

In November 2022, career service professionals from Alberta gathered virtually for a Community Roundtable to discuss employer engagement and how to demonstrate the value of career development and career development professionals (CDPs). The event presented an opportunity for CDPs to reflect on the recruitment and retention challenges raised by employers through CERIC’s [National Business Survey](#), and to discuss potential solutions.

Hosted by CERIC and CDAA, Career Development Association of Alberta, the Community Roundtable brought together 53 attendees to discuss [five themes](#) across different breakout rooms: Challenges for Canadian Businesses, Recruitment, Skills Gap, Soft Skills and Professional / Career Development.

In addition to participating in live discussions, participants also captured their thoughts on these themes by contributing comments to the collaborative web platform Padlet, which serves as a virtual, real-time bulletin board. This document summarizes the written feedback provided by participants for each thematic discussion.


*Note: The summaries below do not represent the positions or opinions of CERIC or CDAA.*

## Theme #1: Challenges for Canadian Businesses


Discussions for this topic were centred around the following questions:

- What ideas, experiences or best practices can you share to address the disconnect between employers and young workers?
- How can career professionals deal with the costly challenge of employee turnover?
- What adjustments have you made in the way you approach employers to help them understand career development services? What do you wish employers knew about career development services?

### Key discussion points

<p><i>Pain Points</i></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Gaps</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Employers ignore the existence of CDPs.</li> <li>– Lack of evidence that our interventions work.</li> <li>– Occupational profiles are shifting and change frequently, so CPDs need to pay attention to the skills needs.</li> <li>– CPDs need to ask clear questions and be more decisive in what they want.</li> <li>– Employers create bigger gaps for youths (e.g., transportation if they live in rural areas).</li> <li>– Well-educated immigrants who have to work in jobs they are not trained for because of the need for certifications.</li> <li>– Employers not willing to bridge wage gaps and training gap.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Awareness gaps</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Lack of knowledge of the attitudes and beliefs about people who are neurodiverse.</li> <li>– Career pathing and career development – if employees can't see how they can grow and improve, they are going to move on.</li> <li>– Understanding if there is the skill base in our cities to match the industry needs.</li> <li>– HR teams look for initial senior talent – do they really need senior, or rather junior or intermediate talent?</li> <li>– Unions are a barrier – how can we get them on board to understand the need?</li> <li>– Employers need guidance from CDPs to highlight what is valuable to employees.</li> <li>– Highlight the value that EDI can bring to an organization and what employees from these groups can bring (the language we use to describe our work does not resonate with employers or other stakeholders)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>High turnover among youth</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Youth are too impatient to wait for advancement. Introducing small steps that acknowledge small career advancement.</li> <li>– Youth move around from one job to the next within 3 to 5 months. While youth are to blame for their unrealistic expectations. Perhaps training youth to better understand job expectations.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Rapid initial growth of businesses</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Start-ups are moving so fast into scale-ups so they do not have time to meet with WDO (workforce development organizations)</li> <li>– The HR teams have quick turnarounds and are not having access to talent.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Organizational barriers</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Alberta Employers are slower to implement work-integrated learning.</li> <li>– Some do not want to invest.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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<p><i>Possibilities and Practical Tips</i></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Support for employers</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Find how to support an employer for onboarding of youth and/or persons with a disability.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Inter-team collaboration</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Reach out to more corporations.</li> <li>– Provide solutions and expertise in building partnerships across sectors – we are the perfect people to do this!</li> <li>– Share goals and outcomes across sectors.</li> <li>– Share our ability to pivot during the pandemic with the sectors – CDPs are part of the solution and an avenue to bridge the gap.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- CDPs can relate information to employers to see how they can help with these and other issues – the timing is right for CDPs to disrupt and employers are ready for us.</li> <li>- Collaboration among WDOs (workforce development organizations)</li> <li>- Involve: policy makers, HR professionals, educational Institutions (from secondary to post-secondary), recruitment firms and corporate sustainability entities.</li> <li>- Encourage more employers to join conversations like these.</li> <li>- Connection between analysis, LM data (linear model function data? supply and demand studies, skills gaps, new strategies to WDOs, CDPs and employers.</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Funding</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Different funding streams that may be more flexible and relevant to some of these initiatives.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Accountability</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Accountability to groups like Economic Development.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Inter-team collaboration</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Address employers’ concerns.</li> <li>- Follow up with employers and improvement for future matching.</li> <li>- Build capacity and gaps in technical training.</li> <li>- CPDs can help with training, particularly for entry-level jobs.</li> <li>- Increase our knowledge of the workforce and employers to help us succeed.</li> <li>- If they can get the senior talent as mentors, then CPDs can help get the young talent.</li> <li>- CDPs need to work with employers to show the importance of career pathing, career development, recognition, and employee retainment strategies.</li> <li>- Have dialogues with organizations who are good examples of career pathing – supporting their employees and help them move up (City of Calgary, RBC); hear their experiences and their challenges.</li> <li>- Use employer success stories and ambassadors to encourage others.</li> <li>- Consider championing employers – could CERIC play a role?</li> <li>- Policy &amp; funding shifts to provide employers workforce development and CDP in house.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>HR</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- HR should work to build a way to get into entry-level positions.</li> <li>- One-stop shop for HR team.</li> <li>- HR teams need to understand the needs – bring on HR associations and engagement?</li> <li>- Centralize intake and skill set development.</li> <li>- Consider upskilling vs. focusing on degrees (not always necessary)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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## Theme #2: Recruitment

Discussions for this topic were centred around the following questions:

- What can CDPs do to help employers find the best/customized recruitment strategies, encourage employers to try new solutions and ask for CDPs help with the recruitment process? What advice do you have for employers for identifying and attracting staff?
- In what areas have you been successful in promoting underrepresented students or clients to employers? What approaches have you used?
- What adjustments have you made in the way you approach employers to help them understand career development services? What do you wish employers knew about career development services?

### Key discussion points:

<p><i>Pain Points</i></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>HR</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– We are finding that HR is open to inclusion and diversity, but when it comes down to the managers/supervisors are who bring the difficult challenge of opening new avenues.</li> <li>– How do we step outside of the traditional hiring?</li> <li>– From an HR perspective, one of the challenges is getting that connection with the agency, having that relationship prior to the hiring need. It is hard to do both. We have a hiring need, and the entire process is time consuming.</li> <li>– Connecting with HR as they may not be readily accessible.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><i>Possibilities and Practical Tips</i></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Inter-team collaboration</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– More communication with the employers, asking what types of assistance we can provide.</li> <li>– We need to find ways that employers can engage in a valuable way, whether that is providing consultations so that employers do not feel like they are taking on extra work.</li> <li>– Encourage employer events, i.e. open houses, hiring events, job fairs, info sessions on campuses, “spotlight” events (reaching out to individuals who have barriers to employment)</li> <li>– Provide suggestions on writing an effective and consistent job posting.</li> <li>– Have roundtables and meetings with employers to share our knowledge of employment barriers (disabilities, etc.) since employers send out clear marketing around diversity and exclusivity.</li> <li>– Provide pre-screened individuals who are the best fit.</li> <li>– Keep open communication with employers, provide assistance.</li> <li>– Offer wage subsidies.</li> <li>– Host webinar and workshops for employers.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

- Present a business case for the benefits of hiring a person with disabilities – success stories to highlight higher morale, less absenteeism.
  - Provide additional mentorship and on-the-job support to ensure a good fit with the workplace/team.
  - Assist employers to find supports on the job with co-workers as support from the agency diminishes.
  - Encourage employers to open to a wider range of students when recruiting Indigenous students.
  - Employer Strategy Forums (at Prospect) (inclusivity and diversity was one theme) – have employers discuss the value of hiring individuals with disabilities. There are many informative posts for employers dedicated to inclusive hiring.
  - With Prospect Services (serving youth, youth with disabilities, those with mental illness) aim to promote clients to employers and offer a reimbursement program for first 360 hours on the job – helping to promote specific demographics.
  - Promote job try-outs, i.e. practicum, volunteer opportunities.
  - Hold career fairs, information sessions for underrepresented students.
  - In employer programs, showcase the company’s diversity to encourage more candidates to apply – give them a sense of belonging.
- **Networking**
    - Promote the benefits of networking – job referrals, bring employers and support agencies together, work with non-profit recruitment agencies.
    - Build relationships with current students (secondary and post-secondary) while they are completing their education – they can be a great source of referrals and potential candidates for future positions after graduation.
    - Get connections with recruiting organizations before we actually need them (be proactive)
    - Promote the benefits of networking.
    - Partner with chambers of commerce to promote employment opportunities.
- **Openness to diversity**
    - With HR, increase the knowledge of certain agencies that are available to help recruit through the diverse population.
    - See value in the individual, bring them up to speed, so they become dedicated employees.
    - Promote the value of international experience.
- **HR**
    - HR should include inclusion and accessibility statements in job postings, showcase and be proud of the diversity the company has.
    - Give HR the talent pool .


	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Recruitment strategies</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Look at internal recruitment strategies, improve and increase flexibility in the screening process and applicant tracking systems, i.e. using video resumés, having 1/1 conversations with applicants who need the support.</li> <li>– Be willing to modify the posting and be flexible to allow the applicants to apply their strength.</li> <li>– In job postings, clearly state salary range and benefits package – this is a time-saving method to assist us in recruitment.</li> <li>– Incorporate more “soft skills” and transferable skills in the job posting and requirements – assist candidates in relating their skills and experience to the position.</li> <li>– Gain a broader talent pool and encourage a variety of candidates to apply for the position.</li> <li>– Encourage employers to state their values – candidates want to align their own values to those of their potential employer.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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**Theme #3: Skills Gap**


Discussions for this topic were centred around the following questions:


- What is the CDP’s role in helping to equip prospective employees with the right skills, so that the reported skills gap shrinks dramatically?
- Who, between job seekers and employers, is the most responsible for closing the skills gap, and what can CDPs do to help employers and employees in achieving this?
- What adjustments have you made in the way you approach employers to help them understand career development services? What do you wish employers knew about career development services?

**Key discussion points**

<p><i>Pain Points</i></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– It’s one thing to say “identify the challenges” but how are you addressing these?</li> <li>• <b>Employer expectations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Employers are looking for specific skills e.g. a type of software. If it is a hard skill the employer is looking for, which may take only a short time to develop, the employers may be overlooking other important skills and making the hard-to-find skill the highest priority.</li> <li>– Some employers are not sure what skills they are looking for.</li> <li>– Employers are asking for unrealistic job skills from youth without knowledge of these skills.</li> <li>– Employers not always open to other perspectives.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Pandemic: technology at home = no IT support (widened skill gap)</li> <li>- A skills taxonomy would be helpful to help employers identify the skills they are looking for (makes the process more objective vs. looking for skills we value the most personally).</li> <li>- Sharing resources.</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Candidates:</b> often need to be coached to identify and articulate the skills they have.</li> <li>• <b>Labour shortage:</b> There are five open positions for each potential candidate.</li> <li>• <b>Employer expectations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- We can help students practice in a school setting, but they don't have real-world experience. Employers expect them to have the skills of adults, but youth do not have these yet as they've never worked before.</li> <li>- New generations and employers need to see the new workforce. Youth are bringing a new skill set.</li> <li>- Big gap between CEOs who are over 60 and don't understand or relate to the youth of today. High school skills could be very far behind employer needs. A typical day of work is very different for different generations.</li> <li>- Shared 50/50 responsibility. Employers put out their only rules. They determine how difficult it is to be hired.</li> <li>- Businesses will need to change and provide more training. They need to be more flexible.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Generational gaps</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Youth is a bit "entitled" now and don't think they need to gain skills.</li> <li>- They believe jobs should be handed to them.</li> <li>- Youth don't want to work evenings and weekends, and need extra time off for social life.</li> <li>- Different reality after the pandemic. Youth are more flexible.</li> <li>- More and more employees are applying for jobs they don't have the qualifications for.</li> <li>- Seniors are trying to get back into the workforce.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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<p><i>Possibilities and Practical Tips</i></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Job seekers</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Once job targets are identified, it's very important to read job descriptions. LinkedIn learning can help to gain experience using programs and software.</li> <li>- Engage candidates in the job search.</li> <li>- Make realistic job searches.</li> <li>- Help candidates set realistic expectations.</li> <li>- Job descriptions need to be read carefully.</li> <li>- Use classrooms as a resource to allow students to see the gaps. Ex.: How a school bell relates to a job (being on time)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Help clients acquire needed skills and coach them through the process of researching specific skill development.</li> <li>– CDP's cannot be replaced with a website because individual coaching continues to benefit the employee.</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Share responsibilities</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Reducing skills mismatch or skills gap is a shared responsibility – individuals, organizations and governments.</li> <li>– CDPs can help both employers and candidates.</li> <li>– Governments in Canada have provided funding for skills training for the past 30 years. We have provided funding to employers for about 5 years. CDPs can bridge the gap between employers and individuals/organizations by helping to define skills, making training referrals and encouraging self-assessment.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Skills:</b> employees responsible for more general skills required; employers responsible for job-specific skills and skills that are not transferrable or carry risk of obsolescence.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– All the stakeholders are responsible: training to solve some of the gaps; reframing that the workplace has changed not only with new generations but with hybrid work models.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Training:</b> employers can provide in-house training; employees can take many free courses and training to improve their skills.</li> <li>• <b>Candidate awareness:</b> Employees require research skills to determine the specific skills they need for particular roles in their sector, and how to gain skills effectively.</li> <li>• <b>Inter-team collaboration</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– If there were a national career development website that is the primary source of career development all employers, employees, and CDPs could use a common language found on the website.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Employer awareness</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Employers need to customize their approaches.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><i>Resources</i></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• JobScan free source for job search. Help them to learn how to look for a job here. Engage them in a real job search.</li> <li>• Labour market information council, Skills for Success, and Future Skills Centre and Labour Market Information Council are working with governments across Canada to develop resources and tools for career practitioners. Skills mismatch and skills gaps are also carefully defined.</li> </ul>




	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Skills for Success includes the old essential skills plus the 21st century skills described in today's skills literature. General skills are called transferrable skills but would also be part of the Skills for Success taxonomy.</li> </ul>
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**Theme #4: Soft Skills**

Discussions for this topic were centred around the following questions:

- What role do you think CDPs should play? How can CDPs help better prepare clients to develop or demonstrate their soft skills?
- How can CDPs educate employers on the increasing value of soft skills and even support them with soft skills training for existing employees?
- What adjustments have you made in the way you approach employers to help them understand career development services? What do you wish employers knew about career development services?

**Key discussion points**

<p><i>Pain Points</i></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Employers surveyed expressed difficulty in finding people with soft skills such as communication skills, positive attitude, reliability and strong work ethic.</li> <li>– Many employers are seeking for employees who have the appropriate soft skills already.</li> <li>– Employers know what they want, but are not always skilled in clearly articulating this in the job posting, or have the time to do so.</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Resistance from employers</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Many employers don't have the time or patience to training for soft skills. They either expect the person to come with the soft skills or they let the person go for not having them (when there could have been support for the client to get those skills).</li> <li>– Employers who have not worked with a CDP seem reluctant to connect with us.</li> <li>– Small businesses may not be aware we exist, and large companies often don't want or need our assistance.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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*Possibilities and Practical Tips*



- **Inter-team collaboration**
  - Conduct workshops to address the direct and indirect culture of providing and receiving feedback.
  - Explore workplace culture and industry culture so the client is prepared for the job they are looking to obtain. Onboarding processes are crucial for new employees.
  - Provide advice on the clients to be open minded.
  - Bring employers and job seekers together at events so they can interact in a less formal setting and increase comfortability.
  - Base assistance for the client for what the client is looking for.
  - CPDs need to really prepare clients for what is needed by acting like an employer (i.e. our expectations would be like what employers would expect).
  - Ensure that posted job descriptions are clear and accurate so the potential employee is prepared and knowledgeable for the interview.
  - Work with agencies to connect employers with many potential employees to facilitate an easier recruitment process. It would also be less expensive than the traditional hiring methods.
  - Write clear and compelling job posting/descriptions – employers could consult knowledgeable resources for examples of "great" job postings.
  - Consider templates that employers/ entrepreneurs could use to create better job postings.
  - Strong workplan/job descriptions to ensure expectations are met - leads to success for employers and employees (e.g. long-term employment)
  - Include "development" of a soft skill as a specific requirement of an internship/work experience term.
  
- **Work with job seekers**
  - Work with individuals to provide real life examples of how they can demonstrate their soft skills.
  - Hold speed networking, employer panels.
  - Use examples from interactions between a candidate and a CDP about skills that are important (e.g. late to a session about how to write a resumé – have a discussion of how that would reflect in a work environment)
  
- **Collaboration with employers**
  - Educate employers – partnering with community organizations so they can get to know the pool of candidates that are coming through.
  - This also helps with various needs of diverse groups of clients/candidates. Helps employers to understand the client group and for the client group to adapt/prepare to what is needed by employers. Ex.: Literacy skills program – with our strong partnerships, we were able to connect with our employers to help bridge gaps between what clients bring and what employer expects/needs.
  - This is where a CDP could help employers understand what CDPs can provide to address these needs.


	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– CDPs can help employers see past some of the obstacles/barriers that may prevent them from hiring a really excellent candidate (e.g. lack of social skills).</li> <li>– Reach out to medium-size businesses – they could be more of an audience/market for our services.</li> <li>– Connect with the "right" person in an organization who is willing/interested in working with a CDP – someone who is the champion for themes like diversity.</li> </ul>
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## Theme #5: Professional / Career Development

Discussions for this topic were centred around the following questions:

- The majority of employers agree it's their responsibility to provide career management programs, but only a minority actually do so. What do you think could explain that? Where do you see CDPs have a role in bridging this gap?
- How can CDPs help employers assess their employees' needs in terms of career management programs?
- What adjustments have you made in the way you approach employers to help them understand career development services? What do you wish employers knew about career development services?

### Key discussion points

<p><i>Pain Points</i></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>HR role</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Time, money, used to organize two career development days, i.e., taking the time to figure out what is needed – Is this HR's role?</li> <li>– The definition of HR is evolving. Employer awareness is needed.</li> <li>– Are HR roles prepared to teach skills? CDPs offer counselling but strategies are not put in place.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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<p><i>Possibilities and Practical Tips</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Build awareness</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Should CDPs provide services to companies? Skills gap is addressed as they realize there is a shortage of skills.</li> <li>– Organizations need to be more aware of CDPs.</li> <li>– Organizations need to hire senior staff to train the junior staff.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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- Programs and networks need to be developed to connect people to services, not just potential employees but also businesses, HR depts, and CDPs – an interactive community.
- Make companies aware that services are available, that they need access to training materials and facilitators for diverse industries.
- Are English training packages adequate?
- Set up optional sessions to join in the industry training including regulatory training needs.
  
- **Create incentives for training**
  - Set up a credit system for employees, like a learning passport, to encourage them to gain skills and work towards earning certificates.
  
- **Training and mentoring**
  - Cross-training, paying for training programs (in-house and from other training institutions).
  - Think outside the box of traditional ways to hire and train – micro credentials.
  - Hire skilled p/t seniors to train junior workers.
  - Talent gaps: transition to new roles building on existing skills. Certificate programs.
  - Engage in mentoring programs.
  
- **Networking:**

Consider creative ways to fill employment gaps. Network with similar businesses/industries through business and industry councils, non-compete groups.