

Action-Research Establishing "Reception" Component With the Community's Partners



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Secteur de la formation professionnelle et technique et de la formation continue

sarca

STATE OF RECEPTION, REFERRAL,
COUNSELLING AND SUPPORT SERVICES

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SARCA

State of Reception, Referral,
Counselling and Support Services

Direction de l'éducation
des adultes et de l'action
communautaire

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Foreword

The action research report published here is one of a set of reports that present new initiatives tested by school boards as part of the renewal of reception, referral, counselling and support services for adults. The Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport (MELS) is delighted with this unusual form of collaboration with the school boards, and with the ensuing contribution to the development of renewed services for adults. In particular, it appreciates the fact that these school boards were willing to involve practitioners in a research activity with which they were not necessarily familiar, and admires the level of commitment and professionalism shown by the practitioners during the research process.

The action research projects were presented, accepted and then implemented in 2004, and ended in late February 2005. During the projects, the MELS provided "light scientific" supervision to ensure that the results generated were potentially of interest to all school boards. Each action research project was distinctive to the community in which it was carried out. It addressed a problem faced by that community, and was carried out by players from that community, all of whom had their own practical experience, expertise and cultures. Had the results been presented without sufficient information on the processes used to obtain them, they would not have been useful to readers from other school boards.

Production of the final report was a difficult and time-consuming task for the teams and their authors. Several different stages, during which the MELS made numerous scientific and linguistic suggestions, were required to produce the end result, which is presented in this document. The MELS is most grateful to everyone involved in this fastidious and demanding task, and the value and quality of their work will be apparent to anyone who reads the text.

Although all the reports have very similar tables of contents to facilitate comparison, the style and spirit of each individual team is nevertheless apparent, and constitutes a further point of interest in these documents.

Enjoy!

Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport
Direction de l'éducation des adultes et de l'action communautaire

Part I



Action Research Topic

To prepare for the upcoming implementation of reception, referral, counselling and support (SARCA) services, the Commission scolaire De La Jonquière wanted to focus its research project on the “reception” component.

Description of the planned intervention

Over the last two years, staff involved in adult education (general education, vocational training and adult education) at the Commission scolaire De La Jonquière have worked together to bring the services provided into line with the *Government Policy on Adult Education and Continuing Education and Training*, with the main focus on lifelong learning. Based on our discussions and work, we decided to pool our efforts to provide a broader range of services, in order to understand, and then respond to, the needs of adults. The possibility of government support for an action research project came at just the right time.

After completing an exhaustive analysis of the way work was organized in the various reception, referral and support services for youth and adult students, the management team decided to redefine its position in order to renew services and improve service quality by pooling the available resources and maximizing their use.

Over the last few years, the Commission scolaire De La Jonquière has become an innovative leader by daring to implement the current educational shift rigorously in both administrative and pedagogical terms. In addition, its work to relocate and renew the layout of premises used specifically for adult education in recent years has reflected the objectives of the *Government Policy on Adult Education and Continuing Education and Training* by switching the focus from supply management to demand management.



Part II



Context

2.1 Background and review of the main problems

To meet the growing demand for reception and referral services in the region, a reception service more responsive to the needs of the population in the area covered by the Commission scolaire De La Jonquière had to be developed quickly as part of the action research project. However, according to several key players whose opinions were not scientifically confirmed, there were several problems with the “**reception**” component of the services provided by various organizations:

- Reception services were offered by several different establishments operated by the school board and other organizations in the community (notable lack of a single service point).
- Almost no partnerships for reception services had been developed by the school board and the organizations in the community (compartmentalization).
- The reception procedure and information provided varied depending on the establishment or organization concerned, and on the services each provided (captive client base, resulting from a high unemployment rate).
- The qualifications of the reception staff varied widely (secretary, technician, education consultant, guidance counsellor, etc.).
- Reception and referral services were promoted mostly in connection with education services (advertising depended on the number of places needing to be filled).
- There were no tools to measure the impact of the initial reception experience.
- There was **no** clear, defined plan of action, available to all key players for all referred clients.

2.1.1 Target objective of the action research

Explore whether a viable “reception” component of reception, referral, counselling and support (SARCA) services is possible under a PARTNERSHIP with all the key players, in keeping with the *Government Policy on Adult Education and Continuing Education and Training*.

This general objective can be summarized by the following research hypothesis: Is a viable, effective “reception” component of reception, referral, counselling and support (SARCA) services possible under a PARTNERSHIP with all the key players, in keeping with the *Government Policy on Adult Education and Continuing Education and Training*?

The general objective and research hypothesis required several stages of research. The first four stages in this action research were scheduled for completion by February 2005. Each stage was based on a specific question, presented at the beginning of the explanation of the stages (Part IV of this report). Unlike the answer to the general question, the answers to the four specific questions were not causal (positivist research paradigm) but interpretive (interpretive research paradigm), since they were based on qualitative data that were not necessarily exhaustive. As we will see below, the qualitative data produced during the action research were

interesting and revealing as well as encouraging, and offered promising possibilities for the achievement of our overall objective in the coming months and years.

2.1.2 Overview of social and geographic particularities

Like many industrialized countries, Québec has seen its economy restructured in response to the new rules of international trade. The Saguenay–Lac-Saint-Jean region and its open economy have obviously been affected by these changes. The new rules have increased the economic integration of countries through an extension of international trade, and have forced a redeployment of economic activity, with strong prospects in some sectors and a decline in others.

More specifically, companies and factories, to meet the need to be competitive, have begun a phase of major adaptation and rationalization, seeking maximum flexibility. However, this reduces the need for workers, especially those with no qualifications.

Rapid technological change and industrial transformation have had an impact on the trades and professions that require advanced qualifications. As a result, the number of jobless workers and the unemployment rate continue to increase (13.6%), the professional requirements for jobs in the Saguenay–Lac-Saint-Jean region have become stringent, and workers, whether employed or not, need to upgrade their skills if they wish to enter or return to the labour market.

2.1.3 Expected benefits of the action research at the local and provincial levels

- Mobilization of organizations in the community.
- Identification of client needs (various client groups).
- Creation of innovative services and intervention methods.
- Implementation of a reference framework for the provincewide development of the “reception” component, based on a regional experience.
- Raising of key players’ awareness of MEQ¹ objectives (SARCA).
- Analysis of the viability of a partnership.
- Verification of whether the action research helps individuals to express their needs or demands.

¹ The abbreviation MEQ (and not MELS) is used in this report, since the research began before February 18, 2005.

2.2 Current knowledge and achievements

2.2.1 Regional reception and referral service in Jonquière

Background

In 1985, a regional reception and referral service was set up, covering the whole of the Saguenay–Lac-Saint-Jean region. It was based on a partnership between organizations working in the fields of education, employment and community action:

- Centre travail Québec (CTQ)
- Canada Employment Centre (CEC)
- Commission de formation professionnelle (CFP)
- Organismes volontaires d'éducation populaire (OVEP)
- Women's organizations
- CEGEPs
- Université du Québec à Chicoutimi (UQAC)
- Commission scolaire régionale Lapointe

The regional reception and referral service had six service points in the 02 region, including one serving Jonquière and the surrounding area. The Commission scolaire régionale Lapointe provided space for the Jonquière reception and referral service at the Centre de formation générale des adultes De La Jonquière.

From 1985 to 1989, the reception and referral service was used mainly as an in-house resource to provide academic and career guidance, as well as counselling, to students at the Centre de formation générale des adultes De La Jonquière. The clients had trouble distinguishing between the school board's reception and referral service and the regional reception and referral service. Working in parallel, the partners referred fewer students.

In 1989, following extensive budget cuts and a lack of cooperation among key players, the local reception service was struggling.

From 1990 to 1996, the reception and referral service went through an interesting period. Restructured services, new employees, and a new location alongside several employment and community education organizations meant that the number of referrals increased from year to year.

In 1996, almost 2 700 clients obtained services from the Jonquière reception and referral service, but this did not prevent the activities from ceasing in 1997. The creation of new organizations for younger client groups, and organizational fatigue, forced the reception and referral service administrators to transfer reception and referral tasks to the Société québécoise de développement de la main-d'œuvre (SQDM), bringing a twelve-year partnership to an end.

2.2.2 Overview of reception services

Reminder

First- and second-line services tend to involve general support for decision making by adult clients who wish to join or remain in the labour market, or resume their education.

Services offered

- Identification and clarification of client needs in connection with job or training requirements.
- Information on keeping or seeking employment, in connection with topics such as job applications, retraining, manpower programs and measures, job search techniques, etc.
- Information about academic possibilities such as programs, schools, job market characteristics, specialized services, etc.
- Related and supplementary information.
- Career guidance to help clients target a clear, realistic career objective.
- Preparation of an educational plan.
- Referral to suitable resources, in other words resources in a better position to help clients make specific career choices or identify and correct a skill gap for a specific job.

2.2.3 What is a partnership?

Definitions

“A relationship based on shared or compatible objectives and a recognized distribution of specific roles and responsibilities among participants who may be official or unofficial, contractual or volunteer, and between two or more parties. The link results in a cooperative investment of resources (time, funding, materials), in other words a joint willingness to take risks, share authority and share the advantages for all participants” (Kernaghan et al., 2001, 202 [translation]).

“A process by which an organization (its managers and staff) associates itself with at least one other organization (its managers and staff) in a customized, evolving relationship; the partners agree to pursue a common goal by pooling or exchanging resources to obtain mutually beneficial results in keeping with their respective missions, mandates and objectives, while retaining sovereign control outside the partnership” (Boisclair, M., ENAP, 2004 [translation]).

Based on these definitions and other work by the authors cited, we can list the key points in a successful intervention based mainly on a partnership.

A partnership

- reflects an expressed, shared need
- leaves the partners free to remain or to leave
- is based on relations of openness, respect and equality
- can involve a chosen, imposed or inevitable partner
- is not just a group of people who want to accomplish something

Some fundamental principles for a successful partnership

- Ensure that all partners support the underlying reason for the partnership (objectives, client needs, etc.).
- Develop a shared vocabulary.
- Promote a partnership-based culture and values.
- Establish effective and efficient partnership practices.

Main characteristics of a partnership

- It is voluntary.
- It involves a sharing of responsibilities, risks, gains and losses.
- It allows all partners to retain their own identity and pursue their own mission, mandate and objectives.
- Actions under the partnership target a common goal.
- It has a limited duration.

Advantages of a partnership

- It allows for creative solutions.
- It offers a tool for social transformation.
- It promotes improved communications.
- It involves people and organizations that would not otherwise work together.
- It can offer a way to develop and support organizational change.

Disadvantages of a partnership

- A partnership may lead to a clash of cultures and values.
- It may make the problem resolution and decision-making process more complex.

- The main players may have different levels of authority, and organizations may have different approval processes.
- The technologies used by the partners may not be compatible.
- Management methods may differ.

A partnership is no longer a partnership if:

- one of the partners has a hidden agenda
- its apparent agreement hides opposing intentions
- it is merely a symbolic gesture or collection of names
- one person holds all the power or directs the whole process
- there is no true sharing of risks, responsibilities, benefits, gains, losses and accountability
- there is a lack of confidence, or mistrust, among potential partners

2.2.4 The “4 Cs” of a partnership

Compatibility

- ◆ Values
- ◆ Mission
- ◆ Objectives, strategies
- ◆ Policies
- ◆ Culture, affinities
- ◆ Commitment of key players
- ◆ Management style

Capacity

- ◆ Techniques
- ◆ Human resources
- ◆ Financial resources
- ◆ Material resources
- ◆ Relative size
- ◆ Available time and energy

Complementarity

- ◆ Strong points and weak points
- ◆ Expertise
- ◆ Geographic location
- ◆ Mutual needs

Complicity

- ◆ Interests and intentions (confidence)
- ◆ Credibility of key players in the partnership
- ◆ Room to manoeuvre of key players

Part III



Planning of the action research

3.1 Initial planning of the action research

Our research project had four stages, and involved consulting partners and adults within the territory of the Commission scolaire De La Jonquière.

3.2 Stages in the action research

1. Meetings with potential partners
2. Meetings with target client groups
3. Establishment of a cooperation table (advisory committee) with partners interested in the action research
4. Establishment of reception activities

1. Meetings with potential partners

The goal of the first stage was mainly to identify the reception processes currently used by various organizations and assess their interest in offering reception services as part of a partnership, if the SARCA project was implemented. In addition, the school board used the meetings to check the perceptions and ideas of its potential partners, and their commitment to a reception process in any future SARCA project. Lastly, the meetings helped to create a shared view of the needs of and realities faced by various client groups, and to involve them in the new approach to reception and referral services launched by the school board.

Objectives

- Report on and debate the objectives and principles of the action research.
- Gather information on the “reception” component.
- Mobilize partners around the “reception” component.
- Promote discussion and debate about the action research project.

Activities implemented

- Preparation of a presentation document and action research questionnaire.
- Telephone contacts with various partners targeted for the action research.
- Individual meetings with partners to gather information on the “reception” component:
 - meetings with managers (one per organization)
 - meetings with professional staff members (one per organization)
 - meetings with support staff providing reception services to clients (one per organization)
- Preparation of a summary of all the information gathered from partners.

Note: Each meeting lasted one hour, making a total of three hours per organization.

2. Meetings with target client groups

The goal of the second stage was to gather information about the needs of adults in the territory of the school board by creating nine focus groups for various client groups. We believed that the data would be useful for making potential partners aware of the needs of their clients, and would promote the idea of setting up a cooperation table for all organizations in the community. We felt that the partners would not wish to ignore the needs expressed by their clients and would decide to get involved in a partnership-based reception service.

Objectives

- Promote discussion and debate about the “reception” component.
- Gather information on past experiences.
- Gather information on needs, along with suggestions.

Activities implemented

- Creation of a short document to present the “reception” component.
- Creation of a questionnaire.
- With help from the partners, creation of nine focus groups.
- Meetings with the following focus groups:•
 - “general education students”: studying at a general adult education centre
 - “vocational training students”: studying at a vocational training centre
 - “unemployed workers”: out of work for six months and receiving employment insurance benefits
 - “welfare recipients”: out of work for one year and receiving income security benefits
 - “no-cheque recipients”: receiving neither employment insurance nor income security benefits
 - “deaf and hearing-impaired individuals”: studying or working
 - “disabled individuals”: studying or working
 - “immigrants”: having studied or worked in Canada for at least three years
 - “workers”: having worked for at least three years
- Drafting of an overview report for each focus group.

***Note:** For each group:

- gender (equal proportion of each)
- age 16 – 29 (4 participants)
- age 30 – 45 (4 participants)

- age 46 – 60 (4 participants)
- place of residence (equal proportion of rural and urban dwellers)
- in all, 108 participants in the focus groups, with 12 per group. Each focus group meeting lasted three hours.

3. Establishment of a cooperation table (advisory committee) with partners interested in the action research

The goal of the third stage was to create synergy among partners in the field to maintain their interest in the action research project and bring the data gathered during the first two stages to their attention as quickly as possible. This stage also allowed for discussions among the participants and gave a clear indication of the willingness of the Commission scolaire De La Jonquière to work with other organizations in the community to build a future SARCA system.

Objectives

- Specify the expectations and reservations of each party.
- Explain the operating mode, capacity and limits of each structure.
- Define objectives and collaborative methods.
- Establish implementation procedures.
- Define and present a reception service structure and shared channel for information.
- Establish discussion forums.
- Make a commitment and support the “reception” process as defined by the members of the cooperation table.
- Facilitate the implementation of adapted intervention methods.
- Help staff members deal with the difficulties that arise during reception activities as part of the action research project.

Activities implemented

- Contact with each partner.
- Completion of eight working meetings:
 - one to present and discuss the results of the focus groups
 - six to design reception activities
 - one final meeting to present the final assessment of the action research project on the “reception” component
- Preparation of a report on each meeting.
- Presentation of the report from the preceding meetings at each meeting, and recording of additions and comments.

4. Establishment of reception activities

The last stage offered a way to explore the feasibility of a partnership-based reception service and to allow the members of the advisory committee to harmonize their practices. The reception activities also offered an experimental platform to explore the question of whether the reception process was realistic and met client needs, and to make corrections throughout the experimental phase. Lastly, it consolidated the links between managers and professional staff members.

Objectives

- Try out a reception process defined by the partners.
- Implement innovative activities.
- Make clients aware of the process for the recognition of prior learning.
- Determine whether the “reception” process meets client needs.
- Explore the professional skills needed for “reception” professional staff members.
- Confirm if the “reception” component is viable, as a partnership-based process, in the territory of the Commission scolaire De La Jonquière.

Activities implemented

- Creation of a statistics sheet on referrals and actions.
- Creation of a questionnaire to check whether the variables changed following the focus groups (adult numbers and sociodemographic characteristics).
- Creation of a prospectus and PowerPoint presentation about the process for recognizing prior learning.
- Implementation of a reception process with input from the nine focus groups over two months:
 - samples: six individuals per group who did not take part in the focus groups (54 individuals in all)
 - frequency: two meetings with each individual, a month apart
- Gathering of information using a questionnaire completed anonymously by the participants in a control group after each reception activity.
- Compilation of results based on data from the questionnaire:
 - first collection of data after four weeks and meetings with 54 individuals
 - progress report to the table of partners and corrections for the second stage
 - second collection of data after four weeks and meetings with 54 individuals
 - report on the second stage to the table of partners, and corrections

- Renewal of contact with the 54 participants in the control group to gather information on their actions.
- Production of a final report.
- Forwarding of final report to the Ministère de l'Éducation du Québec.

3.3 Researcher skills

Research team

Two education consultants (including one project coordinator).

Experience

Responsible for the development and application of several projects focusing on:

- recognition of prior experiential learning and evaluation tools based on the new model
- work/study programs (participation in the regional and provincial partnership tables)
- recognition of life skills
- basic competencies for specific client groups (disabled workers, the deaf and hearing impaired, workers aged over 45)
- processes to diagnose needs (identification of problems and solutions)
- career planning and management services (accident victims, workers reclassified within a business)
- research work on relational skills required by employers
- coordination and supervision of focus groups in conjunction with CRÉPAS (Conseil régional de prévention de l'abandon scolaire) as part of a project with Fonds-Jeunesse Québec
- organization of colloquiums on education and joining the labour market
- participation in the development of Carrefours Jeunesse-Emploi
- partner in a panel on the fight against poverty (employment-entrepreneurship education)
- development, in the late 1980s, of a regional reception and referral service bringing together
 - Commission scolaire De La Jonquière
 - Jonquière CEGEP
 - Université du Québec à Chicoutimi
 - Commission de formation professionnelle (renamed "La Société québécoise de développement de la main-d'œuvre" in the 1990s)
 - Centre Travail-Québec
 - Canada Employment Centre

- women's organizations

3.3.1 Project activities and original time frame

1. Meetings with potential partners

Activity	Time frame
- Draft a presentation document and action research questionnaire	May 2004
- Make contact with various target client groups	Late May 2004
- Meet with various partners	June 2004
- Create an overview of the information gathered from partners	Late June 2004
- Mail out the overview of the information gathered	Late June 2004

2. Meetings with target client groups

Activity	Time frame
- Draft a short document to present the “ reception ” component and a questionnaire	August 2004
- Create focus groups with partners	Late August 2004
- Meet with focus groups	September 2004
- Create an overview of the focus groups	Late September 2004

3. Establishment of a cooperation table (advisory committee) of partners interested in the action research

Activity	Time frame
- Establish a cooperation table	Mid-October 2004 to mid-February 2005

4. Establishment of reception activities

Activity	Time frame
- Draft a questionnaire	Early November 2004
- Apply reception activities with the nine target groups of the action research project	Mid-November 2004 to mid-February 2005
- Have the questionnaire completed by participants in the control group	Mid-November 2004 to mid-February 2005
- Compile the results of the questionnaire - First collection and report on the first stage - Progress report to the table of partners and corrections - Second collection and report on the second stage	December 13 to 17, 2004 January 3 to 14, 2005 February 14 to 16, 2005
- Produce the final report	February 17 to 25, 2005
- Forward the final report to the Ministère de l'Éducation du Québec	Late February 2005

Part IV



Implementation of the action research project

4.1 Steps in the implementation of the action research project

4.1.1 Ideas and research strategies at the start of the implementation process

It is important to state the ideas and research strategies that allowed us to obtain meetings with potential partners in the community, and to describe how our approach generated interviews that provided a great deal of information. Thanks to our strategies, organizations in the community were brought together around the same table, in a “task force” that gave the action research a degree of continuity. In addition, we will describe the strategies that allowed the research team to meet various **key players, along with the actions taken and the details of each action.**

Note: Throughout this report, the organizations in the community will be called “potential partners,” given that the theme of the action research was to explore the possibility of setting up a reception service as part of a “SARCA” approach, based on a partnership with organizations in the community. The results will be discussed at the end, and so the term “potential partners” will be used for now.

The main focuses of the action research were as follows:

- Promote a collective taking of responsibility to maximize reception services.
- Work to establish a consensus concerning the needs of adults, and define a common position.
- Make education and employment players aware of the importance of reception services as the first step in a training process and as an interface between services and the population.
- List various reception experiences and use them to implement partnership-based SARCA services.
- Involve the partners in the action research by asking them to select people to take part in the meetings with target client groups.
- Define, jointly, the mission of each organization to avoid duplication.
- Modify the approach of the Commission scolaire De La Jonquière to the provision of reception services for students.
- Define a reception process resulting from cooperation by all partners.
- Define reception services to match the priority needs of adults, and ways to improve their access.
- Highlight the importance of working jointly to meet the *Government Policy on Adult Education and Continuing Education and Training* objective of increasing the knowledge and skills of the general population.

- Maintain cooperation over the short, medium and long terms.

It is important here to recall the discussions and principles that guided our strategy at the start of the action research project.

When we began our research, we set out the guiding principles we believed were essential for the creation of a reception service in partnership with organizations in the community in the territory of the Commission scolaire De La Jonquière. We relied on these principles throughout the project and we firmly believe that they helped us meet our main objective of bringing together, around the same table, the managers of both education and employment organizations.

- MEQ credentials: holding a research mandate from the Ministère de l'Éducation du Québec.
- Respect for the specific missions of other organizations: avoiding talking about a single service point, and stressing the words "gateway to education" in describing reception services as part of a SARCA system.
- Humility: presenting ourselves as people trying to find out more about the reception processes implemented by potential partners and making partners aware of the difficulties encountered by the Commission scolaire De La Jonquière in connection with reception services.
- Confidentiality: respecting the privacy of data collected from potential partners and target client groups.
- Positioning: stating the willingness of the school board to commission action research, working with key players in the employment and education communities, and its interest in discovering the reception methods used by its future partners.
- Adult needs: gathering data on client needs for all potential partners in the territory and using them for mobilization and discussion at the cooperation table (advisory committee).
- Trust-based relationships: building links of trust with potential partners by stating the issues of the action research clearly and informing them of the willingness of the school board to be an equal partner in the process.

Before the meetings, based on our discussions, we thought that the project would meet with resistance from potential partners for several reasons.

Following an introductory meeting between the school board and organizations in the community to inform them about the upcoming introduction of a SARCA system and the action research project, we observed, at the first interview with a partner, that the perception of this future key collaborator was that the SARCA system of the Commission scolaire De La Jonquière would provide reception services for everyone in the territory. In addition, given the

experience with a “single service point” in the community several years ago which failed to attract the support of all organizations, it is clear that these organizations were uneasy about our visit and the project in general. The managers and professional staff members of the organizations were worried that they would lose clients to a large organization such as the Commission scolaire De La Jonquière.

For this reason, we already felt we had an obstacle to overcome before establishing contact with the organization. We had to deal with this obstacle throughout the meetings, especially when meeting with the head of the organization. Luckily, we knew at least one person in each organization, which we thought would help us establish a climate of trust. In addition, the adult education team involved in the project provided ongoing support to facilitate this step in the process.

We concentrated on a “one step at a time” approach since, from the outset, we were aware that by proposing a single service point we would not appear credible and would find it difficult to work with some wary organizations. We agreed, after reflection, to adopt the following strategy during initial phone calls to partners: “Our action research aims to validate the possibility of developing reception services in partnership with the community, to help create reception services **for educational services** at the school board. In addition, the Ministère de l'Éducation du Québec (MEQ) plans to introduce a SARCA system, and we would like you to be a participant, rather than just a spectator, in this process.” This approach was a way of demonstrating to potential partners that we truly intended to switch the working mindset from isolation to cooperation.

As originally planned, the project was to be implemented in four stages. However, these stages had to be modified slightly to reflect reality.

1. Meetings with potential partners for the action research project.
2. Meetings with target client groups.
3. Creation of an advisory committee bringing together partners interested in the action research project, to work in particular on any genuinely mobilizing results from the first two stages.
4. Creation of a task force. This fourth stage replaces the previously planned fourth stage, *Establishment of reception activities*, as noted above.

4.2 Implementation stage 1

The goal of the first stage was, in particular, to answer a specific question that was part of the broader question outlined above. The specific question was “How do potential partners describe their respective reception services, and how do they perceive the possibility of a partnership-based reception service?”

Meetings with potential partners in the action research project

From May 31 to November 12, 2004, the following activities were completed:

- creation of a protocol, presentation document, interview outline and appointment outline
- contacts with target partners
- meetings with partners
- synthesis of information gathered from partners

The partners were interviewed individually to obtain as much useful information as possible on the “reception” component.

Thirty-eight meetings were completed with seventeen separate organizations, involving interviews with:

- managers (one per organization)
- professional staff members (one per organization)
- support workers (one per organization)

Staff members from various hierarchical levels were interviewed to obtain a broader vision of the reception process in each organization, since the view of the situation changes depending on the position occupied.

4.2.1 Objectives and strategies

Three objectives were set in connection with the research question.

1. Explore the viability of a partnership with other organizations to allow the school board to create a reception service (encourage them to sit on an advisory committee).
2. Draw on the expertise and experience of the organizations to set up a partnership-based reception service.
3. Find out more about the partners’ perception of the needs of various client groups in the territory to create and implement a flexible, responsive and effective reception service.

4.2.2 Tools developed

Telephone interview outline (see Appendix 1)

At this stage in the research project, we had to reduce mistrust and resistance to obtain meetings, so we created a telephone interview outline to give the same information to all the organizations, which are familiar with one another (**see the list in Appendix 2**). In addition, a strategically beneficial approach was to allocate and contact the organizations using previous contacts and trusted contacts. Given the importance of each call and the need to make a good first impression, the organizations were contacted in this way by telephone.

Following the calls, it was possible to obtain an interview with each organization and even, in some cases, to meet a director, professional staff member or support worker. However, it was clear in each organization that there were concerns, not about the project, but about the creation of a SARCA system, which could reduce their client base.

- *Maybe if I refer my clients I will have more, but I admit I am a little wary.*
- *I think people still try to protect their own turf.*
- *A gateway is often blocked by resistance to change, some people prefer to huddle in a little corner and do not want to share. Each service has its own mission, empire building is just human nature. This is fake competition.*

It is important to mention that because these people were short of time, it was necessary to modify the schedule of activities and time frame (**see Appendixes 3 and 4**), among other things, because of the need to space the interviews with potential partners over several weeks.

Confidentiality protocol (see Appendix 5)

After the organizations agreed to take part in the action research project, we drew up a confidentiality protocol. We knew that a document like this, however short, helps establish a climate of trust, especially with professional staff members or support workers, since they feel more comfortable once a confidentiality agreement has been signed. We believe that this approach probably encouraged the people interviewed to be more open, since they were not afraid to express their thoughts.

Presentation document (see Appendix 6)

To inform potential partners about and facilitate the interview process, they were sent a presentation document describing the project and its background. This was another way to prepare the terrain, while demonstrating our own transparency and willingness to cooperate. The organizations knew what to expect, without knowing exactly what questions would be asked, preserving the quality of the spontaneous answers we needed.

Interview outline (see Appendix 7)

During this period of careful preparation for the interviews, we devised an adapted questionnaire to obtain an overview of the reception services offered by each organization and of possible forms of partnership for the future.

Strategies for meetings with various key players

First, we decided that the initial meetings would be held with potential partners with which a climate of trust had already been established following joint projects in past years.

Second, since the interviews took place in the workplace, it was easier to meet several different staff members, and to schedule a time for each of our interventions.

Third, we met with the potential partners who, in our opinion, would offer the most resistance and would be most likely to mistrust the research in light of the past events discussed above.

Fourth, given the scope of the project and the meetings, it was decided to recruit a person to help throughout the project. The person would attend interviews with us, and concentrate hard enough to produce a verbatim record of each interview. This would allow us to focus on the discussion and to “read between the lines,” in other words to gather information based on perceptions and the “unstated.”

Fifth, it was important to meet with as many staff members (managers, professional staff members, support workers) as possible to gather information on existing reception services, strengths and weaknesses, and their vision of a possible partnership to provide a reception service for educational services at the school board. Lastly, we wanted to compare the vision of managers and of employees concerning their own reception service.

Procedure for meetings with partners

First, it is important to mention that we met with seventeen organizations of all sizes. To meet everyone, we travelled to the location of each potential partner, whether in or outside the city. During each visit, we interviewed between one and three people, depending on the size of the organization.

We used an interview outline for each meeting (**Appendix 7**), asking predetermined questions to converge on the essential elements for designing an adult student reception service in partnership with the community. As mentioned previously, this approach was part of our strategy to establish a climate of trust. It is important to remember that we were seen as coming from the school board which, we felt, frightened some organizations. We felt we were seen not as researchers, but as a threat, since some organizations believed that the process would deprive them of clients.

- *The primary mission of educational institutions is to educate, and we must recognize our limits. By seeking to attract clients at any cost, we will create an excluded generation.*
- *We refer only if a client is not eligible for our services.*

This is why our theme “building reception services for adult learners and not for everyone” turned out to be a winning strategy. The people interviewed, following a meeting with representatives from the school board, had retained the idea of a single service point. This perception had to be fought throughout the thirty-seven interviews, and we had to point out repeatedly that we were talking about reception services **for educational services** as part of a SARCA system. This made people feel more secure and allowed us to continue with our actions.

- *Reception services for educational services, with cooperation from everyone, applying their skills and specialties, will allow us to answer questions from prospective adult students.*
- *Reception services for educational services are clearly important and desirable, we must focus on clients.*
- *I think it is clearly a good thing to have reception services for educational services. It's a good starting point and it's OK. There aren't any services at present.*
- *In my case, as an organization, helping to provide reception services for educational services guarantees a form of neutrality and ensures that people will get answers to match their needs. It's in my interest to take part. In our region, we can no longer develop as before. We have to work together.*

As mentioned above, the questionnaire was used to gather information concerning both the material and human resources needed to provide a reception service. However, it was even more important to explore the development of a reception service based on a partnership with the community. We were pleasantly surprised to observe that all the organizations, except one, wanted to be part of the advisory committee that would oversee the implementation of the reception service.

Once the interviews, generally friendly, had been completed with each person in an organization, we asked each management team again if they wanted to help by referring six candidates for the second stage in the action research, which involved forming focus groups with various clients. We were aware that a refusal would jeopardize the action research, because the focus groups were an important component, but the organizations were willing to help and referred candidates. We specified at the time that it was important to select articulate candidates who would provide as much information as possible, and that a travel allowance was

available. This was a crucial decision, because the target client base is not generally in a strong financial situation.

Information gathering (see Appendix 7)

It is important to state here that this stage of the research took a considerable amount of time. The long data-gathering period made it necessary to re-plan the action research activities, because it became apparent that we would have neither the time nor the money to complete the fourth research stage, implementation of reception activities. From the start of the project last spring, this possibility had been discussed.

In addition, a major unexpected event increased the workload during the data-gathering phase. Originally, the plan of action provided for an extra staff member (note-taking specialist) to accompany us and produce a verbatim report to support our own notes on key elements and perceptions. The person was selected with care, and accompanied us on our visits to potential partners. However, during an initial gathering of information following the meetings with partners, we noted major deficiencies in the note-taking process. This added to our workload, and created a delay. We finally decided to select another candidate to take notes during the meetings with the focus groups.

To gather data from the meetings with partners and focus groups, we used a room that ensured privacy. Because of the confidential nature of the information made available to us, we were the only people with access to the room. In addition, we had a large display board and filing cabinets.

Obviously, we had a huge amount of secretarial work to complete in order to prepare a final version of the report itself and its many appendixes.

4.3 Implementation stage 2

The goal of the second stage was to answer a specific question, part of the broader question outlined above. The specific question for the second stage was: How do adult students experience the reception process, and what do they think about the possibility of providing a reception service through a partnership?

Meetings with target client groups

From November 15 to December 10, 2004, the following activities were completed:

- Creation of a short presentation document for the “reception” component and an interview outline.
- Creation of focus groups with assistance from the partners.
- Meetings with focus groups.

- Gathering of data from the focus groups.

Meetings were organized with the following groups:

- “General education students”: studying at a general adult education centre.
- “Vocational training students”: studying at a vocational training centre.
- “Unemployed workers”: out of work for six months and receiving employment insurance benefits.
- “Welfare recipients”: out of work for one year and receiving income security benefits.
- “No-cheque recipients”: receiving neither employment insurance nor income security benefits.
- “Deaf and hearing-impaired individuals”: studying and/or working.
- “Disabled people”: having studied and/or worked in Canada for at least three years.
- “Workers”: having worked for at least three years.

The meetings were designed to find an answer to the question given above and to pursue the following three objectives:

- Promote discussion and debate about the “reception” component.
- Gather information on participants’ past experiences.
- Gather information on needs and suggestions.

However, the main objective was to gather information on the needs of the clients of the various partner organizations, in order to highlight the deficiencies of the existing, separate reception services provided in the territory of the Commission scolaire De La Jonquière. Using the focus groups, we wanted to launch an in-depth review of the needs of clients and their level of satisfaction with existing reception structures in the school board’s territory. The ultimate goal was to help them think about the possibility of a partnership-based reception service, and about the form this ideal service could take.

Presentation document

We drew up a presentation document based on the document prepared for the meetings with partners (Appendix 6), adapted to the target client groups. For the meetings with partners, we sent out the document in advance, but for the focus groups, we presented the document orally.

Interview outline (see Appendix 8)

An interview outline with open-ended questions was drawn up to allow participants to express their opinions concerning their own past experiences with reception services. The questions were designed to promote discussion between the interviewers and the participants. Five questions and three sub-questions were used to trigger discussions and to interrupt the participants as infrequently as possible.

Recruitment of participants in the focus groups

The main recruitment method was to ask professional staff members at the various partner organizations to suggest clients for each focus group. For this mandate, we contacted the following organizations:

- Emploi-Québec
- Service externe de main-d'œuvre (SEMO)
- Accès-Travail-Femmes/Accès-Travail-Emploi
- Service régional d'interprétariat de l'est du Québec (SRIEQ)
- Société d'intervention urbaine Chicoutimi-Jonquière
- Ministère des Relations avec les citoyens et de l'Immigration (MRCI)
- Centre de formation générale des adultes de la Commission scolaire De La Jonquière
- Centre de formation professionnelle Jonquière

The partners were contacted on the basis of their target client groups and asked to refer six, rather than twelve, participants for each focus group because of the complex recruitment process for certain client groups. In addition, we aimed to create small groups to facilitate interaction among individuals and give them more time to express their ideas. Most of the organizations responded favourably to our request, except one partner that said it was difficult to refer clients because of the organization's mission and role and its internal policy of confidentiality. Because of this situation, we reached this client group via the Centre des services aux entreprises.

At this stage in the project, our fear was that the participants would use the focus groups to settle old scores with the partner organizations. Previously, several managers at these organizations had expressed concerns and we, as researchers, wanted to avoid any unpleasantness.

Expected impact

The expected impact was to ensure the involvement of the organizations in the community for the duration of the action research. We felt it was essential to sustain the partners' interest in order to gather information on whether the individual meetings organized at the first stage had been conclusive enough to launch a partnership with the organizations in the community.

Participant allowances

Each participant received a \$20 allowance to cover travel costs. This made it easier to recruit participants for the focus groups. The allowance was important because the members of the target client groups for the action research project were often in a difficult financial situation.

Focus group meetings

We scheduled the focus group meetings over a twelve-day period from November 18 to December 3, 2005. All meetings were held at the Centre des services aux entreprises, except that for the “vocational training students” group, which was held at the Centre de formation professionnelle Jonquière to make it easier for the students to return to their classes afterwards. We had six participants in each group, except for the “no-cheque recipients” group of people without official status, in which there were three participants. At the Centre des services aux entreprises, we met with the participants in a twenty-seat room with tables placed in an oval format to promote discussion among the participants. The two moderators were placed side by side to direct the discussions. Our team included a person taking verbatim notes, seated at the back of the room to be able to concentrate without distracting the participants. The moderators met the participants at the entrance to the Centre and took them to the room, where they were asked to find a seat and pour themselves a cup of coffee if they so wished. We wanted the participants in each focus group to be welcomed warmly in order to make them feel comfortable.

Next, the participants were asked to read and sign the confidentiality protocol, which the moderators also signed after answering any questions. We started each focus group meeting by explaining the project to establish reception, referral, counselling and support services, and by explaining the word “SARCA” on the board. We then provided a more detailed explanation of the “reception” component. The two moderators asked questions from their interview outline alternately, using a previously established procedure. The participants often answered the questions by quickly sidestepping the “reception” component and talking about their experiences with various organizations in connection with the “referral,” “counselling” and “support” components, and the moderators had to interrupt them to bring them back to the “reception” component. At the end, the participants were asked to give their names, on a voluntary basis, so that they could experience a partnership-based reception service in the future.

4.4 Implementation stage 3

The goal of the third stage was to answer a specific question that was part of the broader question outlined above. The specific question for the third stage was: Did the advisory members' committee of potential partners perceive the visual and dynamic presentation of the results of our surveys of organizations and adults as making them more aware and more supportive of the possibility of establishing a partnership-based reception service?

Establishment of an advisory committee of partners interested in the action research project

After the completion of stages 1 and 2, one of our strategies was to share with potential partners our observations and results from the meetings with partners and focus groups. We had planned for the possibility of setting up an advisory committee bringing together all the interested partners. We contacted all the organizations that had expressed an interest and invited them to attend a meeting at the school board on January 25, 2005. The main difficulty was to find a date suitable for as many potential partners as possible, because clearly everyone was already busy. We therefore had to reduce the number of meetings and take them one by one, with the first meeting taking place after the Christmas break.

We used PowerPoint software for the results in order to create a visual, dynamic presentation. The school board provided a room suitable for the size of the group and the need for discussion. Unfortunately, because of an unforeseen event, several organizations were unable to attend. The first meeting was attended by six organizations from the community:

- Emploi-Québec
- Cible-action
- Service Relance
- Société d'intervention urbaine Chicoutimi-Jonquière
- Ministère des Relations avec les citoyens et de l'Immigration
- The school board

Presentation

A special procedure was established for the presentation:

- We reminded everyone of the objective of the action research.
- We presented the basic problem for our community, along with the possible solutions identified by the action research.
- We redefined the objectives of our action research at the local and provincial levels.
- We reiterated the main stages in the action research project.

- We reminded participants of the importance of their involvement to date in the research. Thanks to their collaboration, we were able to interview them and each organization had referred candidates for the focus groups.
- We mentioned the wide range of client groups involved in our meetings.
- Lastly, we arrived at the long-awaited disclosure of the results of our many hours of work (**the visual and dynamic presentation of the results is found in Appendix 9**).

Presentation strategy

To make our presentation more dynamic, we chose the following formula with help from the adult education team involved in the project: first we highlighted the key points that emerged from the meetings with partners, followed by the key points from the meetings with the focus groups. Lastly, we presented a comparative table with the key points that emerged from both sets of meetings.

4.5 Implementation stage 4

The goal of the fourth stage was to answer a specific question that was part of the broader question outlined above. The specific question for the fourth stage was: Did the participants perceive the activities of the task force (*specifically, the visual and dynamic presentation of the results of our surveys and of subsequent discussions*) as making them more supportive of the design and implementation of partnership-based reception services?

Establishment of a task force

We had planned that the fourth stage of the project would be the establishment of reception services. However, we were unable to attempt this stage, and replaced it with the establishment of a task force. In light of all the events mentioned previously, we were unable as researchers to implement this stage because we did not believe, in January 2005, that the action research project would support the implementation of partnership-based reception services for the nine target groups. It was essential, as a prior step, to set up a task force to define a structure, procedure and intervention protocol for reception services based on a partnership with organizations in the community. We suggested the creation of the task force at the advisory committee meeting held on January 25, 2005 at the administrative centre of the Commission scolaire De La Jonquière. The participants expressed their interest in being involved in the task force and the creation of a partnership-based process for reception services. The first meeting was scheduled for February 22, 2005.

Objectives

There were five objectives for the creation of the task force:

- Explore the possibility of creating a process and tools for partnership-based reception services taking client needs into account.

- Explore the possibility of consolidating cooperation by various organizations.
- Explore the usefulness of defining the professional skills needed by reception staff as part of the action research project.
- Establish an advisory committee.
- Explore whether basing the “reception” component on a partnership is viable in the territory of the Commission scolaire De La Jonquière.



Part V



Results of the action research

When we decided to conduct interviews with potential partners and set up focus groups, our goal was to gather a large amount of information about the reception services provided by the school board and by each organization, and to ensure that it could be transferred if SARCA services are set up by the Commission scolaire De La Jonquière.

In addition, we wanted to use the information to make the advisory committee members aware of the importance of a partnership-based reception service. By gathering information on client needs, we expected that it would be easier to persuade key players of the need to work together and to set up a task force to design a partnership-based reception process.

The results for each stage are detailed below.

5.1 Results for stage 1

The specific question for stage 1 was: How do potential partners describe their respective reception services, and how do they perceive the possibility of a partnership-based reception service?

Analyzing the results mainly involved organizing them under a series of key headings, numbered 1 to 25, which were then posted on our board. Once this had been done, we had a total of around twenty issues, identified by key headings, under which we entered data after reading all the interview outlines (50 in all). In this way we were able to analyze our research results and organize them under key headings, supported by numerous verbatim records that formed the basis, with our own notes and perceptions, for the conclusions of our research.

The interest of the research findings was generated, of course, by the meetings with potential partners and the focus groups, which converged on the possibility of setting up an advisory committee and reception activities. For this purpose, our objective was to meet a range of each partner's employees in each organization, and this was achieved. With regard to the focus groups, we had initially identified a number of client groups, based on age, from the educational institutions and organizations in the community. This mission was accomplished, except for the fact that, with the limited time allotted to the project, we had to restrict the number of participants in each focus group. We now believe that a representative sample of six candidates per group gave us enough information, taking into account the fact that an enormous amount of time had to be devoted to gathering and analyzing data. In addition, it is important to remember that we were initially told that our project was ambitious but interesting, but that we might run out of time for the fourth and last stage of the action research project.

5.1.1 Demand management by organizations

We observed that most organizations are moving toward demand management.

- *Each professional staff member is careful to give accurate information and to respond to clients based on their needs.*
- *We place a lot of importance on people and take the time to discover their needs in order to respond effectively and make the best referral.*
- *We listen to people a lot to find out what their needs are.*
- *Here, in our organization, we direct clients based on their needs and not based on their demands.*
- *In our organization, availability is important. We always have an employee available to receive clients. We have resources to ensure that our information is up-to-date.*
- *It is important to be client centred, and to give clients the right answers. It's true we have some deficiencies in this area. Whoever the person is who requests a service, we must offer it.*
- *We must develop services, not work in isolation, and meet client needs. We must be careful to remain available and deal with people humanely.*
- *We must focus on the needs of clients and identify what is good for them and refer them as needed. We have to do a good job.*
- *We are structured to give clients an appointment quickly, and we have developed a questionnaire to meet people's needs in a flexible way.*
- *I refer on the basis of the client's needs. I don't keep someone if the program is not suitable. And I tell the client why I'm not keeping them.*
- *We have several strengths in our reception services: we are open-minded because we deal with various client groups, our resources are available quickly, and we have developed strong expertise over the last 22 years.*
- *Our mission includes helping people in general, whether to get education or a job, it's part of our mission and we refer a lot of people.*

5.1.2 A structured process in small organizations

We observed that small organizations, because of their structure, are more likely to have a structured reception process.

- *We have a simple procedure, our office is open (two days) on Mondays and Fridays. Our clients have to make an appointment, by fax or by phone. Our*

procedure involves a face-to-face meeting, it's part of our culture. We identify the client's problem, and we complete a consent form.

- *I receive clients, I take the time to sit down and listen to their needs, I refer them as needed and I always call them back as a follow-up.*
- *I've developed a process to make sure our clients know about our services, pictures, and a table of our school system. I'm currently restructuring the reception process with a logbook for our clients.*
- *We have our own approach and reception process. We assess clients, inform and advise them, and refer them as needed. We listen and we use a client-centred approach to do things properly.*
- *We have a reception protocol to detect clients' needs and we direct them to individual or group meetings where our organization's mission and services are explained.*
- *We have an organized reception structure which is very user-friendly and personalized, people open up, they don't feel they are just a number.*
- *We have a wonderful reception service which is customized and adapted to our client base; with our long-term niche, we have a strong structure.*
- *I'd like to say that in our organization we offer a personalized, friendly reception service, we take the time to talk to people, inform them, support them, and we respond immediately if necessary. We keep up-to-date by looking at all the services we offer, and our documents. We make sure we have the right tools. We also have a flexible schedule, since we're open in the evenings.*

5.1.3 Reception service tools

We observed that some organizations have developed reception service tools.

- *We've designed tools such as a spiral-bound book with information, what to do, motivation, etc. This is our client reception tool, but we still need a follow-up tool.*
- *Our basic tool is an identification grid, we don't just make notes on a piece of paper.*
- *We have a feedback sheet that measures the satisfaction of clients after their visit.*
- *For reception services, we have developed, among other things, questionnaires, forms and interview grids.*
- *We have intervention tools like ... a protocol that we've developed over time and that we use as a checklist with a series of questions and a counsellor's handbook that explains the intervention process from beginning to end.*

- *We have a quite complete intervention tool ... it's a pre-established questionnaire that we use to supervise people, validate their needs, guide them, and explore options for education and work.*
- *We have intervention tools, including a registration form that we use to collect data and analyze client needs ... in addition to the intervention plan completed and signed by the individual.*
- *We have created a list of resources in the region with accessible means of communication.*
- *For reception services, we have designed a document about client information confidentiality, and a set of questions to ask to determine client needs.*
- *It's important to have proper intervention tools to catch clients at their first visit and get them back on track. We keep a file on each person, with an automatic follow-up process.*
- *In our reception process, we have a special tool we have developed to test knowledge.*
- *We have a professional log, which is an intervention tool with a section for reception services and other sections. There are forms to identify problems during the interview that I can give to the professional staff members afterwards. A complete file on each person.*

5.1.4 Extended missions

We noted that the missions of the organization have been extended as money and subsidy programs have become available.

- *Some missions are extended, and that creates duplication.*

5.1.5 Heterogeneous professional qualifications of reception service staff

We noted that reception service staff held a wide range of qualifications.

The following academic qualifications were noted:

Psychology (Bachelor's)

Special education (College diploma)

Social work (College diploma)

Secretarial work (Secondary vocational diploma)

Guidance counselling (Bachelor's) (Master's)

Academic and career counselling (Bachelor's)

Minimum Secondary School Diploma

Office clerk

College diploma in office automation
Industrial relations
Human resources management
Teaching certificate

- *The reception staff are secretaries, they're not worried about checking clients' problems.*
- *The secretary who answers the phone—this is unthinkable for me. Errors pile up. Direct counselling would avoid problems and lost time.*
- *The administrative assistant receives clients and determines where they should be referred; she asks clients to complete numerous forms to assess their needs.*
- *The staff member at reception must be friendly, must not be frightened of being disturbed, and must be able to work under pressure, organize his or her work, and smile.*
- *The secretary is responsible for receiving clients whether on the phone or in person, and referring them to the right people, namely the education consultant or the department head.*

As we heard in the interviews, reception staff had the following skills:

Knowledge of:

Community partners
Education and training programs
Certification of prior learning
Referral software
The labour market
Reference books about academic and career guidance
The structure of the adult education system

- *It takes experience.*
- *Somebody who has previously worked in a restaurant (empathy and listening skills) and has done volunteer work is an advantage.*
- *In my opinion, you must have basic secretarial skills with experience in document handling to be a reception staff member.*
- *You must have experience in counselling and with the clients' problems.*
- *It's more a question of knowing what to do than having academic qualifications (smiling, attitude, open-mindedness).*
- *Being able to work with people on the margins of society, having experience in mental health. Being able to adapt to a specific client group.*

- *Strong communication skills and empathy, an ability to supervise, familiarity with the latest technology.*
- *Knowing how to control emotions, human kindness and discretion.*
- *A counsellor must have counselling skills.*
- *The person at reception must be very polite and must smile on the phone ... The person must enjoy providing reception services. People must not feel as though they are disturbing her.*
- *You must have knowledge about the labour market and the ability to refer clients correctly.*
- *The person must be trained to develop his or her ability to act as a facilitator and must have strong knowledge of the regional market.*
- *We select people who have experience with groups, group training.*
- *A person providing reception services must have the ability to adapt to various situations and to find a range of information. Knowledge of various areas (services). The ability to refer correctly within the organization.*
- *Relational skills and the ability to understand needs and direct people to resources.*
- *Everybody provides reception services, and we give young people a chance to get their first experience.*

5.1.6 Concentration of information

We noted that in some places, reception services depended on a single person.

- *The knowledge and skills are centralized in the same person. She is a volunteer and keen. What would we do if she left? We have become dependent on a single person.*
- *I'm the only person providing support to the other secretaries who do reception, and in the evening I'm always the one there.*

5.1.7 Insufficient human and financial resources

Some people complained about the lack of human and financial resources for reception activities.

- *We lack availability (two days per week). We lack human resources and our clients are often facing emergencies (here and now).*

- *When my counsellor is there, the clients leave with lots of ideas. She should be there five days a week.*
- *The guidance counsellor is not available enough ... It's too much to expect her to respond to everyone quickly ... there's strong demand in August, September and October, and in January and February.*
- *We are short of time and resources, always rushed. Underfunding leads to a lack of resources, and the services still have to be provided.*
- *I'm on my own, I don't have time to give out all the information and equip clients to move forward.*
- *We often have to make do because we're short of both human and financial resources.*
- *We're short of resources, if the office is closed, they go away and don't come back. Often the door is closed if people are away. Often, clients are dealt with quickly because of the cost and they feel hurried. It's the same everywhere.*
- *It's clear that we're short of staff to meet all needs, especially special client groups, it's one of our weaknesses.*
- *I find that we lack resources and this prevents us from creating a structured reception process. We deal with people who often have major or complex problems, we're extremely short of time.*

5.1.8 Special client groups (disabled people, immigrants, people with poor literacy skills, etc.)

Some people complained that the reception process and tools were not adapted to special client groups.

- *People with poor literacy skills are a special group and I'd like to see their needs ... I'd like to see more of their needs taken into consideration.*
- *There's a lot of work to do for our special clients, who are often lost in the system and not familiar with our overall structure including training options ... it would be good to do skills upgrading, it would help people to join the labour market.*
- *We have a problem in the region because of the low volume, the services are not highly developed and the situation is more complex. There's no structure in the small centres.*

5.1.9 Captive client groups

We noted that some organizations respond to clients on the basis of the services they are able to provide.

- *With a gateway approach, the obstacle is often resistance to change. Some people protect their territory and don't want to share. Each service has its mission, and protecting your territory is a human reaction. This is false competition.*
- *Maybe if I refer clients I'll get more, I admit I'm a little suspicious.*
- *We refer only if a client is not eligible for our services.*
- *I think people are still defensive about keeping their clients.*
- *The primary mission of educational institutions is to educate, and we must recognize our limits. By seeking to attract clients at any cost, we will create an excluded generation.*

5.1.10 The reality of the training situation

Some people said they could not respond to client needs because of administrative constraints (insufficient student numbers, demographic factors, late starting date of a cohort, etc.).

- *I find that often assessments are not based on the client's needs, but on the training map.*
- *Our clients don't always have access quickly to appropriate training resources.*
- *Assessing files is fine, but it's more difficult to coordinate training. When a program has limited entry, we have to switch to Plan B which does not always meet the client's needs. What are we supposed to?*
- *The difficult part of coordinating training is that people don't have the prerequisites and I can't refer them. That's what I find difficult.*
- *When we refer, it's not always easy, you'd need a continuous intake, even if ... Sometimes there's a two-year wait, they go somewhere else it's no good, there's a waiting list.*

5.1.11 Processing of information on education and training by clients

Several people stated that adults in the territory have plenty of access to resources and information for starting or returning to training or employment, but that they have trouble processing and understanding the information.

- *People who want to return to education get badly organized information. It's not centralized. If people knew that, we would have more clients.*
- *People find it difficult to call things by their proper name, and to know what is available.*

- *The resources are there, but ... people don't think the information concerns them. It's not for them. Who can meet my needs?*
- *The organizations are there, but often people don't know about them. People who don't have much education don't read newspapers properly.*
- *I'm not sure that people go and look for information, why don't they go and look for it? Is it because they're not aware of the services? Is it confusion about public services?*
- *Quite frankly, for training you can go to a centre, you can get leaflets, you can leave with a leaflet, but there are no resources that are really identified in the centres. Most of the clients are not really informed, and often their main reference is a newspaper.*
- *There's plenty of information available, but they're not aware of it. We can't answer demands from clients easily.*
- *People find it difficult to get access to information. They don't know where to go, before people knew about the reception and referral services and it's important for them to have a service like that. Often, we send them to the school board, but where? It's hard to refer.*
- *Our clients tell us that it is not easy to find their way around all the different services. They say they feel like the ball in a game of ping-pong.*
- *It's clear that information is hard to find for people who don't know how to use a computer (Internet). The process depends a lot on the clients and their ability to find information. People a long way from the labour market have few resources.*
- *Adults in our territory have access to resources and information, but have to work hard to find them. At the vocational training centre, things are more difficult: information is given out, but not spontaneously.*
- *It's difficult ... for people who don't try hard to look for information. We have no information network ... they ignore the information available. Try and imagine people who don't know how to read or write or who have no motivation: that is the reality.*
- *People come to us after trying many different doors, voicemail boxes, etc. What are they meant to do, where should they look ... the resources exist, but they don't know where to find information.*
- *It's incredible how people are submerged by information. I'm not sure how much they actually notice. Is it relevant or not? The map is not always clear! The information is often complex and between institutions. How to find the right door? People are a little naive about the requirements for a program. They have a mythical, rather than a realistic, view of their possible progress in a training program.*

- *People tell us that there's lots of resources available, but they don't know much about organizations and their mission ... They have unfounded beliefs, and are even suspicious, about school, for example the prerequisites for starting a secondary level vocational diploma and the expense of a year at college.*
- *Academic and career guidance is readily available, but not easy to understand ... often, the agent or person is not a specialist and sometimes has trouble making a referral.*

5.1.12 Intervention procedure

We observed that some organizations have not developed a client reception structure.

- *No, it's more basic ... for the general public (a receptionist) who redirects calls, we have a list of experts in reception.*
- *We have a weakness in the frontline, if the expert in a particular field is not there, the person is referred and not necessarily to the right community coordinator.*
- *No, I have a reception desk, but not a structured reception service even if there are people at the reception desk. They respond to demands but are not part of an organized system. They respond to students.*
- *We do our best to respond to clients.*
- *Client reception is a way of thinking. It's never been defined, it's improvised, each individual has a different life story. Sometimes I feel like a psychologist. It's never been defined.*
- *I receive them, but not in an organized way. I register them and answer their questions. There's no formula ... It happens automatically, without a defined structure, without a mechanism.*
- *In our organization, there are too many different people who respond. We have no standards for communication.*
- *We don't have anybody assigned to client reception. The reception process differs depending on who receives the client. Things have always been this way.*
- *We use logic at reception, because we're not really structured.*
- *We don't really have a structure, everybody is important. I'm the reception structure. Here, it's more like a family, we can have fun, we mustn't be prejudiced. A 180-degree process, an ability to reach out to the real person.*
- *We don't have a reception process, we do the best we can. We start from the fact that there is no reception service.*

- *We have never considered an intervention procedure for reception. We focus more on the clients we already have, rather than on people who drop in to get information.*

5.1.13 Referrals and knowledge of the community

We noted that most of the people we interviewed direct their clients toward training programs mainly on the basis of their own knowledge.

- *[...] If the need is clear and if the clients know what they want, my feeling is that 90% are correctly referred.*
- *Not always. We don't know about all the available services and it's a pity, we refer to the services we know ... I'm the resource person, I give them the resources as soon as possible, I take the time to refer them and I give them a name and a phone number.*
- *I find it easy, because we are quite familiar with what is available elsewhere.*
- *I have no problem referring people. I know the community well even if it's not part of my mission.*
- *They're told to call the school board, but we have no tools. They're sent on like that. It's important to have contact information to send them on to training. We refer them to where we think is best.*
- *Referring clients? Why should that be hard? I know what programs the CEGEP and school board have, and I know the organizations and training programs.*
- *It's easy to refer, because we have good contacts with the guidance counsellors and vocational training advisers. The institutions know about our organization.*
- *I find referrals easy. I've been doing them for 22 years, you end up finding the information ... the gateways are not always the same, but by experience I manage to refer.*
- *If you're not connected to a network of key individuals and you have no reference network, it's difficult to meet needs.*

5.1.14 Unsuitable referrals of clients, without matching their needs

We noted that most of the people interviewed said they had received adults who had been incorrectly referred or had received incorrect information in connection with their training needs.

- *It's not a good thing to see. Their whole future is at stake. Their career is the most dramatic part of my work.*

- *When it's not here but somewhere else, I let them sort it out for themselves because I don't have the information.*
- *I find it difficult to refer clients because I'm not aware of everything that's available to help them (counsellors, psychologists).*
- *People often say they're shunted about from place to place and that it's difficult to find a place where their needs can be assessed.*
- *I often receive clients who have been misdirected or improperly informed. We often hear the comment: "At last, I'm talking to someone who can help me."*

5.1.15 Mechanisms and follow-up

Some people complained about the lack of follow-up mechanisms after referring clients.

- *I don't really know because I don't follow up on clients to find out if they've received the necessary documents.*
- *After referring a client, I ask them to call me for a follow-up.*
- *Once I've referred someone, I'd like to have a personalized approach so as not to worry and to be sure that I responded correctly.*
- *It's difficult to know whether our clients have access to appropriate resources because we have no follow-up tools and I don't know if a client has been contacted or called back.*
- *You need good listening and discussion skills to refer correctly. If you feel you have referred correctly, it's because the interview went well ... On the other hand, we have no follow-up and we don't know if the person has been followed up.*
- *I find it's not easy to refer clients. We have no feedback in the school system, or at least not often. We have to respond, but we get no information.*
- *I find it difficult that we have no feedback when our clients go to school, we lose touch, and we become secondary. Often our clients need a personalized approach.*
- *There's no follow-up mechanism. I don't know at that point when the client was referred. There's no follow-up for the client. I don't follow up on people I've referred. Ideally we would have the tools.*
- *I find it quite easy to refer to educational programs, but I have no contact with the schools to do follow-up, I have no personalized follow-up with tools or mechanisms.*

5.1.16 Access to major organizations

Some key players consider that the major organizations have a complex structure that does not facilitate access to training services by the general public and to organizations in the community.

- *We have a problem with visibility to contact people. Access is difficult if the client has not been referred.*
- *The receptionist is not always there and the guidance counsellor meets people by appointment, so she often has to send people back ... We lose people and when they try to come back, they have to make a big effort and often they hit a brick wall.*
- *With a reception desk in front, people often encounter a voicemail box. I've tried to call here myself and it took half an hour to get a line. Often, clients tell us that it's hard to get through during the admission period.*
- *In this context, we can't answer right away, meaning that sometimes they just give up.*
- *Reception must be part of a flexible process, at least more flexible than before. Paperwork is a barrier, and it makes reception less attractive.*
- *It's important to have just one phone number because, right now, when we place ads, we have up to three phone numbers and we lose clients because of that. There's no channel. It's not right for clients. They don't call back.*
- *In big, complex structures, I'm not convinced that people have access to services quickly, because they often have to wait a long time and sometimes people give up. Often, the bigger the organization, the more difficult it is.*
- *The clients that we refer don't get quick service; in big organizations, they often hit a computerized phone service and it's difficult. They don't provide an efficient reception service. In our case, it's more direct and personalized ... a computer can never replace a human being.*
- *It's not always easy to refer. You have to do several kinds of research, in several different places, but we make sure we get an answer ... before that, we used to call the reception and referral service to get information.*
- *Sometimes, it's not easy to refer to a big organization because the guidance counsellors aren't available, they're often interviewing someone, but once they respond everything is fine.*
- *Often, the clients get trapped by administrative constraints, they've already seen two or three professional staff members ... It's complex and sometimes clients have to wait and it has a negative impact on them.*

- *In general, people tell me they get access to resources quite quickly in small organizations but they have to wait longer in large organizations.*

5.1.17 Gateway to training

Most of the people we interviewed supported the idea of a single gateway to training.

- *Yes, because that would increase the level of exchange with the community and facilitate service delivery to clients. Information could be obtained more quickly with a partnership. A need that has been met and a correct referral reduces fear ... It becomes even more interesting if there is a structure and sufficient resources.*
- *There is an urgent need for partnership-based reception services because the people who are not being reached will be reached. It's embarrassing to see that, in a country like ours, people are not being reached. We can increase the level of schooling ... The impact of education at the lower levels will have repercussions for the community.*
- *It would certainly be possible to do more, one or two people could respond to clients.*
- *If they can change the way it works, that would be great, it would help a lot. It's often the last door for them ... It has to be welcoming; when people have a good service, they can refer other people.*
- *Everything is possible. The mechanism will have to be personalized with quick services. It can't be bureaucratic like, for example, hospitals where you need to be sick last week to get an appointment next week.*
- *I'm convinced of it, you have to be there for the clients. Instead of going to ten places, they can go to one place to get real information. Often when they are referred to three or four places they get discouraged. We have to save time. We have to respond immediately to primary needs, and we mustn't lose clients in the process. I'd like to set up functional, client-oriented structures. I want to ensure that the result of the action research is worthwhile. I'd like to be consulted and to say "Yes" to the partnership.*
- *It has been shown by experience. It works well with the school board for partnership-based training. We send someone and we get a response. Often we have clients who want to be assessed or to get a report on their prior learning. I think it would be easier with a single service point.*
- *We have a strong ability to facilitate referrals for academic information. If everyone wants it, why shouldn't there be a reception service?*
- *A reception service would give us a link with the community, to get responses and to refer to the appropriate partner. If you need training, you call there. The*

person on reception must be able to refer clients to the right resource ... You have to look at the history of decentralization.

- A reception service for training, with everyone's cooperation and their skills and specialties (it's happening already) would help us respond adequately to people looking for training.*
- What we don't have right now is a single service point. We play ping-pong with clients by sending them from place to place. We have to make citizens' lives easier. It can be discouraging over the long term.*
- A reception service for training is clearly important and desirable. It has to be client based.*
- The word partnership has been used and applied for many years. Working in isolation leads nowhere. A reception service is an excellent idea. We have to stop people building empires and grabbing resources.*
- A reception service is important and necessary. Adults go to the school board and feel lost. It's complicated for them. I see the service as a kind of hub, with suitable referrals, and more efficient. Even making a phone call is complicated. It's like an ivory tower in a big organization and inaccessible.*
- I think it's a good idea to have a reception service for training. It's a good starting point. There isn't one at present.*
- In my case, as an organization, by cooperating in a reception service for training, it gives me a form of neutrality where people will get a response based on their needs. It's in my interest. You're revolutionary, we can't develop in our region as we used to. We're forced to work together.*
- It's both possible and desirable to have a reception service. It's been tried in the past and it allowed us to reach out to clients who were lost in the system.*
- I agree absolutely with the idea of a partnership-based reception service for training. It's been done for employment, so why not for other community's sectors including school boards?*
- A reception service is useful and necessary in my opinion because we have to work on solutions for training for specific client groups that often cannot be dealt with by the regular services.*
- A reception service with partners would clearly be useful in my view because, when a client wants to go back to school and wants to progress, it would be an extra tool. When there's a referral, there must be assistance.*
- I've noticed that our clients don't know where to go for training. It's already a stressful experience for them to go back to an educational institution. A target location would be great, a kind of single service point. Often, my clients come back instead of going in and completing the process.*

- *A partnership-based reception service, in my opinion, will allow us to respond to our clients better. I'll need to look for information less, and it will help me in my work.*
- *I think it's possible to set up a reception service, but it would have to be quicker and more fragmented ... Education often looks at only the student. I believe you have to take the student's baggage into account, take it as a whole.*
- *It's essential in my opinion, if you put the clients first, to set up a partnership-based reception service ... the service will help our clients start training.*

5.1.18 Physical location

Some people considered that the physical location of a reception service should be based on its accessibility and proximity to training and employment services.

- *People didn't want to go into town, they dropped out part way through. The resources started moving out to outlying areas. Service points are needed.*
- *Our strength at reception is to make services accessible because it's important to be in a place that clients can identify easily and that is accessible ... You have to think about wheelchairs and other disabilities.*
- *We have a physical location that allows us to display academic and career information that make it easier for clients to access information on their own.*

5.1.19 Physical layout

Some people stated that the physical layout of the service must be designed to create a climate of trust.

- *We chose an open-plan layout for the reception—it's pleasant and friendly.*
- *The main focus is on reception. It's unconventional, an open-plan layout with walls of a welcoming colour.*

5.1.20 Advisory committee and cooperation

We noted that almost all the people interviewed found it important to be on the advisory committee and saw it as an opportunity for cooperation by various organizations in the community.

- *Yes, because it would help improve the academic side of the service for clients, launching actions to integrate people, cooperation is a success. I'm going to work hard for the project. It's small actions like this that help improve services.*

- *A table leads to discussions and knowing what is out there. I think it's a great idea.*
- *It must be simple and appropriate.*
- *Yes, to be able to share my vision of things and have a high-quality final product.*
- *It will be difficult, but with time we'll manage. There will always be people who are scared ... because a partnership is between people, not organizations.*
- *The service must be improved, we must stop losing people everywhere.*
- *Increasingly, I have faith in cooperation tables ... listening to citizens.*
- *It's essential because we hold a key place in the community and work with everybody. I'm very interested.*
- *I think we have shortcomings and we have to find solutions to offer clients a better reception service. We have to get involved to present our point of view.*
- *I think it's important to share our expertise because we provide services for tax-paying citizens. I support cooperation, we can't work in isolation any more, we have to work together.*
- *Because of the information we receive and give, it's easier afterwards to refer based on clients' needs. A committee like that keeps us up-to-date.*
- *In my opinion, a cooperation table like this would be stimulating. It doesn't often happen that the employment and education sectors get together. They don't get many opportunities for cooperation. Increasingly, we have to avoid existing solutions and introduce new ideas. I still believe this can help us overcome the problems in the region.*
- *I'd like to be on an advisory committee because our client base needs training and recognition of prior learning. It's important not to forget that the average age is 44. There's no time to lose and it's essential to work together and the reception service must be strong.*
- *I believe in a partnership, but the roles of the partners will have to be defined to ensure cooperation with the community. A reception service with partners is extremely important. I agree with the advisory committee because we have to find simple mechanisms for exchanging information while retaining the local colour of each organization.*
- *I've noticed that over time there's no uniform approach to reception services with the partners because often a person goes to several places.*
- *I think it's extremely important to have a partnership offering client reception services.*

- *I think an advisory committee is important because I've noticed that I'm informed about our own programs, but not about the other training programs offered by other organizations.*
- *I'm not necessarily interested in being on the advisory committee ... in the past, we've often just been like extras on some committees.*
- *I find that sometimes we refer clients back and forth. We don't have enough answers to give them because we don't sit down together to answer the clients' questions.*
- *I think a partnership-based reception service is a good idea, but it has to mesh with the mission of each organization, and there must be collaboration with other actors in the community. There's no point having a service like that if there's no link with other organizations. It is vitally important to involve people in the community ... I'd be interested in being on the committee, because we often receive people who need training.*
- *It's a perfectly good idea to set up a reception service. Even in the field of employment we need to know more about training programs, to know where to refer people at the school board ... it would be good to have a seat on the advisory committee. A partnership would help ensure the circulation of information.*

5.2 Results for stage 2

The specific question for stage 2 was: How do adult students experience the reception process, and what do they think about the possibility of providing reception services through a partnership?

Based on the observations and reports from the focus groups filed by the two moderator/researchers and the verbatim records of the note-taker, our analysis of the results allows us to highlight the following comments from the verbatim record, with examples.

5.2.1 Demand management

We observed that most candidates would like to see reception services focused on their needs.

- *The reception didn't match my needs.*
- *The guidance counsellor makes decisions for people. The ideal reception service: target needs.*
- *I want someone to listen to me. The guidance counsellor should meet my needs.*

- *The organizations' reception service is fine. They assessed my limitations. I knew what I wanted and didn't want to do, but I didn't know about all the possibilities. They found me new workplace internships.*
- *The advantage is to be able to say No to a job that doesn't suit you. They have confidence in their clients and they increase our confidence. Using the assessment, they know where to look for our strengths ... They spend a lot of time and carry out searches for clients (finding something suitable for everyone, adapted to their needs).*
- *A relevant service (managing demand), looking at needs. Seeing possibilities, things that will help me fulfill my potential.*
- *I feel the organization personalizes its approach.*
- *The professional staff member really looked to see what kind of work was suitable for me.*
- *I think a reception service is always case by case ... I needed to be guided and listened to.*
- *The service is for everyone, not just people without resources. Answering my questions ... While they're about it, telling us that we don't match their client base.*
- *In this organization, I did a search to identify my needs.*
- *I was received and informed by the professional staff member. Together we looked at what kind of job would suit me, with my health and academic record. She followed up on me and asked me how the job was going.*
- *The two organizations helped me find out what trade I would like to do. I received good guidance.*
- *Guidance is important at the start.*
- *With the age factor, it's hard to find a job.*
- *I'd like someone to ask me what my needs are and suggest training programs. Getting the right information is essential for going to the right places.*
- *As a minimum, people should receive guidance to know where their strengths lie. At our age, we have no time to lose. I know that, in my group of students, some people won't end up working in the trade because they don't enjoy it. They weren't properly counselled.*
- *You have to focus on human beings. Clients first. A communicating vessel with everyone.*
- *Often, people who go there ... to the school, are in a shaky state. If they aren't properly dealt with, they become discouraged.*

- *The service must be very, very objective. You're not just a number. You're a human being.*

5.2.2 Supply management

Some candidates mentioned that organizations responded to their needs on the basis of the admission criteria for various programs.

- *We are subsidized and pushed to perform ... We don't always respect our pace.*
- *I was looking for a course to take and nobody could give me any information.*
- *They mainly tried to find me a job.*
- *I asked about training, but they said I would do better to use my experience to find a job. Details like that make you feel badly served and badly treated. I felt like a number.*
- *It was difficult. I found a technical course I would have liked to take, but the organization couldn't provide financial assistance. After that, I found a diploma of vocational studies in secretarial and accounting skills. That's not what I really wanted to do, but I did what I was expected to do and took the course.*
- *I met my professional staff member and he didn't understand why I wanted to go back to school with such a strong CV. I told him that I really wanted to change direction. I even said I'd like to meet with a counsellor, but he ignored that ... I would have liked to do an attestation of college studies in damage insurance.*
- *I chatted with the professional staff member and she asked me what I could do, where I had worked. She told me where places were available, for things like kitchen assistant, on financial assistance programs. After that, we decided which place suited me best as a job.*
- *Managing supply even if the client's need has been expressed. They manage according to their criteria.*

5.2.3 A structured process in small organizations

We noted that some participants said they had received a more personal reception and follow-up in small organizations.

- *Good support from the organization that found me a job. I went to them myself and was well received ... very friendly, I felt they were supporting me in my search.*
- *The organization's professional staff member did things to help, he called for a course as a parts clerk.*

- *You can judge the reception service by the interest the person has in you, and your specific needs. This organization acts as a marvellous gateway in any situation, you're always well received. I sat down with the participants and I felt they were structured. I phoned for information and a very friendly lady gave me piles of information on training and directed me toward an organization to find out if I was eligible for training.*
- *At the organization, during the reception process, we sat in a group and did animation activities to introduce ourselves individually and state our motivation.*
- *I was well received by this organization and the person helped me fill out the sheets. I was very motivated by the job search process.*
- *The secretaries helped us and explained how to complete the forms. They gave us all the information we requested.*
- *He showed us how to write a CV and helped us complete our own.*
- *I found out about the help available from the organization in the newspaper. I phoned and the secretary gave me an appointment. The counsellor helped us define our qualities and know ourselves better. The two teachers explained the process to me.*
- *This organization provides well-structured reception services. A good organization.*
- *I phoned a professional staff member who gave me an appointment for a group meeting. Later, there were individual meetings for a quick summary of my background (training, work experience, prior learning) and needs.*
- *The organization helped me change direction. I told them that I needed experience in computing. I felt that I was welcome. I was comfortable right away when I walked in. At reception, the person spent an hour explaining everything they did. She asked about my needs, what I wanted, and explained the process. After that, I had an appointment to get more information.*
- *The organization did good follow-up. They called to ask if I'd enrolled. The service is personalized. They make appointments, interview you and give out information. They tell you where to go (name of the school, phone number, address). They help you complete all the application forms.*
- *They make you feel important ... good reception, efficient, follow-up on your application, appointments, etc. They explain what they know. You leave with a name or an address. They guide you and help you complete the registration form. A good starting point, they are great.*

5.2.4 Mechanisms and follow-up

We observed that candidates obtained personalized follow-up from reception workers in various organizations in our territory.

- *The professional staff member still helps me in my job search. He counselled me about the wages offered for various jobs. He looked in the sales sector, which matched my needs.*
- *There's good follow-up. They give you a chance to find something you like, as long as you help yourself (autonomy). If you have problems, they listen to you. They helped me find a grant to launch a small business (support), do my CV and enter corrections (very good follow-up). They gave me several CVs. The professional staff member took time to explain the possibilities and also did some specific searches for me. I tried a trade that didn't work out, and he helped me change direction. A good listener. He searched a lot for me. I wouldn't have stayed there if they hadn't been good listeners. He called me regularly, did follow-up ... He adapted to each person (personalized).*
- *Doing follow-up, getting back to people who are waiting. It's important for someone working in reception.*
- *The people are there to help us and they follow up on what we're doing. They keep your name and call you back to offer you a job.*

5.2.5 Processing of information on education and training by clients

Most of the participants said they had easy access to resources or useful information for remaining in or rejoining the labour market or education system, but that the information media used by the organizations did not reach them.

- *I got the information from the newspaper and I phoned but ... there's so much information, no one helps us understand it.*
- *It's important to consider language that's accessible for everyone.*
- *The information given in newspapers isn't enough ... to understand properly.*
- *It's awful. I don't read newspapers (no impact). When I read, I don't understand.*
- *Poorly adapted promotional tools. What are the courses, the prerequisites ...*
- *Several services are there, but the information only trickles through.*
- *It's hard to find information, it's discouraging.*
- *Not everyone has the Internet or knows how to use it.*

- *The leaflets and information are hard to decode when you don't even have Secondary V. It's not accessible to all members of society.*
- *I looked for courses and it wasn't easy. I hear about educational organizations once a year, when they advertise in the newspapers.*
- *When you finish your course and want to find out about job prospects, they refer you to a book and it's got nothing to do with the reality in the region. The statistics cover big cities like Montréal.*
- *There were no clear, precise explanations about the content of courses given by educational institutions ... There was a short program about adult education in the newspapers. They gave the key dates for registering, the phone number, etc.*
- *A person who asks questions must never return home without documentation, the person has to know where to go to get documentation.*
- *It's hard work finding academic information ...*
- *I find that you see a lot of information in newspapers, but it's too scattered.*
- *The information isn't complete (for example, prerequisites, admission criteria, course descriptions, prospects, work outside the region).*
- *Special client groups lack information about training. We only get suggestions.*
- *The leaflets have too much text that is hard to understand, there should be more photos. The words are too hard for special client groups.*
- *No, it's not easy because a lot of information is available on the Internet, and I'm not familiar with that.*
- *When they advertise training in the newspaper, you can't understand anything.*
- *If you don't know what to do, you often pick up information by word of mouth.*
- *To register at a training centre, I got the information by word of mouth.*
- *I got the information (course content, timetable, etc.) on the Internet, because I know how to use it.*
- *I don't even know what other courses are given here at the centre.*
- *I had trouble finding the right place to get information, they kept sending me somewhere else.*
- *I went to several different places to get information on courses and each time, they sent me somewhere else. Just to get the phone number for each centre, I had to look in the phone book. They just have a leaflet that talks about diplomas of vocational studies. I registered when I came here to the centre ... completely by chance.*
- *Anybody else would have become discouraged because it took so long, but I had strong motivation.*

- *Yes, with the Internet it's possible to get information, but that's not for everybody.*
- *Yes, I got the registration dates from the newspaper, but not much else.*
- *I didn't think to check on the Internet.*
- *No. In the newspaper the ads are too vague.*
- *It takes a lot of personal searching.*
- *You have to be able to read. I wanted to know more about course details and content but nobody gave me any answers.*
- *I see the courses as advertising and a bit of information.*

5.2.6 Reality factors in training

Some people said access to training is difficult and the waiting period is too long.

- *You have to wait too long ... up to two months to get on a course. We should have access to courses, we feel alone and insecure.*
- *The Ministère waits until it has a minimum of 19 people before starting the course, and that's far too long.*
- *It's not easy to find an individualized program.*
- *There's not enough information in the newspapers ... when you call up, they say "Come and register right away," they're going to cancel the course because they don't have enough people.*
- *I was told "Find 20 people who want to take the same course as you and we'll open up a group course." In other words, it's up to you.*
- *Before, I worked, but I didn't have my Secondary V diploma. To have an assessment and some exams, I needed an interpreter and I was told that, for a single person, it was too expensive, I had to wait until I could be in a group. I lost my job.*
- *"You have to meet their criteria" really means "Find your own solution."*
- *I was supposed to start training in November. There weren't enough students to start the course, so they told me "We'll call you back." I had to call them myself, often, to find out if the course was going to start up soon, because they never called me. The course finally began in January. Not everyone in my class was called back.*
- *There weren't enough people to start (cohort). We had to pressure them to start in January.*

5.2.7 Reception services in major organizations

Some candidates said large organizations did not offer a personalized reception, making it difficult to respond to the needs of clients and to offer quick access to academic and career guidance services.

- *At our first meeting for courses, the reception took place in the cafeteria and the tour of the building was a series of pictures. Next, we went to meet the teacher in our classroom. We didn't feel welcomed by the other students.*
- *It took me a week to get an appointment with the guidance counsellor. I waited three weeks to take a placement test, and another three weeks to get the results.*
- *I had to take a course before meeting a guidance counsellor. I paid for my registration and books for nothing, because the course didn't meet my needs.*
- *I phoned the centre about going back to school. I had to take a placement test. They gave me an appointment, and it took four weeks.*
- *In two years of studying, I went through reception for two hours each time, with instructions, etc. It's just repetition the second time round, a waste of time.*
- *They should ask who has already been through reception so they don't have to repeat it.*
- *It's very complicated, studying versus unemployment, social assistance, etc.*
- *Noting appointments in a notebook, with a one-month wait, isn't very efficient.*
- *A guidance counsellor should be available before we register.*
- *It's very bureaucratic and routine.*
- *The secretary did my reception and later I had to run around looking for information ... timetable, schedule, calendar.*
- *The reception process at the secretariat is unfriendly, no fixed dates.*
- *You ask a question and you don't feel as though anyone is listening to you.*
- *Somebody with low motivation will never come back to the centre, that's for sure!*
- *You get a call from a secretary, it's quick and cold. No information. You feel like a loser.*
- *At the secretariat, they're fed up. They've done it all too often.*
- *If you're not motivated ... go back home.*
- *If we received more supervision before starting, that would help.*
- *Yes to individualized reception, No to group reception.*

- *When I register, the secretary should give me an appointment with a guidance counsellor to help me make a decision about going back to school.*
- *Ideally you need to see a guidance counsellor, but there's not always one available.*
- *Educational institutions are huge. I left more confused than when I went in.*
- *It's not easy to get phone access to training organizations.*
- *It's complicated calling an educational institution about training.*
- *Awful voicemail boxes. Demotivating.*
- *I had to call another school to get information about loans and bursaries and I didn't know who to talk to and I felt discouraged. The information is too scattered.*
- *I was told: "Look around for a program and when you've finished, come back and talk to us about your plan." That's what I did. I shopped around for what I wanted to do.*
- *The first thing I did was call the administrative office of a school and they couldn't answer my questions. Then, I phoned a polyvalent school, thinking perhaps it was the school that gave the training. They transferred me from one extension to another maybe four times, and in the end a man told me that the course for a vocational studies diploma was given somewhere else. Finally I was able to meet him despite my busy schedule; he gave me some documents and a few explanations that I studied at home and, in the end, I enrolled in the program. I registered and that's how it happened.*
- *The reception process is frightening.*
- *To complete a form, they say, it's too difficult to explain, just let us do it ...*
- *In the training centre, I did a placement test but I never met a counsellor.*
- *I never met a guidance counsellor. I need information about the training and jobs I can do with the academic qualifications I have.*
- *I went to school to finish Secondary V, but they never gave me a career plan. I met a guidance counsellor, but I didn't understand anything. He talked about what I wanted to do, but there were no exercises and I never saw him again.*
- *What's missing is support and assessment for each individual.*
- *Everyone is put together in the same room, with no individual assessment.*
- *I would have liked to have the opportunity to finish my secondary school diploma.*
- *I made several trips for nothing, without getting the right answers.*
- *A professional staff member sent me to get my transcript of marks and information about diplomas of vocational studies, but I didn't know where to go, he didn't give me a phone number or address or anything.*

- *I was referred to places without knowing whether it was the right door.*
- *I would have liked to get information about everything I could do ... The professional staff member told me I had to go to a school organization to get my marks, but he didn't know the phone number and I didn't know where to go. I went to several places for nothing, it was a waste of money.*
- *I arrived a week after the others to register. Our group arrived at the training centre and we waited at least two hours to meet the secretary (reception), then we went to get our photos and then they directed us to our course.*
- *The guidance counsellor is very busy and doesn't make appointments. It's difficult to meet her and it's a long wait (there were six of us waiting on the same day).*
- *You can't make an appointment to see the guidance counsellor at the training centre, you can only see her when she's free.*
- *The secretaries don't know what the programs are. They just dispatch.*

5.2.8 Gateway to training

We noted that most participants would like to see a single gateway to training.

- *You need a central point. A reception service at the school board that meets our needs. All the resources should be concentrated in the same place.*
- *What's needed is an academic information tourism site.*
- *It's essential for all organizations to send people to a reception service and to create links to be aware of what is available elsewhere.*
- *If the services are brought together ... people would receive better counselling, the range of services would be broader.*
- *I'd like things to be centralized, everything in the same place, and for someone to be able to tell me where to go for adult education, CEGEP, secondary level, university degree, vocational training.*
- *I don't want people to play ping-pong with me any more. That's what it feels like.*
- *I'd like to call the general information service at the school board and have access to a guidance counsellor ... and then register for a course.*
- *A gateway could be useful for many people, because there isn't one currently.*
- *A service point to direct me and help me compare.*
- *It might help ... less time wasted.*
- *There is no reception service. It would be something new.*

- *A reception service would be accessible for everyone to know what they want.*
- *A reception service is a great idea.*
- *I don't want to have to go to 36 different places to find information.*
- *I'd like there to be a site (like a tourist information site) showing all the secondary-level vocational courses available in the region.*
- *It would be a "best scenario." More information with the qualities of each organization. There's no time to be lost in our region, the service is urgently needed.*

5.2.9 Organizational structure

Some people described their vision for the physical and organizational aspects of a reception service.

- *The opening hours should be during the day and the evening to meet the needs of people who work during the day.*
- *Daytime reception: group reception ... Evening reception: specific dates.*
- *A phone number could be given to all organizations so that we could get information.*
- *I'd like the reception service to be different so as not to duplicate existing services and improve the quality. Each organization should be represented as part of the reception service.*
- *A time during the week with all the organizations.*
- *A tour of the reception service during our courses.*
- *Not in an office, you need space.*
- *With appointments (individual).*
- *With an access ramp and elevator.*
- *A meeting room for discussions (visitors).*
- *A schedule from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday to Friday. Hours in the evening for workers and people who want information on skills upgrading ... also Saturday morning.*
- *TV advertising, an easy-to-remember phone number for the reception service. No voicemail. Come and see us, we'll give you information.*
- *Advertising for special client groups should go through the association ...*
- *An easy-to-remember phone number. Something catchy.*

- *A phone call, you end up on an answering machine, imagine how disheartening that can be.*
- *No phones with answering machines, because I prefer to meet someone and talk to them.*

5.2.10 Intervention procedure

We noted that most of the candidates interviewed suggested various reception procedures and services for clients going back to school.

- *Guided tour of the school and its services (principal, guidance counsellor) and how it functions, rules, etc. Names of persons and location of classrooms, or a brochure (tool) with a plan of the school and classrooms.*
- *Group reception difficult. Prefer individual.*
- *Have a resource person at reception (tutoring).*
- *It's encouraging to meet a guidance counsellor, it makes you want to take action. We know what we need as prerequisites, instead of trying to do things on our own.*
- *I'd like to see information in shopping malls.*
- *There could be an information evening with all the organizations.*
- *A kiosk with information about all available training programs.*
- *It would be a good idea for a person from each organization to come and give information.*
- *Always refer to the same person, so as not to have 10,000 different interpretations. Somebody who knows your background, and has your file to set up contacts. Because you're not always comfortable at a first meeting.*
- *Meet one person at a time in a big office.*
- *Make the first meeting individual and the second meeting a group meeting.*
- *Good service, target needs.*
- *Focus on giving out information and suggest phoning immediately to get an appointment. No need to wait twice.*
- *There should be preparatory job training (group). I'd like to visit businesses because we're visual. Assess our needs in a sector suitable for manual work.*
- *A guidance counsellor is not aware of all the problems. A delegate or representative could help us and have an interpreter.*

- *I'd like to be a helper in a reception centre ... Thanks for thinking of us and help us to help you.*
- *I'd like to have an initial meeting with a guidance counsellor. I don't know about all the training programs open to me because I don't have much schooling.*
- *I'd like someone to tell me the easiest path to achieve my goal to avoid doing training for nothing.*
- *A guidance counsellor who gave me a proper explanation of training possibilities and the time required.*
- *I'd like him to show me how to put a CV together to find out about job possibilities.*
- *I'd go to see the secretary to register. Then, I'd like to see a guidance counsellor and complete some placement tests. It would be nice to know where I was heading, to see a list of available courses at the reception desk. I'd receive the course schedule and start classes.*
- *It would be nice to have a summary of my prior learning, like a CV, but more.*
- *See a guidance counsellor who answers questions. What I need to complete my game plan ... know what to expect.*
- *Do placement tests.*
- *I'd like to see a personalized reception service for individuals.*
- *Assess what point you've reached in your education, your needs, your plans for the future. When you don't know where to go, you need counselling.*
- *I'd like to have my prior learning (experience) recognized.*
- *I'd like to know what businesses require in terms of training and qualifications.*
- *You have to determine people's interest.*
- *I'd like to have a skills summary. Guidance, active listening. Often, people (professional staff members) don't listen.*
- *Two types of reception service:
A quick path for people who know what they want.
A slow path for people who don't know what they want and need help.*
- *It would be nice to have an information session before I register. Like a tourist centre, but for training. Information on Internet (all information). Good information, good references.*
- *At a place like this, where there are lots of trades in construction, there should be a CCQ representative on site to give information.*

- *Effective advertising could be placed in commercial sectors, secondary schools, job centres, social assistance centres, because there's too much advertising in the newspapers.*
- *I went to a vocational training fair. There was lots of information.*
- *The guidance counsellor at the centre gave me a good reception service. It was very well organized. We did a group tour of the school.*
- *The teachers were all introduced to us. We took photos. I would have liked them to explain the modules to us so that I could understand the outline of our program.*

5.2.11 Intervention tools

Some people mentioned the intervention tools needed in a reception service.

- *Information about the services available at the school board. Record of learning. Leaflets, information in public places (shopping malls) to awaken people's curiosity.*
- *I'd like to see a plan of the school in a brochure as a reception tool.*
- *A Web site with an Internet address, a database with information and an explanation of the trade.*
- *I'd like to have access to a computer with a database.*
- *Information about real job statistics should be available at the reception desk.*
- *You should show information videos about possible trades (with subtitles).*
- *I'd like to have access to a database (Internet) about job possibilities outside the region. And to know what training is required for each job.*
- *There should be a database about job possibilities, prerequisites, to clarify things.*
- *I don't know what the placement rate is in the trade I'm studying, it's a worry.*
- *A centre like that could give you all the job prospects, placement rates, programs.*
- *A questionnaire to fill out on the Internet to identify our aptitudes along with information about the course.*

5.2.12 Skills and professional attitudes of reception staff

The participants mentioned the skills and professional attitudes that they expect to find in a reception service.

- *I liked the warm reception, because our files were processed separately from the group (personalized).*
- *I'd like to see people who understand that it's difficult for us to communicate in French and who talk to us slowly.*
- *I'd like the person at reception to inform us about the labour market, health care, the various kinds of training available, and to put us in contact with other specialists.*
- *The person should be competent and have an open mind toward immigrants.*
- *A person who recognizes my experience and knows where to refer me.*
- *I'd like to know where to go after meeting with the person on reception.*
- *I'd like the professional staff member to give us the tools for launching a business.*
- *There should be a person who knows how to get information from the Internet.*
- *It's hard to find competent people who can refer us in each subject.*
- *We sometimes find that the information we receive from a more competent specialist is different.*
- *The teacher draws up a plan of action for you showing the time needed to take the subject, follow-up is good. You feel you are being listened to.*
- *We want a reassuring and versatile person.*
- *Somebody who knows about the education system.*
- *A guidance counsellor, but not overworked.*
- *A person assigned to reception who knows about all the services.*
- *Somebody versatile, teaching oriented, who knows the system, the counsellor has too much work to do the initial reception.*
- *You need to have someone specially assigned to reception.*
- *A guidance counsellor or someone else. Hired specifically for that purpose and who refers.*
- *The information is passed on to us drop by drop.*
- *How to read and understand a transcript (credits).*
- *A resource person able to help me find information, who knows how to read and write.*
- *A secretary, resourceful, who knows the system.*
- *A person who tells you if you're able to take a course (ability, attitude, prerequisites).*

- *A person who is comfortable with computers, able to find information and is sympathetic and welcoming.*
- *A person who knows about the services available and refers you to the right person to get more details.*
- *A person able to respond to needs and with access to general information. Should not let anyone leave without information.*
- *A guidance counsellor.*
- *A person trained to provide reception services, versatile and able to identify needs.*
- *The first image we remember, a smile ... an informed resource person.*
- *Somebody with service content.*
- *Someone who knows about everything available in the training field.*
- *This is the person who gives us our first impression of the enterprise, who answers our general questions about the service provided.*
- *Somebody that you feel wants to help you.*
- *A responsible person aware of the needs of special client groups before meeting them.*
- *Assess the needs of each person with a specific disability and differentiate between oral interpreters, gesture interpreters and lip readers.*
- *An open-minded person who speaks slowly and pronounces clearly.*
- *Someone aware of the needs of the deaf.*
- *Someone who faces people, can mime actions, is comfortable, without prejudice.*
- *The person on reception must be patient.*
- *A warm-hearted, humane person who listens to me and answers my questions.*
- *I'd like to see someone who studies my profile and advises me on the basis of my physical abilities and what would suit me as a job.*
- *I'd like the person to be humane, fair, understanding, good humoured, receptive to my needs and without prejudice.*
- *A Bachelor's degree in psychology.*
- *A guidance counsellor.*
- *A social worker.*
- *A well-informed secretary and receptionist. Without prejudice, more than a secretary. Aware of everything, well informed, able to guide clients.*
- *A secretary, but well informed.*

- *A person without prejudice such as a professional staff member (empathetic).*
- *More than a secretary, someone who is aware of all the information.*
- *Someone to greet me and refer me, who has background and experience. Not young (empathetic).*
- *A person with a smile who asks what they can do to help me.*
- *The resource person should know all the services.*
- *A relationship based on trust and honesty.*
- *Enthusiastic and able to make me feel important, to look after me. I don't want to feel like a burden.*
- *A good-humoured reception.*
- *Lots of knowledge, not too many referrals, for example, reception to guidance counsellor (OK).*
- *A professional staff member able to readjust to needs.*
- *Someone who is able to answer all your questions, and to select one of several trades and know what will be in the course.*
- *An enthusiastic person who makes you feel important and knows how to talk to people.*
- *A person who knows the process and is able to detect and listen to needs, whether the client knows where they're going or not.*
- *A well-informed person so that you're not bounced around from place to place and who directs you like a counsellor.*

5.2.13 Special client groups (disabled people, immigrants, people with poor literacy skills, etc.)

Some people mentioned that a partnership-based reception service should take the needs of special client groups into account.

- *An open-minded, aware person, show instead of tell. People comfortable with reception, not prejudiced. We're afraid of reception (often people are impatient), they say "it's too complicated for you, let me do it," there's no communication.*
- *Adapted tools for special client groups (adapted leaflets).*
- *We want appointments to be set up immediately with an interpreter.*
- *Information on training. Visits to make. Choose an accessible trade.*
- *You need visual information, something concrete.*

- *At the guidance stage, see the trade on a video, advertising for special client groups.*
- *Meetings with special client groups must be “face to face.”*
- *It's important to differentiate and adapt services for all special client groups.*

5.2.14 Physical location

We observed that practically all candidates thought it was essential for the reception service to be located close to public transit, close to training and employment services, in a high-profile location.

- *An office close to downtown Jonquière would be preferable to facilitate access to the centre, because many of us don't have a car.*
- *Downtown (transportation) close to the bus route.*
- *At the reception centre in downtown Jonquière, accessible by public transit, close to buses and the adult education centre.*
- *Downtown (near the hospital) with bus access ... Place St-Michel close to Emploi Québec. In a shopping mall, where I feel comfortable.*
- *Downtown, close to the hospital to be accessible by bus. Close to Emploi-Québec.*
- *A centralized place, the employment centre for example, in the town centre near general services.*
- *I'd like the reception centre to be located close to the employment centre. If it's for training, it has to be downtown, near the bus route, next to the shopping mall.*
- *An ideal place (adult education centre) for transportation. An adapted service for special client groups.*
- *The reception centre could be located at the adult education centre because special client groups already know the centre and we already have classes there.*
- *I'd like the reception service to be downtown with service points in various organizations.*
- *I'd like to see the location advertised. Faubourg. In the town centre.*
- *You need advertising to increase visibility, like the armed forces.*
- *The reception centre could be located at the Holiday Inn, close to schools, close to buses for people on foot, in downtown Jonquière.*

5.2.15 Physical layout

Some people mentioned the importance of designing the physical layout to provide a user-friendly, attractive space, taking into account the needs of special client groups (people with disabilities, immigrants, people with poor literacy skills, etc.).

- *It's important to think about access ramps, an elevator.*
- *I can imagine a pleasant space with soft colours, information oriented, a discussion area.*
- *Several organizations don't have an elevator or access ramp for the disabled.*

5.2.16 Partnership-based reception

Most people stated the importance of a reception service designed in a partnership with all organizations in the community, while respecting the mission of each organization.

- *A partnership-based reception service is an important need. We'd like to see a representative from each organization present at an information meeting.*
- *A central service in a network for all services ... Referring us based on our needs.*
- *An information session on what is done elsewhere (other organizations), as needed.*
- *If all the services are brought together, we'll have more possibilities ... A global vision for clients. Knowing the mission and services of each organization (essential) ... Developing contacts.*
- *The actions must be focused on human beings, a place where everyone has the same goal, to help people.*
- *Visibility is important. Because it gives me more choices, more opportunities for training. Referring me to the right place.*
- *It would give us other possible pathways.*
- *The service would be easier. It should already be operating like that. Each organization should be aware of the mission of the others, where people can call.*
- *I'd like to see a reception service, including the presence of the partners, to provide information sessions. That would help us progress further in the searches we want to do. I'd like someone to give us a sheet with information on the partners and the services available.*
- *Yes, I'd like to have information on the partners. Complete a summary of my prior learning.*

- *The organizations should each have their own area of specialization. Mix all the partners to provide better service (young people, adults, etc.).*
- *Everyone has their area of specialization, so it should all be put together.*
- *Especially a region like this one. It's important to work together. With what we experience.*
- *Communicating vessels. Everyone is aware of what the others are doing. People will get proper answers. Very clear.*
- *The service will allow the organizations to come together around a table. Work together ...*
- *It needs the same goal, respect for individuals, it'll work ...*
- *You have to know what the other person has. Constant monitoring is essential.*
- *A representative of each organization to help you in your search. There'd be no competition between organizations. Individuals would be respected.*
- *The larger the information network, the easier it is to target the right information, transfer information. Advertising for the reception service is very important and should be distributed to all partners or at least to a reference address.*
- *The organization must remain in contact with the reception service.*

5.2.17 Motivation of the participants in the focus groups

We observed that the participants had different reasons for taking part in the focus groups.

- *We're taking part in this focus group because we want new solutions to be created ... Time is very important when you're an adult.*
- *We came to support change.*

5.3 Results for stage 3

The specific question for the third stage was: Did the members' advisory committee of potential partners perceive the visual and dynamic presentation of the results of our surveys of organizations and adults as making them more aware and more supportive of the possibility of establishing a partnership-based reception service?

Along with the chosen actions and strategy detailed in the preceding chapter, the visual and dynamic presentation of the results led to the qualitative outcome described below, mainly based on the comments of the researchers, and corroborated by the participating potential partners.

As shown in Appendix 9, our strategy was based on the confidentiality of the results obtained from the meetings with partners and target client groups. It is important to note that only the highlights of our meetings were presented to our partners. We defined general observations for each of the highlights to stimulate the interest of the participants in the first meeting and fruitful discussions about our observations.

Why did we minimize our analysis of the results obtained from the interviews and focus groups? For a simple reason: we wanted the highlights and observations to act as a springboard for an in-depth discussion by the participants, allowing them to make their own partnership-based observations from the data gathered. The goal of this strategy was to create a consensus on the various problems connected with reception services in our territory, as experienced by adults wishing to register for training.

Another goal of the strategy was to avoid a situation where partners would feel targeted by an exhaustive analysis of the highlights by our research team. We believed that a more detailed analysis could threaten the confidentiality of our meetings and focus groups and jeopardize the presence of some partners on our future advisory committee. The committee will, in our view, be the cornerstone in the creation of a partnership-based reception service for the new reception and referral service of the Commission scolaire De La Jonquière.

The visual and dynamic presentation, to the partners, of the highlights from the interviews was warmly received.

- *Excellent work, clear, interesting. It's easy to read and to understand the highlights.*
- *It's useful to see the highlights projected on a screen using PowerPoint. It's easier to emphasize the main points.*
- *I didn't expect such a dynamic visual presentation of the highlights and people were interested in the disclosure of the results.*
- *At last, we could see the results of our meetings and get a better idea of individual needs.*
- *I was looking forward to the meeting to find out more about the observations from the interviews.*
- *We will be able to use the highlights as a foundation for constructive discussion.*

These observations raised several questions, generating strong discussion between the school board representative and the organizations' representatives.

- *I think it's important to call a meeting quickly to build a cooperation table with all the interested partners.*

- *Our clients expect our organizations to work jointly and it's important to do it quickly.*
- *I believe that we must work in "silos," times are changing and I believe we're now ready to work together to improve our client interventions and develop labour in our region.*
- *We're ready to work together, but everything has to be done in a way that respects the mission of individual organizations.*

After the presentation, the representatives of the school board and of the other organizations in the community agreed to set a date for a meeting to look at how a reception service for training at the school board could be built using a partnership approach. It was clear, at that point, that people were willing to work together in a partnership, rather than in isolation.

In conclusion, we had proof that our strategy had worked, because the partners were willing to work together in a task force to find solutions to the problems identified in our highlights and general observations. So far, no partner has withdrawn from the cooperation table.

It is important to note that most of the highlights are elements that were mentioned by both the partners and the focus groups (**see the last ten pages of Appendix 9 for a parallel presentation of the results**).

5.4 Results for stage 4

The specific question for the fourth stage was: Did the participants perceive the activities of the research team (*specifically, the visual and dynamic presentation of the survey results and subsequent discussions*) as making them more supportive of the design and implementation of partnership-based reception services? As mentioned in the previous chapter, this stage could not be completed. However, the results from the first, second and third stages have already, in our opinion, laid the groundwork for a possible fourth stage, in the form of opinions about the necessary, less onerous prerequisites for the fourth stage.

We believe the first, second and third stages were essential for the launching of a partnership with organizations in the community. However, we believe some of the activities scheduled in our action research contributed little to the success of the process. We suggest that anyone wishing to apply our plan of action should concentrate more on stage 2, involving meetings with target client groups. This strategy is a core element of our action research because it allowed us to document the needs of adults in the territory of the Commission scolaire De La Jonquière and to call an initial meeting with organizations in the community to present the conclusions of our focus groups.

Our future partners were made aware of the needs of adults in our territory and, as a result, the range of needs of their own clients.

- *Now that we have seen the needs of clients in our territory, I think it's essential for us to work together to respond to the demand.*
- *At last we have an overview of the needs of our clients, and it's up to us to act on this information quickly.*
- *We must react quickly to the needs expressed by our clients, work together and develop a partnership-based gateway for training.*
- *We must set a date for another meeting immediately and ensure the continuation of this morning's presentation.*
- *Our clients want to see a structured reception service and a partnership and it's essential to respond to this.*
- *Adults want a gateway to training close to downtown and we must, together, identify a place that is suitable for our clients.*

We believe that this stage is crucial to a sustainable partnership. All managers want to respond effectively to the needs of their clients; the observations and highlights from our discussion demonstrated clearly what the needs were.

- *You need a central point. A reception service at the school board that meets our needs. All the resources should be concentrated in the same place.*
- *It's essential for all organizations to send people to a reception service and to create contacts so that they're aware of what is available elsewhere.*
- *I don't want to have to go to 36 different places to find information.*
- *I'd like the reception service to be different so as not to duplicate existing services and improve the quality.*
- *The actions must be focused on human beings, a place where everyone has the same goal, to help people.*
- *Adapted tools for special client groups.*
- *I'd like someone to ask me what my needs are and suggest training programs. Getting the right information is essential for going to the right places.*
- *The service must be very, very objective. You're not just a number. You're a human being.*

We felt it was difficult for our future partners to withdraw from the table after having been informed of their clients' wish that the organizations work together in all interventions. In addition, the data gathered from our clients provided a valuable source of information for the establishment of a procedure for a partnership-based reception service.

To streamline the process, we suggested that, in stage 1, the meetings with professional staff members and support workers be eliminated, leaving only the interviews with managers, because of the complexity of the process and the difficulty of presenting observations at the initial meeting with partners to discuss the results. We noted that the people present at the first meeting were mostly managers and that it was difficult for us to discuss observations from their staff. In our view, the most important aspect of the first stage was to gather information from the managers of the targeted organizations and, at the same time, to make them aware of the school board's project to create a partnership-based reception service in conjunction with the socioeconomic community.

Stage 4 originally reflected the research team's intention to test the process for a partnership-based reception service and validate its feasibility. We believed this could be done once all the partners had agreed on their respective roles and responsibilities and on a clear intervention procedure for reception services. The strategy we wished to implement for this stage could, in our view, have resulted in a high-quality SARCA system. Our meetings with the target groups would have validated the jointly designed reception procedure. The information gathered from participants in the experimental implementation would have been used as a springboard to create a culture of ongoing improvement for all SARCA services.

5.5 Situation on December 2, 2005

Since March 2005, we have completed several workshops with partners in the community interested in establishing a partnership-based reception service as part of the renewal of reception services at the Commission scolaire De La Jonquière. For example, we have all worked together on designing a joint reception check sheet to facilitate exchanges of information about clients among partner organizations and to prevent clients from having to complete duplicate forms for each organization. As researchers, we believe the willingness of the partners to create joint reception tools is an important first step toward the design of a process for a partnership-based reception service. We believe the discussions and analysis generated by the tools will highlight potential avenues for cooperation for the various services offered by all the members of the cooperation table.

In December 2005, we postponed the work of the task force responsible for devising a model partnership-based reception service, because of the delay between the end of our action research on the "reception" component and the launch session for the renewal of SARCA services by the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport scheduled for March 2006. We contacted the partners again in early January 2006 to inform them about the content of the SARCA launch session in March and about the wish of the school board managers to draw up a strategic plan for renewal of its reception and referral service, as requested by the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport, in collaboration with the members of our cooperation table. We hope the strategic plan will serve as a basis for the creation of SARCA services in partnership with community's organizations.

We are currently completing the strategic plan for the renewal of our SARCA services, with help from the partners on our advisory committee. Several working meetings have taken place to determine our strengths and weaknesses. Possible ways of improving the following components have been selected: reception, support, the record of learning for basic general education, information, career guidance, the actions of adults, and general responsibilities, in other words partnerships and proactive measures. We have also targeted priorities for each improvement.

In addition, we have defined a strategic guideline for each component with input from all the partners.



Part VI



Recommendations

Some recommendations

- Before establishing reception activities, it is important to create a task force with the other partners to define a structure for the partnership-based reception service.
- An advisory committee should be set up only after the focus group stage has been completed.
- Two to three meetings with potential partners should be planned instead of eight as suggested in the initial plan.
- A budget should be reserved for the reception activities (experimental implementation) in stage 4.
- A specialized note-taker should be hired to support the researchers.
- A room suitable for the disabled should be reserved for the focus groups.
- The researchers, in a project like this, should also be involved in meetings with the adult education team at the school board and partners from the community. It is important to ensure a shared discourse from the outset and throughout the action research project to avoid any ambiguity, given that a research project is constantly evolving.
- It is not necessary to form focus groups with more than six members. The members should be drawn from the 16-29, 30-45 and 46-60 age groups (e.g. two people from each age group).
- When preparing meetings with the partners, it is essential to meet with one representative from each employment group: managers, professional staff members, support workers.
- The best formula is to meet with partners at their workplace (this makes them feel more secure).
- The researchers should know the community well (saving time when meeting everyone).
- Peripheral areas should also be visited, because the realities are often different.
- Structured, adapted tools should be designed for meetings with partners and focus groups. Care should be taken not to go outside the framework for the action research and its focus; for example, a discussion of reception services should not include referral services.
- The names of the organizations should never be mentioned directly in the verbatim reports.
- For a similar project with similar deadlines, the research should be limited to the first three stages, because a lot of time is needed to gather information and process results.

- A neutral person (a representative of the school board, for example) should be asked to rule on cases where the researchers cannot agree on a perception.
- A flexible daytime and evening schedule should be offered for the focus groups, which ideally should be held in a neutral setting.
- An interpreter should be available throughout the action research project for deaf or hearing-impaired clients, and a budget should be allocated.
- It is important to be able to rely on an adequate organizational structure for this type of intervention; in other words, the researchers hired should have past experience of establishing a relationship of trust with the potential partners. The researchers must be familiar with the dynamics of organizations and school boards, and with related issues.
- It is also important to have
 - professional secretarial support
 - professional assistance with note-taking for the researchers
 - a computer layout specialist (PowerPoint presentation)
 - an office reserved for the researchers for the duration of the project, with a board, overhead projector and filing cabinet, in an environment offering confidentiality for working sessions and interviews
 - a room large enough for ten people to hold focus group meetings, able to instill a climate of trust among researchers and group members, with a board, to introduce SARCA services



Part VII



Ethical considerations

It is important to include the following information on the consent form:

- a description of the action research project and its objective or objectives
- a short biography of the researchers and the person mandated to complete the research project
- a statement that the action research project will not harm the participants in any way
- the way in which participants are expected to contribute
- the way in which the data will be processed
- the signature of the participating professional staff members and the people responsible for the research team to authorize the use of the information and ensure its confidentiality
- the contact information for the project officer, so that people can send comments or indicate dissatisfaction

Context of the research

Despite the researchers' latitude in completing the action research project, the respective missions of the organizations that took part in the project must be respected.



Part VIII



Abstract

Under the action plan for the *Government Policy on Adult Education and Continuing Education and Training*, the Commission scolaire De La Jonquière launched an action research project in the spring of 2004 to explore the possibility of designing a reception service for educational services at the school board **as part of a partnership with the community**. The project was based on the following general question: Is a viable, effective “reception” component of reception, referral, counselling and support services (SARCA) possible under a PARTNERSHIP with all the key players, in keeping with the *Government Policy on Adult Education and Continuing Education and Training*? This general question, which could not be answered by the deadline (February 2005), generated four specific sub-questions relating to the four initial project stages.

The action research project focused on a basic problem and was designed to suggest potential solutions. Within the specific regional dynamic, it is possible at this point to make the following observations:

- Reception services are provided by several organizations in the community.
- There is almost no partnership among the school board and other organizations in the community; all work in isolation.
- The reception procedure and the information provided vary according to the organization concerned and the services available (captive client groups).
- Reception services are promoted, but only as part of the general supply of educational services.
- There is virtually no clear, defined action plan for client groups that is shared by all the key players.

Exploring the possibility of defining a partnership-based reception service was therefore a challenge, especially in a historical context in which a single service point had previously existed but had been abolished.

The action research project was divided into four stages to answer the four specific questions (detailed below):

1. Meetings with potential partners
2. Meetings with target client groups
3. Establishment of a cooperation table (advisory committee) with partners interested in the action research
4. Establishment of reception activities

Research projects can often head into unexpected directions. In this case, we met with potential partners and were warmly, if a little suspiciously, received. Next, focus groups composed of different types of clients with access to services in the community were formed.

Because it was impossible to bring together all the partners before the Christmas break, it was more effective, as mentioned in the recommendations, to compile the information gathered and to set up the advisory committee later, in January, with a wealth of content to ensure continuity. It is important to remember that the key players had already been made aware of the project at a meeting organized by the school board with people from the community.

The results from stage 1 were used to answer the following specific question: How do potential partners describe their respective reception services, and how do they perceive the possibility of a partnership-based reception service? The highlights from the interviews with 17 organizations and potential partners concerned the following topics:

- Demand management by organizations
- A structured process in small organizations
- Reception service tools
- Extended missions
- Professional qualifications of reception service staff
- Concentration of information
- Insufficient human and financial resources
- Special client groups (disabled people, immigrants, people with low literacy skills, etc.)
- Captive client groups
- The reality of the training situation
- Processing of information on education and training by clients
- Intervention procedure
- Referrals and knowledge of the community
- Unsuitable referrals of clients, without matching their needs
- Mechanisms and follow-up
- Access to major organizations
- Gateway to training
- Physical location
- Physical layout
- Advisory committee and cooperation

The results from stage 2 were used to answer the following specific question: How do adult students experience the reception process, and what do they think about the possibility of

providing reception services through a partnership? The highlights from the interviews of 48 adults in eight focus groups with six participants each concerned the following topics:

- Demand management
- Supply management
- A structured process in small organizations
- Mechanisms and follow-up
- Processing of information on education and training by clients
- Reality factors in training
- Reception services in large organizations
- Gateway to training
- Organizational structure
- Intervention procedure
- Intervention tools
- Skills and professional attitudes of reception staff
- Special client groups (disabled people, immigrants, people with low literacy skills, etc.)
- Physical location
- Physical layout
- Partnership-based reception
- Motivation of the participants in the focus groups

The results from stage 3 were used to answer the following specific question: Did the members' advisory committee of potential partners perceive the visual and dynamic presentation of the results of our surveys of organizations and adults as making them more aware and more supportive of the possibility of establishing a partnership-based reception service?

After the meetings with potential partners and the completion of the focus groups, a major data-gathering exercise resulted in a compilation of all the results, which were presented to the partners in the form of a PowerPoint document (Appendix 9). We observed a clear interest in the conclusions of the research project and a willingness to go further. Following the meeting, at which many fascinating discussions took place, the organizations agreed, as mentioned previously, to come together for an initial meeting. The advisory committee, at the time this report was written, had already met and promising discussions had taken place concerning the vision of a structure for a reception service for educational programs at the school board. The same committee had agreed to meet again in the coming weeks.

As mentioned earlier, stage 4, involving the implementation of reception activities, was not carried out due to a lack of time and money. However, a task force was created, and several recommendations were made.

All the discussions will probably continue, with the ultimate goal of creating SARCA services, since the research appears to have made an important contribution by clearing the way and identifying the actual needs of clients, along with their main concerns and greatest fears. The future will tell whether it has been possible to achieve the main objective of the action research project, which was to explore the possible viability of the “reception” component in a partnership-based SARCA service with different key players, in keeping with the *Government Policy on Adult Education and Continuing Education and Training*.





APPENDIXES

Appendix 1

Telephone interview outline

Hello,

Presentation of the researchers

Objective of the call

- Mandated by the MEQ
- Action research project about a reception service
- As part of a partnership with key players
- The MEQ wants to set up SARCA services (reception, referral, counselling and support services)
- Throughout Québec
- Your participation is essential to ascertain your vision
- 45 minutes of your time is needed to complete the interview (14 questions)
- Plus two members of your staff involved in reception services (one support worker + one professional staff member)
- Confidentiality assured (identified by number, not by name)

Appointment date

- Suggestion of various dates

Conclusion

- Presentation of project
- Protocol of agreement
- Phone or fax number
- Partnership instead of collaboration

Appendix 2

List of partners targeted by the action research project

- Emploi-Québec
- Cégep de Jonquière
- Carrefour Jeunesse-Emploi Saguenay
- Cible-Action
- Service externe de main-d'œuvre (SEMO)
- Service Relance
- Accès-Travail-Femmes et emploi
- Centres Alpha (2)
- Centre local de développement (CLD)
- Service régional d'interprétariat de l'est du Québec (SRIEQ)
- Odyssée Québec-Monde (entreprise d'entraînement)
- Société d'intervention urbaine
- Ministère des Relations avec les citoyens et de l'Immigration (MRCI)
- Commission scolaire De La Jonquière
 - CFPJ
 - CFGA
 - CSE

Appendix 3

Planning grid for the action research project Synopsis of activities and time frame

Project stage	Time frame for each stage	Control and follow-up measures
1. Meetings with potential partners in the action research project	May 31 to October 5, 2004	▪ Draft a protocol, presentation document and interview outline (May 31 to June 18) ▪ Make contact with the target partners (letter, protocol, project presentation) (June 21 to August 25) ▪ Meet with partners (June 28 to September 3) ▪ Create a summary of the information gathered from partners (September 6 to October 1) ▪ Mail out the summary of the information gathered (October 4 and 5)
2. Establishment of an advisory committee of partners interested in the action research project	September 6, 2004 to February 21, 2005	▪ First meeting, week of September 6, 2004 (information meeting) ▪ Second meeting, week of October 4, 2004 ▪ Third meeting, week of October 25, 2004 ▪ Fourth meeting, week of November 15, 2004 ▪ Fifth meeting, week of December 13, 2004 ▪ Sixth meeting, week of January 24, 2005 ▪ Seventh meeting, week of February 21, 2005 (tabling of final report)
3. Meetings with target client groups	September 27 to December 3, 2004	▪ Draft a brief document to present the "reception" component and the interview outline (September 27 to October 1, 2004) ▪ Create focus groups with partners (October 4 to 8, 2004) ▪ Meet with focus groups (October 11 to November 12, 2004) ▪ Summarize the results of the focus groups (November 15 to December 3, 2004)
4. Establishment of reception activities	December 6, 2004 to February 28, 2005	▪ Create an assessment sheet with recommendations for reception service clients and a statistical sheet for professional staff members (December 6 to 10, 2004) ▪ Develop a presentation about the new reception process ▪ Remind managers at organizations about the need to recommend individuals for the experimental implementation (December 13 to 23, 2004) ▪ Implement a partnership-based reception service experimentally with the nine target groups for the action research project (January 3 to February 11, 2005) ▪ Ask professional staff members to complete a statistical sheet after each interview (January 3 to February 11, 2005) ▪ Ask clients to complete an assessment sheet with recommendations after each interview (January 3 to February 11, 2005) ▪ Analyze content (assessment sheet with recommendations, statistical sheet) (February 14 to 25, 2005) ▪ Produce the final report (February 14 to 25, 2005) ▪ Send the final report to the Ministère de l'Éducation (February 28, 2005)

Appendix 4

Planning grid for the action research project Synopsis of activities and time frame (Modified version)

Project stage	Time frame for each stage	Control and follow-up measures
1. Meetings with potential partners in the action research project	May 31 to November 12, 2004	- Draft a protocol, presentation document interview outline and interview schedule (May 31 to June 18, 2004) - Make contact with the target partners (letter, protocol, project presentation) (June 21 to August 25, 2004) - Meet with partners (June 28 to October 15, 2004) - Create a summary of the information gathered from partners (October 18 to November 12, 2004)
2. Establishment of an advisory committee of partners interested in the action research project	December 13, 2004 to February 21, 2005	- First meeting, week of December 15, 2004 (present a summary of the information gathered) - Second meeting, week of January 24, 2005 - Third meeting, week of February 21, 2005 (tabling of final report)
3. Meetings with target client groups	November 15 to December 10, 2004	- Draft a brief document to present the "reception" component and the interview outline (November 8 to 12, 2004) - Create focus groups with partners (November 15 to 17, 2004) - Meet with focus groups (November 18 to 24, 2004) - Summarize the results of the focus groups (November 29 to December 10, 2004)
4. Establishment of reception activities	January 17, 2004 to February 28, 2005	- Create an assessment sheet with recommendations for reception service clients and a statistical sheet for professional staff members (December 20 to 23, 2004) - Implement a partnership-based reception service experimentally with the nine target groups for the action research project (January 17 to February 11, 2005) - Ask clients to complete an assessment sheet with recommendations after each interview (January 17 to February 11, 2005) - Analyze content (assessment sheet with recommendations, statistical sheet) (February 14 to 25, 2005) - Produce the final report (February 14 to 25, 2005) - Send the final report to the Ministère de l'Éducation (February 28, 2005)

Appendix 5

Individual protection protocol

The research project

As part of an action research project commissioned, supervised and funded by the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport in conjunction with the Commission scolaire De La Jonquière, François Bernard and Rémy Audet, education consultants at the Centre des services aux entreprises operated by the Commission scolaire De La Jonquière, have been mandated to gather information from 15 selected organizations in the community that offer reception services to their clients on a daily basis.

The objective of the research project is to gather information from each participating organization, on a confidential and voluntary basis, concerning the delivery of reception services to their client base. The project will validate the possibility of establishing a reception service in partnership with the community.

Your participation in the action research project will not be harmful to you in any way, and you will receive a copy of the final report once the project has been completed.

Contribution by participants

The research project will last from September 2004 to February 2005.

Information will be gathered initially at the workplace of each organization, using individual interviews lasting approximately one hour. During the interviews, Mr. Audet and Mr. Bernard will gather and collate information using an interview outline. The notes taken during the meeting will be submitted to the person interviewed for approval and initialling at the end of the meeting.

Participation is voluntary, and the organization may decide to withdraw from the process at any point.

Data processing

To ensure confidentiality, each organization and participating staff member will be assigned a number for use in processing the data. Only group results will be released, and the identity of participants in the focus groups will be protected. All the data and comments gathered will be stored with no link to an individual's name.

Signature of the participating staff member

I, the undersigned, _____, have read and understood the procedure for this research project and agree to participate, subject to my right to withdraw at any time and without prejudice.

As a result of my agreement to participate in the project, I will receive a copy of the final report once the project is completed.

Signed at _____, on _____ 2004.

Signature

Signature of the research team coordinators

We, the undersigned _____, _____, attest to the veracity of the information provided in this authorization form and personally undertake to ensure the confidentiality of the information gathered from the participant named above.

Signed at _____, on _____ 2004.

Signature

Signature

If you are dissatisfied with or wish to comment on the quality of the interviews conducted for the purpose of the action research project, please contact Claude Gaudreault, director of the CFGA and project leader for the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport, at 418-547-4702, extension 225.

Appendix 6

Presentation

The *Government Policy on Adult Education and Continuing Education and Training*, published in 2002, proposed a renewal of reception, referral, counselling and support (SARCA) services and created the necessary conditions for a complete redesign of the services. If school boards are to move collectively toward new guidelines and new practices, a vision of SARCA services that is broadly based and inclusive must first be defined.

As a result, the Direction de la formation générale des adultes at the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport commissioned the Commission scolaire De La Jonquière to conduct an action research project on the "reception" component with a view to establishing a partnership with the community.

What is action research?

As the term implies, action research is generally applied to understand a situation or problem and the intervention required to make a change or explore a solution. Most often, it combines theory and practice, discussion and action, abstraction and reality, with the goal of understanding in order to take action.

Outline description of the problem in our community for which the action research project is expected to define solutions

During our meetings with the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport and the other school boards participating in action research projects, we noted that there was a general problem with reception services in Québec. Various organizations were experiencing difficulties with the "reception" component. We made the following observations:

1. Reception services are provided in a disparate way in different establishments operated by the school board and other organizations in the community.
2. The reception procedure and the information provided vary depending on the establishment or organization concerned, and on the services each provide.
3. The qualifications of the reception staff vary widely (secretary, technician, education consultant, guidance counsellor, academic and career counsellor, labour market adviser, etc.).
4. Reception and referral services are promoted only in connection with education services.

5. There is a notable lack of tools to measure the impact of the initial reception experience.
6. There is no clear, defined plan of action, available to all key players for all referred clients.

Objectives

- Raise awareness among key players of MELS objectives (SARCA).
- Validate the suitability of a partnership.
- Verify whether the action research project meets the expectations of individuals in expressing their educational needs and requesting educational services.
- Mobilize organizations in the community.
- Identify client needs (various client groups).
- Design innovative services and intervention methods.
- Create a reference framework for the provincewide development of the “reception” component, based on a regional experience.

Stages

- Meetings with partners
- Meetings with target client groups
- Establishment of an advisory committee of partners interested in the action research project
- Establishment of reception activities

Considering that a partnership is the cornerstone of our action research on the “reception” component, we would like you to help us by discussing your opinions and observations concerning the reception services provided by your organization.

François Bernard and Rémy Audet, education consultants at the Centre des services aux entreprises, have been mandated by the Commission scolaire De La Jonquière to gather relevant information on the “reception” component using an interview outline.

We would like to thank you for your assistance, and to assure you that your observations and opinions, which are of primary importance in our research project, will be treated in a discreet and professional manner.

Claude Gaudreault, Director, CFGA (project leader for the MELS)
François Bernard, Education Consultant, Centre des services aux entreprises
Rémy Audet, Education Consultant, Centre des services aux entreprises

Appendix 7

Interview outline

Meetings with partners

Action Research

Establishing “Reception” Component With the Community's Partners

For

The Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport

Date:

Organization number:

Address:

**Number of the staff
member interviewed:**

1. What is your mission?

2. What services do you provide?

3. Where are your clients from?

4. Do you have a reception service?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If "Yes," answer questions A, B and C.

If "No," go to question D.

A) Explain your reception structure.

B) Describe your reception procedure.

C) What are the target qualifications for a reception staff member?

Academic qualifications

Relevant experience

D) If "No," why not?

5. What are the main strengths of your reception service?

6. What are the main weaknesses of your reception service?

7. How many hours a week are allocated to staff members for reception activities?

☐

1 - 20

☐

81 - 100

☐

161 - 180

☐

21 - 40

☐

101 - 120

☐

181 - 200

☐

41 - 60

☐

121 - 140

☐

201- 220

☐

61 - 80

☐

141 - 160

☐

221 - 240

Comments (if any):

8. Do you have any mechanisms and/or intervention tools for receiving clients?

Yes ☐ Please describe

No ☐ Why not?

9. Do you believe that adults in our territory have easy access to the resources or information they need to enter or return to the labour market or education system?

Yes ☐ Why?

No ☐ Why not?

10. Have you ever received adults who have been incorrectly referred or who have received incorrect information about their educational needs?

Yes ☐ No ☐

11. Have you ever referred clients on the basis of their respective needs?

Yes ☐ Why?

No ☐ Why not?

12. A) Is it easy to refer clients on the basis of their respective needs?

Yes ☐ Why?

No ☐ Why not?

B) Do you believe your clients have easy access to appropriate resources?

Yes ☐ Why?

No ☐ Why not?

13. Do you believe it is possible to establish a reception service in partnership with the community?

Yes ☐ Why?

No ☐ Why not?

14. Would you be interested in joining an advisory committee as part of the action research project on the “reception” component with a view to establishing a partnership with the community, in order to respond more effectively to the needs of adults?

Yes ☐ Why?

No ☐ Why not?

Remarks and comments

(space reserved for research team)

Follow-up

(space reserved for research team)

By: François Bernard, Education Consultant
Rémy Audet, Education Consultant

Appendix 8

Interview outline

Focus groups

Action Research

Establishing "Reception" Component With the Community's Partners

For

The Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport

Date:

Focus group:

- 1. Describe one or more reception processes that you have experienced in recent years in order to enter or return to the education system or labour market.**

[illegible]

[illegible]

1.2 What are the main weaknesses you identified in the reception process?

[illegible]

[illegible]

2.1 What qualifications would you like reception staff members to have?

Academic qualifications

Relevant experience

4. Have you ever been incorrectly referred or received incorrect information about your educational needs?

Yes

☐

Why?

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

No

☐[illegible]

5. Do you believe it is possible to establish a partnership-based reception service with organizations in the community?

- Emploi-Québec
- Cégep de Jonquière
- Carrefour Jeunesse-Emploi Saguenay
- Cible-Action
- Service externe de main-d'œuvre (SEMO)
- Service Relance
- Accès-Travail-Femmes et emploi
- Centres Alpha (2)
- Centre local de développement (CLD)
- Service régional d'interprétariat de l'est du Québec (SRIEQ)
- Odyssée Québec-Monde (entreprise d'entraînement)
- Société d'intervention urbaine
- Ministère des Relations avec les citoyens et de l'Immigration (MRCI)
- Commission scolaire De La Jonquière
 - CFPJ
 - CFGA
 - CSE

Yes ☐ Why? (advantages)

No ☐ Why not? (disadvantages)

Remarks and comments

(Space reserved for research team)

Follow-up

(Space reserved for the research team)

By: François Bernard, Education Consultant
Rémy Audet, Education Consultant





Appendix 9

Action research

**Establishing “reception” component
with the community’s partners**

SARCA





OBJECTIVE OF THE ACTION RESEARCH

Explore whether a viable “reception” component of SARCA* services is possible under a partnership with all the key players, in keeping with the Government Policy on Adult Education and Continuing Education and Training.

*** SARCA: reception, referral, counselling and support services.**



SUMMARY OF THE PROBLEM IN OUR COMMUNITY TO WHICH THE ACTION RESEARCH APPEARS TO OFFER A SOLUTION IN KEEPING WITH THE FOCUS ON ONGOING IMPROVEMENT

Original postulate, March 2004

To meet the growing demand for reception and referral services in the region, a reception service more responsive to the needs of the population in the area covered by the Commission scolaire De La Jonquière had to be developed quickly as part of the action research project. However, there were several problems with the “reception” component of the services provided by various organizations:



Reception services were offered by several different establishments operated by the school board and other organizations in the community (notable lack of a single service point).

Almost no partnerships for reception services had been developed by the school board and the organizations in the community (compartmentalization).

The reception procedure and information provided varied depending on the establishment or organization concerned, and on the services each provided (captive client base, resulting from a high unemployment rate).



The **qualifications** of the reception staff varied widely (secretary, technician, education consultant, guidance counsellor, etc.).

Reception and referral services were promoted only in connection with education services (advertising depended on the number of places needing to be filled).

There were no tools to **measure the impact** of the initial reception experience.

There was **no** clear, defined plan of action, **available to all key players** for all referred clients.



EXPECTED BENEFITS OF THE ACTION RESEARCH AND LOCAL AND PROVINCIAL LEVELS

Mobilize organizations in the community.

Identify client needs (various client groups).

Design innovative services and intervention methods.

Create a reference framework for the provincewide deployment of the “reception” component, based on a regional experience.

Make key players **aware** of MEQ objectives (SARCA).

Validate the viability of a partnership.

Verify whether the action research helps individuals express their needs or demands.



STAGES IN THE ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT

Meetings with partners

Meetings with target client groups

Establishment of an advisory committee of partners interested in the action research project

Establishment of a task force for partnership-based reception services



MEETINGS WITH PARTNERS

Objectives

Report on and debate the objectives and principles of the action research.

Gather information on the “**reception**” component.

Mobilize partners around the “**reception**” component.

Promote discussion and debate about the action research project.



METHOD

Draft a protocol, presentation document, interview outline and interview schedule (May 31 to June 18, 2004).

Make contact with the target partners (17 in all)
(letter, protocol, project presentation) (June 21 to August 25, 2004).

Meet with each partner individually

- manager (one per organization)
- professional staff members (one per organization)
- support staff members (one per organization) (June 28 to October 15, 2004).

Create a summary of the information gathered from partners
(October 18 to November 12, 2004).



MEETINGS WITH TARGET CLIENT GROUPS

Objectives

Promote discussion and debate about the “reception” component.

Gather information on past experiences.

Gather information on needs, along with suggestions.



METHOD

Draft a brief document to present the “**reception**” component and the interview outline
(November 8 to 12, 2004).

Create 9 focus groups with partners
(November 15 to 17, 2004).

Meet with 9 focus groups
(November 18 to 24, 2004).

Summarize the results of the focus groups (November 29 to December 10, 2004).



9 FOCUS GROUPS (6 participants per group)

“General education students”:

studying at a general adult education centre.

“Vocational training students”:

studying at a vocational training centre.

“Unemployed workers”:

out of work for six months and receiving employment insurance benefits.

“Welfare recipients”

out of work for one year and receiving income security benefits.

“No-cheque recipients”:

working without officially declaring it, or out of work and receiving neither employment insurance nor income security benefits.



9 FOCUS GROUPS (6 participants per group)

“Deaf and hearing-impaired individuals”:
studying and/or working.

“Disabled individuals”:
studying and/or working.

“Immigrants”:
having studied and/or worked in Canada for at least three years.

“Workers”:
having worked for at least three years.



ESTABLISHMENT OF AN ADVISORY COMMITTEE WITH PARTNERS INTERESTED IN THE ACTION RESEARCH

Objectives

Specify the expectations and reservations of each party.

Explain the operating mode, capacity and limits of each structure.

Define objectives and collaborative methods.

Establish implementation procedures.

Define and present a reception service structure and shared channel for information.

Establish discussion forums.

Facilitate the implementation of adapted intervention methods.



ESTABLISHMENT OF A TASK FORCE

Objectives

Explore the possibility of designing a process and tools for partnership-based reception services taking client needs into account.

Consolidate cooperation by various organizations.

Validate the professional skills needed by “**reception**” staff as part of the action research project.

Confirm that basing the “**reception**” component on a partnership is viable in the territory of the Commission scolaire De La Jonquière.



METHOD

Establish a task force from among the members of the advisory committee to develop a process and tools for partnership-based reception services (January 25, 2005).

Produce a final report (February 1 to 25, 2005).

Send the final report to the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport (February 28, 2005).



Highlights from the meetings with partners

Extended missions

We noted that the missions of the organization have been extended as money and subsidy programs have become available.

Concentration of information

We noted that in some places, reception services depended on a single person.

Insufficient human and financial resources

Some people complained about the lack of human and financial resources for reception activities.



Highlights from the meetings with partners

Captive client groups

We noted that some organizations respond to clients on the basis of the services they are able to provide.

Referrals and knowledge of the community

We noted that most of the people we interviewed direct their clients toward training programs mainly on the basis of their own knowledge.

Unsuitable referrals of clients, without matching their needs

We noted that most of the people interviewed said that they had received adults who had been incorrectly referred or had received incorrect information in connection with their training needs.



Highlights from the meetings with focus groups

Supply management

Some candidates mentioned that organizations responded to their needs on the basis of the admission criteria for various programs to enter or return to the labour market or education system.

Organizational structure

Some people described their vision for the physical and organizational aspects of a reception service.

Motivation of the participants in the focus groups

We observed that the participants had various reasons for taking part in the focus groups.



Compared highlights from the meetings with partners and focus groups

Partners	Focus groups
Demand management in organizations We observed that most organizations are moving toward demand management. A structured process in small organizations We observed that small organizations, because of their structure, facilitate a structured reception process.	Demand management We observed that most candidates would like to see reception services focused on their needs. A structured process in small organizations We noted that some participants mentioned that they had received a more personalized reception and follow-up in small organizations.



Compared highlights from the meetings with partners and focus groups

Partners	Focus groups
Reception service tools We observed that some organizations have developed reception service tools. Professional qualifications of reception service staff We noted that reception service staff held a very wide range of qualifications.	Intervention tools Some people mentioned the intervention tools needed in a reception service. Skills and professional attitudes of reception staff The participants mentioned the skills and professional attitudes that they expect to find in a reception service.



Compared highlights from the meetings with partners and focus groups

Partners	Focus groups
Special client groups (disabled people, immigrants, people with low literacy skills, etc.) Some people complained that the reception process and tools were not adapted to special client groups. The reality of the training situation Some people stated that they could not respond to client needs because of administrative constraints (insufficient student numbers, demographic factors, late starting date of a cohort, etc.).	Special client groups (disabled people, immigrants, people with low literacy skills, etc.) Some people mentioned that a partnership-based reception service should take the needs of special client groups into account. Reality factors in training Some people said that access to training is difficult and the waiting period is too long.



Compared highlights from the meetings with partners and focus groups

Partners	Focus groups
Processing of information on education and training by clients Several people stated that adults in the territory have plenty of access to resources and information for starting or returning to training or employment, but that they have trouble processing and understanding the information.	Processing of information on education and training by clients Most of the participants mentioned that they had easy access to resources or useful information for remaining in or rejoining the labour market or education system, but that the information media used by the organizations did not reach them.



Compared highlights from the meetings with partners and focus groups

Partners	Focus groups
Intervention procedure We observed that some organizations have not developed a client reception structure.	Intervention procedure We noted that most of the candidates interviewed suggested various reception procedures and services for clients going back to school.
Mechanisms and follow-up Some people complained about the lack of follow-up mechanisms after referring clients.	Mechanisms and follow-up We observed that some candidates obtained personalized follow-up from reception workers in various organizations in our territory.



Compared highlights from the meetings with partners and focus groups

Partners	Focus groups
Access to major organizations Some key players consider that major organizations have a complex structure that does not facilitate access to training services by the general public and to organizations in the community.	Reception services in major organizations Some candidates stated that major organizations did not offer a personalized reception, making it difficult to respond to the needs of clients and to offer quick access to academic and career guidance services.



Compared highlights from the meetings with partners and focus groups

Partners	Focus groups
Gateway to training Most of the people we interviewed supported the idea of a single gateway to training.	Gateway to training We noted that most participants would like to see a single gateway to training.



Compared highlights from the meetings with partners and focus groups

Partners	Focus groups
Physical location Some people considered that the physical location of a reception service should be based on its accessibility and proximity to training and employment services.	Physical location We observed that practically all candidates thought that it was essential for the reception service to be located with access to public transit, close to training and employment services, and with high visibility.



Compared highlights from the meetings with partners and focus groups

Partners	Focus groups
Physical layout Some people stated that the physical layout of the service must be designed to create a climate of trust.	Physical layout Some people mentioned the importance of designing the physical layout to provide a user-friendly, attractive space, taking into account the needs of special client groups (people with disabilities, immigrants, people with low literacy skills, etc.).



Compared highlights from the meetings with partners and focus groups

Partners	Focus groups
Advisory committee and cooperation We noted that almost all the people interviewed found it important to be on the advisory committee and saw it as an opportunity for cooperation by various organizations in the community.	Partnership-based reception Most people stated the importance of a reception service designed in a partnership with all organizations in the community, while respecting the mission of each organization.