
York Region Industry Education Partnership

DRAFT

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	2
Background	2
Problem / Opportunity	2
Current Situation.....	2
Project Description	3
Project Description	3
Objectives	3
Strategic Alignment	3
Environment Analysis	4
Business & Operational Impacts	8
Conclusions & Recommendations	9
Conclusions	9
Recommendations	9
Project Responsibility	9

Section

1

Executive Summary

York Region Industry Education Partnership

Today's economic growth is driven by knowledge, skills, innovation and entrepreneurship. All of these characteristics are derived from the quality of the workforce a region possesses. An essential element for sustained economic vitality is to ensure there is a proper balance of labour force skills to enable local firms to meet the challenges of global competition. York Region wishes to establish an Industry Education Partnership to address these workforce issues.

Through a community consultation process which included key stakeholder interviews and a focus group process, community interest and support for the formation of an industry education partnership has been established. Both business and education overwhelmingly support the concept, see the benefits and are willing to participate in the next stages of development.

Various organization models have been discussed with the business and education community. Consensus is that the most appropriate next step is to appoint a task force to determine mission, vision and mandate for the partnership. Based on the outcome of that discussion, an appropriate model, governance structure and financial sustainability plan can be determined.

Section

2

Background

York Region Industry Education Partnership

Opportunity

Over the next 25 years, York Region will experience continued rapid population and employment growth. To adequately plan for these increases, York Region developed Vision 2026, Towards a Sustainable Region. As part of that strategy, attracting and supporting businesses is a key action area. By 2026 York Region will be renowned for its advanced technology, innovative businesses, supportive business infrastructure and highly skilled resident workforce. In order to accomplish this goal, one of the action steps is to foster networking between businesses, both regionally and locally and between business and other sectors. In order to accomplish this goal the Region is facilitating the formation of an industry/business education partnership to provide an opportunity for business, education, government, the work force, union and other stakeholders to leverage resources, knowledge and innovation to address common workforce development issues.

Current Situation

During the Region's Economic Strategy consultation process, stakeholders expressed their concern over skills shortages and skills imbalances in the Region. The quality of the labour force and the range of issues surrounding the supply, access and training of employees were raised consistently. Some participants indicated that the skills and human resource needs of businesses should be identified and addressed.

Research into the business model adopted by other jurisdictions has shown that the industry/business education councils operating in this province are in the forefront of the workforce initiative that brings together business, education, government and community groups to address the skills issue. While individual industry/business education councils operate under different names, they all share the common goal of facilitating partnerships among business, education, government, labour and the community to ensure that the local community has the skills, knowledge and competencies to best compete in the marketplace. Their objectives are to enhance career education and create the best opportunities for youth, improve school to work transition, enhance employability and life skills, promote life long learning and grow and retain their talent pool.

There are ten existing industry education partnerships in Ontario. Each partnership is unique to its own community and is structured and governed to best meet the local community needs. Peel Region announced the launch of an industry education partnership on November 9, 2007 and is continuing to work on its development.

In April of 2007 the Planning and Economic Development Committee recommended the completion of a feasibility study to formulate the recommended strategy and action plan for the establishment of a York Region Industry Education Council.

Section

3

Project Description

Project Description

Industry education councils are at the forefront of community driven coalitions aimed at addressing local workforce issues and strengthening community capacity.

Objectives

The formation of an industry education partnership in York Region will

- Increase awareness of local opportunities and gaps
- Bring together local organizations and businesses to collectively address needs
- Align programs and services to decrease duplication
- Share knowledge and information regarding local labour market development and workforce needs
- Make a region wide impact
- Bring business and education together to learn from and support each other
- Improve training and education services for newcomers and those experiencing difficulty finding employment in York Region

Section

4

Strategic Alignment

The York Region Vision 2026 Goal Statement states that:

In 2026, York Region residents will live, work, play and learn in healthy, accessible and safe neighbourhoods that are vibrant, exciting and people – friendly. Residents will continue to enjoy the high quality of life that attracted them to York and will have a strong sense of belonging and commitment to their communities.

Goal 3 states

In 2026 York Region will be renowned for its advanced technology, innovative businesses, supportive business infrastructure and highly skilled resident workforce.

The creation of an industry education partnership would support the following action areas of Goal 3

- Fostering networking between businesses both regionally and locally and between business and other major sectors (such as health, education and government)
- Encouraging the development of lifelong learning opportunities and a broad range of learning options for residents
- Identifying workforce and educational needs together with key business and education partners
- Facilitating job creation in designated employment areas

Section

5

Environment Analysis

In April of 2007, York Region Council approved a Feasibility Study to formulate the implementation strategy and action plan for the establishment of an Industry Education Council in York Region. The Ontario Business Education Partnership was retained to complete the feasibility study and create a final report for York Region Council. The Ontario Business Education Partnership is a partnership of not for profit organizations across Ontario committed to advancing business – education co-operation in support of workforce and economic development. Each member organization is community-based and works with local stakeholders to address local opportunities and challenges, such as helping students and youth make the transition from school to employment, enhancing broad community career education programs and linking employment to labour market needs for all.

Provincial Perspective

There are currently ten industry education partnerships across Ontario with one in Peel Region under development. The Ontario Business Education Partnership is the provincial association that supports these partnerships as well as many local training boards across the province. The Ontario Business Education Partnership (OBEP) is a partnership of not for profit organizations across Ontario committed to advancing business – education co-operation in support of workforce and economic development.

Each member organization is community-based and works with local stakeholders to address local opportunities and challenges, such as helping students and youth make the transition from school to employment, enhancing broad community career education programs and linking employment to labour market needs for all. As a collective, our partnership is active at three levels;

STRATEGY

Working with key decision makers from business, education, government and leading associations to inform policy and program directions

ADVOCACY

Acting as a conduit between government and our member communities to ensure effective stakeholder communication and strong working relationships and;

IMPLEMENTATION

Supporting member communities in the delivery of programs, services and expertise that meet our stakeholders' needs

Industry education partnerships are locally driven, not for profit organizations whose main purpose is to bring business and industry together with education in order to contribute to the economic vibrancy of the community.

Business Education Councils are committed to:

- Identifying talent in each community; realizing that retaining such talent is increasingly important in building a sound economic foundation
- identifying, enhancing, promoting and sharing best practices
- working closely with educators in improving the delivery of community-based programs that prepare students and youth for the workforce and life
- enhancing the provision of school-work programs

- mobilizing teachers' federations, faculties of education and members of the business community to implement professional development opportunities in support of publicly-funded education

Their common characteristics include

- inclusive, broad-based membership
- shared leadership
- stable source of funding

Other characteristics include

- a group of concerned people from education, government, business and labour come together for a common cause of helping to support and improve education in their community
- formal, not for profit status
- high ranking representation – the members of the council are movers and shakers from key sectors of the community brought together to facilitate change
- local focus – each council develops and executes programs services and special events to meet the needs of their local community. There is no cookie cutter approach

Industry education partnerships are effective because they

- expand what is possible in the area of community-school collaboration
- provide a collective response to the evidence that suggests that our schools benefit by utilizing community resources
- pool energies and create a unified voice and can help identify and eliminate duplication of services
- are a proven means to make sure that education is a top priority in the community
- are a mechanism to generate youth employment and community prosperity
- are a vehicle to help educators and employers cross traditional barriers (real and perceived)

Their common purpose is to bring business, education and industry together to address local workforce development issues and needs and identify solutions for that community. Typically their partners include

- Business and industry
- School boards
- Community colleges
- Universities
- Private schools
- Municipalities
- Adult education providers
- Employment Services organizations
- Training Boards
- Service clubs
- Chamber of Commerce/Board of Trade
- Professional organizations
- Unions
- Youth

The benefits of an industry education partnership in a community include

- identifying talent in each community; realizing that retaining such talent is increasingly important in building a sound economic foundation
- identifying, enhancing, promoting and sharing best practices
- working closely with educators in improving the delivery of community-based programs that prepare students and youth for the workforce and life
- enhancing the provision of school-work programs
- mobilizing teachers' federations, faculties of education and members of the business community to implement professional development opportunities in support of publicly-funded education

The existing industry education partnerships range in history from twenty five to less than five years. Their budgets range from \$200,000 to over 2 million dollars annually and staffing complement is anywhere from two to twenty. As an example, the IEC Hamilton has an annual budget of \$1 million and a staff of ten. Halton Industry Education Council has an

annual budget of \$2 million and currently has eighteen staff. Their sources of funding include membership fees, fees for service, project fees and donations from local businesses and organizations. All however, have a self sustaining model.

Industry education partnerships operate under one of four basic models, Councils such as the IEC Hamilton are working more closely with municipalities, others are more autonomous such as the Halton Industry Education Council. Some are closely attached to school boards like the Career Education Council in Guelph, Wellington, Dufferin and the Foundation for Education in Huron Perth. A fourth model is where the partnerships are more industry focused such as the Business Education Partnership of Waterloo and the Ottawa Centre for Research and Innovation who both work closely with the technology and innovation sectors. Most focus on youth and particularly high school students but others such as the Business Education Council of Niagara take a “cradle to grave” approach and are involved in early years programming.

Local Perspective

York Region is home to over 86,100 enterprises and has a strong and diverse economic base. Key industries represent business and financial services, automotive parts, information technology, biotechnology, transportation equipment manufacturing, construction and building related services and furniture and related products.

While the Region is home to a number of large international firms with over 500 employees, the very small firm is the predominant form of enterprise. In 2004, over 94% of York Region enterprises had less than 20 employees. However, large firms with over 500 employees increased 28.3%.¹

York Region's dynamic, robust economy has a Gross Domestic Product that is larger than any of the Provinces of Atlantic Canada. All aspects of the Region's economy are impressive by Canadian standards.²

An indication of York Region's rapidly expanding economy is the employment growth which has outpaced population growth since 1971.³

The 2007/08 Trends Opportunities and Priorities report from the York South Simcoe Training Board identified 7 trends in our local labour market that require attention:

- Increased immigration
- Skilled trades shortage
- Higher entry level requirements
- Aging small business owners
- Increasing local employment opportunities
- Decline in family farms
- Underutilization of persons with disabilities

The identified trends, issues and proposed actions are important to our community in order to ensure the continued success of our vibrant economy.⁴

Community Consultation

Key Stakeholder Interviews

In order to gather additional information from business and education in York Region, a key stakeholder interview process and community focus group consultations were used.

A letter was sent to key businesses in York Region containing information of this initiative and indicating that they would be receiving a follow up phone call to gather more information. This letter was sent to over 700 businesses in York Region. These businesses were located across the entire region and included those that had been nominated in the top 1000. Small, medium and large businesses were included in this list. In addition telephone calls were placed to human resource managers in over 125 businesses in York Region to invite them to participate in the process either by attending a focus group or completing an interview.

¹ An Economic Profile of the Region of York Section 4 Business Enterprise.

² An Economic Profile of the Region of York Section 2 The Economy of York Region

³ An Economic Profile of the Region of York Section 2.3 Employment Growth

⁴ TOPS Report 2007/08 YSSTB

Fifteen key stakeholder interviews were conducted with businesses and organization across York Region. Interviewees were contacted by telephone and asked to schedule a half hour appointment to complete the interview. Over one hundred and fifty businesses and organizations were invited to participate via this method. They were also given the option of attending a focus group or completing the interview via email. A list of those who completed the interview is found in Appendix A.

The sample included geographical representation of the communities in York Region. Small, medium and large businesses participated as well as both school boards and Seneca College. No incentives were offered for participation and all participants were given information regarding business education partnership in general and their roles within communities in Ontario prior to answering the questions.

The sample is limited by size, the voluntary nature of participation and response rate although those who did participate were keenly supported and very interested in further participation. Even those who choose not to participate received information about the initiative and will also be informed about next steps.

Interview Response Summary

What would be the key activities you would see a York Region IEC focusing on?

The most common response was focused on helping to pinpoint more accurately the skills related to certain areas of employment and helping school and educators understand more areas of focus for industry. Another common response was to help facilitate businesses to articulate to students/educators what some of their industries entail and what the necessary jobs skills are. The hope expressed was that this type of dialogue would lead to increased awareness. There was also discussion regarding businesses coming together with education to improve training amongst the existing workforce and sharing knowledge and experience around learning.

How could businesses in York Region assist educators through this IEC?

Both business and education responded that this is an opportunity to bring both sectors together and increase their understanding of each other. This would allow articulation of needs on both sides and lead to increased opportunities for collaboration and shared solutions. Awareness of existing opportunities was also mentioned frequently in response to this question. This would allow a clear communication path to address the needs of both the students and employers. This would allow educators to have a better understanding of the businesses in the region and understand what these businesses do. It would give them the opportunity to meet with people and understand how they run their business and the in and outs of their industry. In turn businesses could go into schools and talk about industry specific requirements and general areas such as health and safety.

How could educators in York Region assist business through this IEC?

Educators could help business understand more about the youth of today and ensure that the programs that schools are offering are known by industries in York Region so they can capitalize on them. They could also share their expertise on training and learning systems to assist business to address the education needs of their existing workforce. Educators can also help business to understand how they can become engaged in the education system and in experiential learning opportunities.

What is your interest level in being involved? Use a scale of 1 to 4 where 1 is not very interested to 4 being very interested.

All those interviewed were a three or higher with the majority expressing an interest level of four. All want to be kept apprised of future directions and opportunities for engagement. The concept was wholly supported.

Focus Groups

In addition to the interviews, three focus groups were held during the month of October. Various times and days were offered in order to facilitate participation by a broad range of stakeholders. A second letter was sent to the list of 700 key business contacts to invite them to participate. Some participants in the focus groups chose to share their feedback in this manner as opposed to participating in a telephone interview. In total, twenty three key individuals participated in the Focus Groups. A participant list can be found in Appendix B.

Focus group participants were asked to identify their current top human resources challenges. Most common answers included an aging workforce, the challenge of working with the young worker of today and the lack of awareness of what opportunities exist in York Region. There was much discussion of the number of York residents who commute out of the

region for work and the resulting congestion and environmental concerns. Challenges with assisting newcomers to be job ready was also mentioned as was the perceived lack of essential job skills i.e. numeracy, literacy combined with the lack of soft skills, i.e. punctuality, work ethic and respect. When asked to predict future workforce challenges, the participants spoke of the impending retirement of a large pool of workers. Not only is that a challenge from a recruitment perspective but also the fact that a large pool of knowledge and experience will be leaving the workforce. There was also concern about businesses inability to predict their future workforce challenges due to lack of time available and knowledge lacking in this area. Many businesses are so busy in the day to day they are not able to focus on the future needs.

When asked what potential benefits an industry education partnership could bring, focus group participants spoke of the benefits of being able to address local workforce development needs from a regional perspective. The concept of bringing partners together to understand more about what each other are doing and to eliminate duplication was also seen as a benefit. There was a sense that this partnership could take on a research role and assist with prediction of future trends and needs to enable all businesses to be more proactive with their workforce development.

Focus group participants were shown three potential models for this partnership and asked for their feedback on applicability. The first model was an incubated model where the partnership exists inside another organization and is supported by that organization. Governance typically is of an advisory committee format and staff are employees of the host organization. The second model was a community based model. This is where the organization exists on its own with a board of directors and staff/volunteers that are accountable to the board of directors. The third model was a task force model where key individuals come together to address a specific issues and determine appropriate actions which are then typically delegated to other organizations. There was not consensus on this question. Many felt that an incubated model, particularly if it was incubated by the region would not be as well accepted by the community. Others felt that this model was a good start up strategy until resources could be determined. There was a sense that this partnership needs to be owned by no one and owned by everyone. Some participants felt that a task force model might be best to gather more information to determine the focus, vision, mission and purpose and that in turn will suggest what the appropriate model is.

When funding was discussed, focus group participants felt that once the purpose is determined the funding will fall into place based on who the catalysts are. There was a caution around relying too heavily on government funding and that by proving the benefits, members of the partnership will be willing to provide funds.

Section

6

Local Municipal Impacts

The formation of an industry education partnership would bring benefit to both the education and business sectors in York Region as well as the region as a whole. Benefits include

- Reduction in duplication of service
- Increased awareness of programs and services that are available
- Locally developed solutions to training and development needs of business
- Increased ability to respond to local workforce needs with locally developed solutions
- Neutral infrastructure to support both business and education's efforts with respect to workforce development in York Region
- Increased ability for business and education to collectively create solutions to address local needs
- Ability for business and education to discuss individual needs and identify cooperative solutions

Section

7

Financial Implications

The financial implications to York Region to move to the next phase in the creation of an industry education partnership are minor. The recommendation to establish a representative task force comprised of one York Region staff person and key stakeholders from the community will require minor financial investment. Part of the work assigned to the task force will include a funding model which has a goal of self sufficiency.

Section

8

Conclusions & Recommendations

Conclusions

There is great community support for the formation of an industry education partnership in York Region. There are a number of significant key stakeholders who are interested in participating in the next stage of the development of this partnership. There is an understanding in the community of the benefits of this type of partnership and a willingness to look at strategies to make it self sustaining.

Recommendations

- Appoint a task force to determine the mission, vision and mandate of the York Industry Education Partnership.
- Task Force membership to include representation from York Region, a representative from a Chamber of Commerce, a representative from York University, Seneca College, both school boards and at least four representatives from local business and industry. Geographic representation to be considered.
- Task force to determine the funding model for the partnership to ensure sustainability
- York Region staff to host further individual discussions with York University regarding their role in the partnership
- Commit to a deadline for moving forward with the appropriate model and communicate that timeline to the interested community
- Update those who have participated in the project to date with the next steps and include a call to action so that they can indicate what roles they are interested in playing
- Research potential projects available that the partnership may look to for funding

Project Responsibility

That the project responsibility continues to lie with York Region Economic Development until an appropriate model is determined.

Section

9

Appendices

A – Key Stakeholder interview participants

B – List of Focus Group participants

Appendix A Key Stakeholder Interviews Completed

Diane Blasiaks	Director of Human Resources	Miller Paving
Anne Hardy	Area Manager	Bayshore Healthcare
Marc Neeb	Executive VP Human Resources	Dortec Industries (Magna)
John Futhey	Editor	Newmarket, Aurora, Era- Banner
Donna Hall	Manager of Continuing Education	Seneca College
Art Niezen	Executive Director	Georgina Trades Training Inc
Scott Smith	President	JD Smith and Sons
Norm Sneyd	President	Highland Transport
Rob Low		Matcom Industrial Installations
Debra Scott	General Manager	Newmarket Chamber of Commerce
Maureen Richardson	President	King Township Chamber of Commerce
Leslie Walker	CEO	Richmond Hill Chamber of Commerce
Deborah Bonk	CEO	Vaughan Chamber of Commerce
Salim Jamal	OYAP Coordinator	York District School Board
Ron Dorcas	OYAP Coordinator	York Catholic District School Board

Appendix B Focus Group Participants

Wednesday October 3, 2007
3:30 pm to 5:30 pm
Regional Municipality of York

John Rogers	CAO Town of Aurora
Art Niezen	Executive Director, Georgina Trades Training Inc
Carla Adams	Executive Director, Aurora Chamber of Commerce
Rodney Webb	Associate VP, York University
Gale Harild	York District School Board

Thursday October 11, 2007
7:30 am to 9:30 am
Regional Municipality of York

Brenda Osler	Town of Richmond Hill Economic Development
Michael Siu	Associate VP of Research, York University
Stephen Chiat	Director of Economic Development Town of Markham
Stephen Paul	President and CEO Bay 3000 Corporate Education
Vern Cunningham	President Alutron Modules Inc
Larry Herrod	Director of Distribution Services, Newmarket Hydro
Lynn Slaney	Director of Education, Preferred Health Care Services
Tom Holland	York District School Board, Discovery Program

Tuesday October 30, 2007
8:30 to 10:30 am
Regional Municipality of York

Stan Talesnick	Seneca College
Wanda Andrychuk	HR Consultant, York Region
Olga Ferro	York Catholic District School Board
Megan Thomas	YMCA
Catherine Resentera	Region of York
Steve Baulb	Ontario General Contractors Association
Nadine Heslop	Service Canada
Maureen Cunningham	York Region District School Board International Education Office
Ilia Burtman	Service Canada
Alan Wilson	York South Simcoe Local Training Board