of this event was to introduce and validate the concept of Career Ladders with a group of community stakeholders that included representatives from the food processing and agri-food/agriculture sector. The project lead, Essential Skills Ontario as well as members of the Integrated Planning Group supported the event.

Several representatives attended the event from local food processing and agricultural businesses including Maple Leaf Farms, Geissberger Farmhouse Cider and Frolic Acres Farms. In addition, representatives from Durham College, including the Dean of the School Science and Engineering Technology, as well as Ontario Works managers provided valuable feedback on the initiative. A decided lesson learned as a result of the Town Hall was that employer engagement can be challenging and requires a great deal of proactive outreach to elicit even modest results.

The agenda for the Town Hall included a comprehensive presentation on the Career Ladders model as well as guided questions that allowed participants to inform the project team of potential opportunities, challenges and obstacles in implementing a customized initiative model in Durham. The results of the event were encouraging with the attendees confirming the selection of the sector focus and providing valuable feedback on potential challenges and opportunities.

Discussion items that arose during the event were expected to inform future iterations of the Career Ladders model in Durham Region. These items included validation of the chosen sectors (food processing and agriculture) as well as confirmation that the model met identified employment and training needs in Durham Region. In addition,



potential considerations and challenges were noted. The following key themes emerged:

**Awareness:** Business owners suggested that there is a lack of knowledge of the industry on the part of potential workers. Many people possess a very traditional view of farms and food production and do not understand the safety guidelines, computerization or science and technology advances involved. Some school-level programs have proven to raise the awareness of primary and secondary students but adults are often not familiar with the industries. Conversely, food processing and agricultural businesses are not always fully acquainted with local training that may meet their human resources requirements.

**Barriers to Employment:** Of concern to all stakeholders present was the need to remove systemic barriers to employment and learning opportunities. Some of the noted obstacles included the requirement for a high school diploma to participate in some training programs as well as a lack of robust public transportation in the rural north. Additionally, shift work in the food processing industry and the prevalence of seasonal downtime can be challenging for working parents requiring flexible childcare arrangements. A successful Career Ladders model would require long-term wraparound supports geared to the local needs of low-wage workers.

**Small Businesses:** Many farms and food processing businesses represent small to medium employers and do not have large enough workforces to access traditional corporate training solutions. Strategies for a consortium or group approach to Career Ladders would therefore be of great benefit. A consortium approach would focus the model upon training workers from within the chosen sectors but who are employed by several different local businesses. In the rural north of Durham, a Career Ladders approach that targets employees of small to medium employers rather than one larger employer may be most suitable.

**Training:** Durham College provided an overview of relevant training curriculum that has been developed but not delivered specifically for the food processing and agriculture sector. This includes a one-year certificate consisting of condensed adult learning geared to those already working in the food processing industry. It has proven challenging to attract students and employers to access this type of program. Durham College has continued to investigate flexible delivery options for food processing and agriculture training and clearly spoke to a commitment to remove barriers from participation. What was clear from the discussion was that the availability of industry-focused, post-secondary certification was not only feasible but already locally available to some extent. The group was encouraged by the College's commitment to supporting Career Ladders as well as their interest in removing obstacles to adult learner participation.

It was clear from the discussion at the Town Hall that there is a concrete need for a Career Ladders model in the selected sectors despite noted challenges. While the assembled group was small, it encouraged ongoing investigation into adopting the model locally and provided valuable feedback on specific themes and considerations as above. It was anticipated at the end of the event that the employers present would participate in key informant interviews and that ongoing project outreach be directed to all Town Hall attendees.

### **3.2 Industry Conversations**

The Literacy Network of Durham Region and Durham Workforce Authority consulted with industry representatives from the earliest phase of the project. In order to determine a sector focus, it was important to gauge not only the interest but also the capacity of various local industries. Preliminary research was initiated through general conversations with representatives from both regional and municipal economic development departments. These meetings were intended to provide some local background to the various trends of employers in the area. This valuable introduction to local economic development intelligence contributed to the early identification of the food processing and agri-food/agriculture industry for a Career Ladders approach. Industry consultation validated much of what Durham Workforce Authority had noted in its ongoing local labour market research. Considering the decline of employment in the local automotive sector, alternative emerging labour market trends are expected to impact Durham Region's urban and rural workforces. Some of these trends as they relate to food processing and agriculture guided the sector selection process and are highlighted below.

Several new developments in Durham represent increased labour market activity in the food processing sector, most notably the opening of the 108,000-square-foot Del Monte food processing and distribution plant and Durham College's new Centre for Food training facility in Whitby. Both were scheduled to launch in late 2013.

Regional Council endorsed a Food Processing Action Plan in December 2011 that targets the development of a value chain including businesses in the agriculture and agri-food industry. Opportunities for future development such as local public cold storage and post-harvest handling facilities were sited.

Continued growth and development is expected in Durham's thriving agricultural and farming communities, which comprise approximately 40% of regional land.<sup>6</sup> Currently,

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<sup>6</sup> Durham Workforce Authority. *Local Labour Market Plan Durham Region 2013*. 2013.

there are 1,454 operating farms in Durham Region and 2,130 farm operators.<sup>7</sup> A total of 2,975 individuals work directly in agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting in Durham Region.<sup>8</sup>

When suitable data and research validated the food processing and agriculture sectors as a viable target, ongoing discussion with industry representatives proceeded with a finer focus on future partnership building. The Durham Workforce Authority leveraged its existing relationships with sector partners to secure several key informant interviews. These conversations were both scripted by Essential Skills Ontario and also took place on a more informal basis. Informal and formal briefings, information gathering and presentations to stakeholders included the following:

- Briefing: Agriculture and Food Processing Consultant - May 2013
- Presentation: Community Innovation Lab, Decoding Youth Unemployment Forum - July 2013
- Information Gathering: Durham Agricultural Advisory Committee, Annual Farm Tour - September 2013
- Information Gathering: Durham Region Economic Development - October 2013
- Presentation: Greater Durham Economic Development Partnership, Destination Durham Networking Event - November 2013
- Presentation: North Durham Social Development Council - January 2014
- Presentation: Business Advisory Centre of Durham, Youth Jobs Idea Forum - January 2014
- Presentation: Durham Workforce Authority, Board of Directors - February 2014

In February 2014, the Literacy Network of Durham Region and Durham Workforce Authority met with the Agricultural Advisory Committee of Clarington. This committee assists the Municipality of Clarington in identifying issues and making recommendations to Clarington City Council on agricultural issues. While several other informal presentations were facilitated over the life of the project, it was this delegation that provided not only critical feedback on Career Ladders but provided several key contacts for food processing and agriculture key informants. In March, the Literacy Network of Durham Region and Durham Workforce Authority are scheduled to similarly present to the Durham Agricultural Advisory Committee.

In order to capture feedback from employers and stakeholders, Essential Skills Ontario crafted specific industry questions that focused on specific hiring and training practices (Appendix 1). These questions were posed to three key industry respondents in the Durham Region as follows: Maple Leaf Consumer Foods, Hela Spice Canada

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<sup>7</sup> Statistics Canada. 2011 Census of Agriculture, Farm and Farm Operator Data. Catalogue no. 95-640-XWE.

<sup>8</sup> National Household Survey. 2011.

Incorporated and Geissberger Farmhouse Cider. These key informants were representative of the varying firm sizes in Durham Region. With 99% of Durham Region firms having 49 or fewer employees, it was imperative to ensure that small and medium enterprises were solicited.

The food processing and agriculture industry in Durham Region is cohesive. Respondents indicated that in many instances food processing firms in Durham Region began as small, family-run businesses. While some business have experienced a physical expansion coupled with the hiring of external employees there remains a family mentality within the organizational structure. This is further exemplified in business partnerships and relationships.

Respondents suggested that growth has largely been drawn out over extended periods of time. While the interviewees disclosed plans for growth within the next five years, they were adamant that it would be dependent on the availability of serviceable land, market demand and growth of parent/subsidiary companies.

Entry-level occupations within the food processing industry in Durham Region are largely production line workers. For these positions, employers principally hire applicants based on experience, basic literacy and numeracy skills, physical capabilities and work ethic. All respondents indicated that production line workers are required to be physical fit, able to stand for long periods of time and lift a minimum of 40 pounds. Throughout the interview, the interviewees repeatedly returned to the importance of attitude and work ethic of entry-level employees.

Other occupations within these firms included quality assurance technicians, electricians, millwrights, shippers/receivers, health and safety, sanitation technicians, research and development and sales. These occupations within food processing firms require varying levels of education and experience and diverse skill sets. The key informants all expressed a desire to promote employees internally, and historically this has been the practice. Many of the employees within these firms have had a lengthy tenure and acquired a wide range skill sets. Cross-training is a commonly used practice by food processing firms. Respondents indicated that while some employees are promoted to a new position permanently, there are many who are trained solely to fill gaps in the organizational structure due to vacation, illness and employee turnover.

Presently, the businesses interviewed stated that they provide training for staff. In most cases training is limited to WHMIS, facility practices and procedures, health and safety and safe food handling. It was clearly noted that there were instances where literacy and basic skills deficits created difficulties in both the design and delivery of training.

The introduction of technology into these workplaces has also presented training hurdles. Workplaces are becoming increasingly automated with less reliance on paper. As the usage of technology in day-to-day operations increases, there is a need to upgrade the skill sets of employees accordingly.

For some food processing workplaces, employment is cyclical. During peak seasons additional staff are hired however production is stalled for a portion of the year and thus, employees are laid off. Most employees return when recalled. The layoff and re-hiring cycle has become the norm for seasoned employees. Interestingly, respondents noted that peak season for food processors runs adjacent to that of agriculture, and there may be innovative opportunities to leverage and train employees accordingly. The companies interviewed were aware of training opportunities that presently exist within Durham Region. Durham College, Durham District School Board and the Durham Catholic District School Board are currently providing students by way of co-operative education and the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program. However, most businesses in this sector do not seem to be utilizing Employment Ontario services. Within the food processing industry, word of mouth and placement agencies remain the primary way to recruit new employees.

The Career Ladders model was well received and interviewees saw it as a viable way to train and retain employees. While respondents indicated plans for growth, they also acknowledged the need to attract and retain highly skilled individuals capable of performing a multitude of tasks. Career Ladders was noted as a way to ensure that employees were receiving relevant training to meet the needs of the individual as well as the industry.

The most insightful piece of information gathered from key informant interviews was regarding the delivery of the Career Ladders approach. Small and medium enterprises do not have the capacity to provide multiple employees with training and promotion opportunities simultaneously. Rather, these small and medium sized food processors would be more interested in and capable of providing this opportunity to one or two employees at a time. This notion has led to the development of the consortium or group approach to Career Ladders. Using this approach, Career Ladders would be offered to a group of employers, each of who would be able to provide several employees. Training would have to be coordinated amongst the various workplace schedules and locations. The stackable credentials offered by the Career Ladders model would require endorsement by all involved employers. While this model presents challenges in terms of development, it best fits the needs of small and medium enterprises in Durham Region.

Overall, the respondents had few concerns about the Career Ladders model. Some of the respondents operate in a unionized environment. Accordingly, they noted a need for union support in order to introduce the initiative. Other concerns included identifying training needs, the use of temporary foreign workers, encouraging youth to pursue careers in the food processing industry, transportation to worksites and disproving common perceptions of the industry. Respondents felt that through continued consultation these challenges could be overcome and Career Ladders could become a viable training model.

### **3.3 Service Provider Conversations**

Consultation with training and employment stakeholders in Durham Region took place regularly throughout the first pilot phase. These two groups were relatively easy to engage given the Literacy Network of Durham Region's ongoing facilitation of monthly service coordination meetings. Twenty "Literacy Service Planning" and "Employment Service Managers" meetings per year are conducted with Ministry of Training, Colleges & Universities-funded Employment Ontario programs. The objective of these meetings is to ensure agencies are delivering synchronized and integrated program delivery. Currently the Literacy Service Planning committee is comprised of representatives from the following delivery agencies:

- Centre D'emploi Francophone de Durham /Durham French Employment Centre
- Durham Catholic District School Board - Continuing and Adult Education
- Durham College - Academic Upgrading
- Durham Deaf Services - Adult Upgrading Program
- Durham District School Board - Continuing and Adult Education
- John Howard Society Durham - Learning Alternatives Program
- Literacy Council of Durham Region
- Ontario Shores Centre for Mental Health Sciences - Vocational Rehabilitation Services

Similarly, service coordination meetings also take place with "full suite" Employment Services managers who oversee the following organizations:

- Centre D'emploi Francophone de Durham /Durham French Employment Centre
- Durham College - School of Interdisciplinary Studies and Employment Services
- Durham Region Unemployed Help Centre
- Essential Communications - Ontario Self Employment Benefit Program
- John Howard Society Durham - Employment Services
- Northern Lights Canada
- vpi Inc. Oshawa
- YMCA of Greater Toronto - Employment and Community

Wider, informal community consultation took place with the Durham Region Employment Network's Employment Ontario Service Integration Team as well as with participants at local chamber of commerce, economic development and Business Advisory Council of Durham events. Overwhelmingly, community stakeholders were receptive and enthusiastic about the Career Ladders model. Specifically, it was felt by many that the model would assist the precariously employed to attain stable workforce and training opportunities. Similar to the industry questionnaire, Essential Skills Ontario also assisted the project by developing an outline to guide key informant interviews with service providers (Appendix 2).

These interviews were conducted with representatives of the Durham Catholic District School Board, Durham Region Unemployed Help Centre, John Howard Society Durham, Literacy Council of Durham Region, vpi Inc. and YMCA. The survey participants were all managers or job developers of Employment Services and Literacy & Basic Skills programs in the Durham Region. As such they were positioned to provide key themes and points related to implementing a Career Ladders approach. A total of six interviews were conducted, evenly split between literacy and employment providers.

Respondents agreed that moving low-skilled, entry-level workers to better jobs remains a significant challenge in the Durham Region. In the case of entry-level employment, generally the positions available are related to general labour, customer service and retail or food service sectors. All agencies, with the exception of one, had experience partnering directly with employers either providing employment or training supports. All had developed best practices in this realm. Most notably agencies emphasized the need to establish collaborative relationships with employers by providing efficient, customized and flexible customer service. In addition, Employment Service providers frequently offered additional human resource services including addressing questions and needs beyond simple job placement, hosting job fairs and referring clients to community supports as required.

In regards to training, it was felt by all respondents that current community offerings have not always effectively met the needs of employers and barriered clients alike. A frequent disconnect was mentioned in regards to employer knowledge of local education opportunities. In some cases, employers were not fully certain of their own internal training needs. This indicates a requirement for informative outreach to employers. On the worker side, upgrading and skills development opportunities were often targeted at clients with few or no barriers. Rarely was delivery offered in coordination with intensive wraparound supports such as subsidized childcare. In the case of Literacy and Essential Skills programming, constrained funding has provided insufficient local program space and inflexible delivery options.

The key informants all felt that Career Ladders would address some of the challenges above by providing customized, flexible and supportive training that meets the needs of both employers and employees. Critical features of the model would ideally reflect the following:

The model must meet the criteria for "learning and earning" so workers do not need to absent themselves from the workplace for long periods of time. This satisfies the income support requirements of workers as well as ongoing production and labour demands of employers. Training delivery should be flexible in all regards and include all levels of Literacy and Essential Skills instruction.

Lateral or horizontal movement between sectors is highly desirable so workers can apply transferable skills to a new industry in times of economic or sector contraction. This is seen as an opportunity to develop a resilient and adaptable workforce to meet changing employment trends.

Wraparound supports are crucial in assisting marginalized under-skilled adults in obtaining and retaining employment. These supports should reflect a wide variety of barriers to employment. Job retention coaching and soft skills training courses were also noted as beneficial.

All key informants indicated that Career Ladders would enhance service coordination efforts by providing an opportunity for greater information sharing, inter-program referral and collaboration. Without exception all respondents assumed that their organizations would support the implementation of Career Ladders and in some cases, would provide tangible contributions to the functioning model such as curriculum design, training or case coordination.

### **3.4 Summary of Stakeholder Engagement**

Industry and service provider consultation illuminated various findings, insights, opportunities and potential barriers to implementing a Career Ladders approach in Durham. This information was collected at various points in the first pilot phase, including key informant and Town Hall activities and includes the following themes:

**Community Consortium Model:** The future delivery of Career Ladders in Durham should focus on one specific industry and be governed through a consortium approach that is reflective of multiple training, employer and community stakeholders. This is opposed to the development of a single institution or grants-based model that is steered by one post-secondary institution or one particular funding agency.



**Employer Size:** Food processing and agri-food/agriculture in the Durham Region is inclusive of small to medium sized businesses. A future model must take in to consideration the needs of employers of varying scale, especially those in the agriculture sector running family-based farms with very few employees. Ideally, a local Career Ladders approach would be available to smaller scope workforces.

**Flexibility:** In order for a Career Ladders model to be successful, it must reflect a degree of flexibility for both employers and employees in terms of mode of training delivery, timing of programming and program offering. Online, flex-shift and locally relevant curriculum are some of the key requirements to attracting employer and employee participation. Furthermore, certification should reflect both stacked and “stand alone” credentials so that employees can derive benefit from completing only a portion of a full set of training units.

**Lateral/Horizontal Movement:** In order for the region to maximize the benefit of Career Ladders, it is imperative that lateral or horizontal opportunities be identified. This means that certifications such as Quality Control that have a multi-sector application are offered to ensure the greatest possible employment opportunities to participants. This feature in particular addresses the needs of foreign trained professionals and the growing immigrant population in the region by providing an opportunity to utilize an individual's existing transferable skills and training.

**Wraparound Supports:** Many of the unemployed or under-employed individuals who would benefit from Career Ladders experience multiple barriers to workforce participation. These issues include but are not restricted to access to childcare, transportation, substance misuse treatment, food and housing security, mental health services and learning disability identification. The successful implementation of Career Ladders would provide access to an array of support services that address barriers to training participation.

## Section 4: Feasibility and Next Steps

**Feasibility:** Considering the support received to date from both industry representatives, stakeholders and key informants, it is determined that Durham Region is a suitable Career Ladders community. Not only does the area have an appropriate array of potential employer partners and a viable sector focus, it is reflective of demographic data to suggest that Career Ladders would address a number of locally identified barriers to workplace participation. Having validated the community's interest in the model, the project partners are assured that sufficient momentum exists to continue working towards a fully implemented initiative.

**Industry Selection:** A significant consideration in proceeding with a second phase of Career Ladders is whether a suitable employment focus has been identified. Once again, the Literacy Network of Durham Region and Durham Workforce Authority are confident that they have produced quality research and selected an appropriate industry sector. As a result, Career Ladders in Durham Region will proceed to a second project phase targeting food processing and agri-food/agriculture industries. Future investigations in to other industries such as the service class sector may also take place. To this end, the Literacy Network of Durham Region and Durham Workforce Authority have agreed to participate in a second phase Career Ladders project. This initiative is under the leadership of Essential Skills Ontario as submitted to the Ministry of Training, College & Universities' Service Delivery Network Development Fund. Approval for this project is pending approval with a tentative start date of June 2014.

**Requirements:** The second phase of the Career Ladders pilot in Durham will focus on a variety of activities that pick up where the first phase left off. While an initial investigation into feasibility and community engagement indicated future success, additional research of the "moving parts" of the model is required.

**Training:** The second phase of the project will map out existing training options in the community - namely Literacy and Essential Skills, secondary credit and post-secondary diploma programs. Additional attention will be paid to the area of apprenticeship and skills training. This review of existing training will result in recommendations as to what programs currently exist as well as those programs that are required by local employers. Consultation with training providers will be undertaken to determine how larger credentials can be "chunked" into attainable certification. The preliminary development of pilot curriculum that embeds Literacy and Essential Skills instruction into secondary and post-secondary training will be investigated. Finally, discussions at the community level will take place as to how the brokering process may occur amongst training institutions wishing to deliver Career Ladders programming.

**Target Group:** Future work of the project will also involve the Integrated Planning Group identifying target clients for a Career Ladders model. This process will include the articulation of client profiles, as well as strategies for engaging target populations. Partnerships will be established with suitable referral sources such as income support and employment services. Further to client profiles, wraparound supports must be identified. This process will include the development of a referral protocol and compendium of available resources.

**Employer Engagement:** Ongoing consultation with the food processing and agriculture sectors will continue in the next phase. The work in this area will become more focused on cultivating and establishing partnerships with employers who may participate in a soft launch of the Career Ladders model in future project phases. These employers will provide feedback and intelligence on how best to arrange training delivery around the needs of their sector. This work will include the articulation of required training courses and certification, modes of delivery such as online learning and human resource planning. A local process for identifying suitable employee candidates, engaging them with entry-level employment and directing them to training opportunities requires full investigation and development.

**Participants:** In order to maintain the momentum of the first phase of the project, the Durham Integrated Planning Group will continue its efforts to promote a local Career Ladders model in between funding periods. As a Service Delivery Network Development Fund grant may not come to fruition until June of 2014, outreach and partnership activities will continue in the interim. As mentioned elsewhere in this report, the Literacy Network of Durham Region and Durham Workforce Authority will carry out a delegation to the Durham Agricultural Advisory Committee in March. Furthermore, the current development of a learning communities approach in Durham will be utilized to promote Career Ladders.

The Literacy Network of Durham Region, Durham Workforce Authority and Community Development Council Durham (CDCD) have partnered to develop what has been phrased as a learning communities approach to local research and collaboration activities. According to its definition, a learning community is earmarked by a diverse group of people working together to nurture and sustain a knowledge creating system, based in valuing equally three interacting domains of activity:

**Research:** a disciplined approach to discovery and understanding, with a commitment to share what is learned.

**Capacity Building:** Enhancing people's awareness and capabilities, individually and collectively, to produce results that they really care about.

**Practice:** people working together to achieve practical outcomes.<sup>9</sup>

The learning communities consortium has hosted several meetings since 2012 on the topic of capacity sharing and research. The most recent meeting took place in May 2013 and addressed very briefly the concept of Career Ladders. A half-day conference is scheduled to take place in April 2014 on the topic of establishing a formal learning communities approach. It is expected that the Career Ladders model will remain on the agenda of this particular partnership initiative.

The Integrated Planning Group with its current compliment of members will continue to drive the project forward. It is anticipated that this committee will see the addition of several new representatives from the food processing or agriculture sector. As the pilot advances, the composition of the Integrated Planning Group will endeavour to recruit suitable participants.

**Next Steps:** With the support of a Service Delivery Network Development Fund grant from the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, Career Ladders Durham is expected to proceed to a second phase. In anticipation of possible funding, the Integrated Planning Group will support ongoing efforts to partner with sector representatives and build support and momentum for the initiative. In addition, consultation with food processing and agriculture businesses will continue to take place between phases of the initiative to ensure robust employer participation in future endeavours.

In the coming months, the Literacy Network of Durham Region and Durham Workforce Authority will continue to engage the community through a variety of outreach activities. The objective in meeting with sector representatives is to increase the profile of Career Ladders, build relationships with key stakeholder informants and collect information that will strengthen the initiation of a second project phase. Engagements scheduled at the time of this report are as follows:

- Presentation: Durham Agricultural Advisory Committee - March 4, 2014
- Networking Event: Clarington Agricultural Summit - March 18, 2014
- Presentation: Learning Communities of Durham Conference - April 2014
- Networking: Annual Durham Region Farm Tour, Durham Agricultural Advisory Committee - September 2014
- Networking Event: Agricultural Gala, Durham Farm Connections - October 16, 2014

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<sup>9</sup> Earl, Benjamin. Presentation. Discussing the National Household Survey: Implications & challenges for community planning and development. May 28, 2013

# **APPENDICES**

# Appendix 1

## 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 are entry-level employees?
  - What is the general range of entry-level jobs in your unit?

### Section 2: Sector 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 the 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 2

### Career Ladders: Industry Key Informant Interview Guide for Service Providers

#### Section 1: Background Questions:

Name of Organization:

Name & Position of Interviewee:

#### Section 2: Employment Challenges

1. Do you think the challenge of moving low-skilled, low wage entry level workers into better jobs is a significant issue in your community?
  
2. 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 you have challenges, what additional resources do you feel are necessary to better support them?
  
3. 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 3: Employer Engagement

1. Does your organization or department work with employers? (Yes/no)  
If so, what is your relationship with them?
  
2. 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 4: Service Coordination

1. Does your organization work with other service providers in your community?
  - If so, how do you collaborate with them?
  - If not, what are the challenges?
  - Do you feel there is a need to collaborate more effectively?



2. 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 5: Career Ladders**

1. 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?
2. Do you think there would be any problems to implementing Career Ladders in your community?
  - If so, what are they?
3. 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?
4. What additional resources do you think would be needed to implement a Career Ladder in your community?