

SASKATCHEWAN

Canada-Saskatchewan Career and Employment Services

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Vision

Department of Social Services

Saskatchewan people, regardless of differences in needs or circumstances, have opportunities to contribute and be included in the economic and social life of the province.

Overview

In 1996 the federal government initiated the process of devolving responsibility for labour market related activities in Saskatchewan, formerly the purview of HRDC, to the provincial government. At the time, Saskatchewan's employment and career development responsibilities were limited to providing assistance to people receiving social assistance and delivered through the New Careers Corporation – a Crown Corporation. Recognising that the integration of federal and provincial programs would provide better services to citizens and significantly reduce program duplication, Saskatchewan was keen to unite the federal and provincial agencies.

In February 1998 the *Canada-Saskatchewan Agreement on Labour Market Development* was signed and the transfer of the responsibility for delivery of federal employment and labour market initiatives was finalised. The provincial Crown Corp was dissolved and federal and provincial employees were merged together to form the Canada-Saskatchewan Career and Employment Services offices. These offices were part of the Department of Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training (PSEST).

The Department of Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training established 20 Canada/Saskatchewan Career and

Employment Centres across the province. The centres are modelled much like libraries and any individual can access labour market information both physically, through a varied selection of resource materials, and virtually, via computers with Internet access and printers for hard copies. Centres are supported by staff who help people find the information they need. Individuals use the centres to search for new employment/career opportunities, information on starting a business, or to obtain help to prep for potential jobs.

The Canada/Saskatchewan Career and Employment Centres continue to focus on programming specifically targeted at people on Social Assistance and/or Employment Insurance. In addition, there is on going development in the work with employers. Employers also use Canada/Saskatchewan Career Centre services to undertake some preliminary human resource planning, post job opportunities and assist in searching for workers.

Partnerships

Federal and Provincial Unions

During the transition of services from federal to provincial jurisdiction, over 115 federal employees were absorbed into the new provincial agency. This required significant co-operation and negotiation between the two unions. The partnership between these two groups worked smoothly and the transfer of employees to the provincial government was successfully achieved.

Community Based Organisations

To provide stable points of services to citizens across the province the Canada/Saskatchewan Career and Employment Centres partner with community based organisations (CBO) to deliver programs/services on their behalf. These partners enter into multi-year contracts and many of the CBOs have established solid reputations with both the employers and citizens for finding work and providing services.

Achievements

Canada/Saskatchewan Career Centres

Establishment of 20 offices located across the province dedicated to providing career and employment services.

Internet Site SaskNetWork

The development and launch of the SaskNetWork web site. The site helps the people of Saskatchewan connect to the resources they need in the areas of jobs, work, education and training, career planning, self-employment, labour market information, financial help and the workplace. Citizens can use the site to post/search resumes, post/search jobs and match skills to jobs.

<http://www.sasknetwork.gov.sk.ca/pages/aboutus.html>

Challenges

Cultural Difference

The transformation of any organisation, especially the merging of two formally separate federal and provincial agencies, faces fundamental cultural changes as it grows and adapts into its new identity. Like these organisations, the Canada/Saskatchewan Career and Employment Centres faced a fundamental cultural change. Factors affecting workplace culture included the move of 80 staff from a provincial Crown Corp to a Department, the transfer of 115 federal staff into the provincial department and the change in policy which required staff, some of whom who were not accustomed to providing customer service, to work with the public. In addition, a new customer service policy was adopted moving from passive customer service to more active/responsive service.

In order to address these challenges, the executive decided to use the situation as an opportunity to define a new collective vision for the organisation. Using extensive staff consultation, a common language and vision was created and staff provided additional input on the development and modification of programs. Staff were trained on the new customer service policy and began to move towards a model of mutual obligation and responsibility on all parties (customers as well as employees) to provide efficient and effective customer service.

New Technology Development and Implementation

Soon after the merge, Canada/Saskatchewan Career Centre developed a new case management computer application. The intent of the program was to move staff from using a paper-based system to a technology based system. The introduction of the technology required extensive on-going training for all staff and fine-tuning of the application continues.

Critical Success Factors

Senior Leadership

Visible, on-going senior leadership and communication has been key in helping the new organisation move through its initial transition stages into a well functioning, customer service focused organisation. At the early stages of the transition senior leadership (DM/ ADM/Executive Management) met in regional offices to provide visible leadership and to get to know and understand the challenges of front line staff. This interaction opened communication between senior management and front line staff and helped pave the way for greater co-operation and input from staff.

Staff Training

In order to foster a new customer service culture in the organisation, essentially translating customer service policy into practice, appropriate staff training was required. Training focused on providing skills to staff who were previously inexperienced in delivering customer services as well as changing how all staff interact with the public, moving from passive to active customer service and personal responsibility.

Saskatchewan Public Service Commission

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Overview

Saskatchewan has not progressed as far as other provinces in furthering their ISD agenda. In the past the two main challenges have been a diverse population located in small cities across the province and no dedicated ISD driver or champion in the government. The lack of a co-ordinated approach to ISD has led to the implementation of ad hoc ISD projects/policies across government. Despite the ad hoc approach, Saskatchewan realises the importance of providing seamless integrated services to the public and continues to move the ISD agenda forward. Recently, the position, Chief Service and Information Officer (CSIO), was made responsible for the ISD agenda.

The CSIO will co-ordinate cross government ISD initiatives and foster/encourage the understanding of the benefits of ISD to citizens as well as government.

Achievements

CSIO Position

Position is responsible for furthering Citizen-Centred services and the ISD agenda in Saskatchewan.

Challenges

ISD Agenda

Keeping ISD on the provincial agenda has proven challenging. The challenge has been compounded by a lack of ISD/Citizen-Centred champions to promote and encourage cross ministry partnerships and initiatives.

Senior Bureaucratic Buy-in

It has been difficult to stimulate senior bureaucratic buy-in for ISD/Citizen-Centred initiatives. In order to foster buy-in, the new CSIO will have to demonstrate the value of ISD initiatives particularly how they relate to budget efficiencies and overall advantages for the public as well as government.

Critical Success Factors

ISD Champions

The CSIO needs to develop a critical mass of ISD champions within government. These champions will actively support and encourage new ISD projects within and across ministries. In order to gain these champions the CSIO will need to:

Increase ISD dialogue among ministries – articulate the advantages of Citizen-Centred services and citizen's desire/demand for these types of services as detailed in research such as Citizens First 3.

Demonstrate value and tangible results gained through successful ISD initiatives. Build on these successes and encourage new projects and partnerships.

Incremental Approach

Start small and use an incremental approach to develop and implement new ISD initiatives. Focus attention and resources on "one-off" projects that can later be used to demonstrate the value of ISD initiatives to both citizens and government.

Effective reporting and accountability mechanisms

Until ministries are made accountable for ISD initiatives/achievements, ISD will remain low on the government agenda.