



## **Learning Exchange Summary Document**

### **National Connector Program Learning Exchange, October 28-29, 2024**

Over the two days, the Connector Community came together to discuss best practices, solutions to issues, share knowledge and to come together and celebrate our community. The following pages are a summary of the discussions, and the most important takeaways of each session.

#### **Session #1: Social Media Campaigns and Labour Market Information**

Pavneesh Chawla of the Halifax Partnership gave a presentation on the new Super Connector Campaign the Halifax Partnership is running this year. The slides can be found on the [NCP Members portal](#) under “Marketing.”

#### **Build a Campaign**

- Connectors as influencers
  - Use their networks and knowledge to help the campaign spread organically and gain traction (for low and high budgets alike)
- To bring Connectors in, speak their language
  - Make sure to key into the reasons why Connectors want to be a part of the program – and use these key points in your messaging
- Right message at the right time
  - Adapt accordingly to what’s happening in your community, and in your market. Make sure to adopt the correct messaging to resonate with people who will see your campaign
- Using the right platforms to shine - LinkedIn and Meta
  - In Halifax, most Connectors use LinkedIn and Meta. Understand your audience, and which platforms you need to use.
- Understand habits
  - You’ll know better where and when to place your ads and content if you understand the habits of your audience
- Tailor messages for each platform
- Organic ads and paid ads both work – use based on your budget
- Lower budget – try sites such as Canva, Trello, Hootsuite
- Higher budget - try HubSpot

#### **Time is money**

- Tool options for campaigns (options for all budgets)
  - See the presentation for more information
- Numbers do not lie – measure what matters

- Ensure you are measuring the right KPIs to really understand your impact and reach
- Know your audience – or you may be wasting your time

#### Roadblocks:

- Budget Issues
- Allocate based on best options to reach audience and to optimize campaign
- Monitor what ads work best

#### Capacity

- Automate processes and repurpose content when possible (e.g., Connectee providing own headshots)
- Time and effort to develop campaigns
- Allow for time before launch date to engage participation and assets
- Importance of collaboration of teams – Make sure you use the entire team at your disposal, but also that you understand they have priorities too

#### Connector Problem

- E.g. Halifax partnership = huge area of Connectors versus rural areas
  - Focus on key sectors in the area = target the right audience E.g. Halifax = Cleantech, OceanTech, Finance, IT
  - Find your Connectors, and your areas of focus for your Connectees – allows you to be more intentional about seeking them out, and not spreading yourself or your Connectors too thin

#### When is the right time for campaigning on billboards or radio?

- Campaigns must be Time-bound
  - Ads can become obsolete when people get used to them
  - Keep content fresh and engaging
  - Time of year = September-November
  - Give paid partnerships a lot of lead time for good placement
  - Frequency on social media – depending on platform, once a day, once every two days

**\*\*LinkedIn = post every time you meet a new Connector**

#### How do you collect the data?

- Paid ads
- Go to platform to collect information and numbers
- Keep monitoring ads and make changes when needed
- Social media team (if you have one)

### **Takeaways:**

- Know your audience (Connectors and Connectees)
- Tailor your messages and posts for each platform
- Track everything, communicate at all stages with your entire team and adapt the campaign accordingly

### **The Labour Market in Canada**

Robyn gave a quick presentation on the Labour Market, and its importance in how the Connector Program runs in any given community across Canada.

- There are many changes and unknowns happening with immigration right now
  - Overall reduction by 20%
  - Changes to international graduate stream
  - Further changes upcoming
- We need to be careful and creative as things change over the upcoming years
  - E.g., Virtual Connector Program in 2020; it was successful even though it was a stressful and unknown time
- Predictions?
  - International graduates are anxious to get into the program – Connectors need to understand this
  - International graduates need to make connections in the community so that they will stay in the area – and they are supported by employers to do so.
- Local graduates have higher unemployment rates
  - They have never used the program in the past – coming to us now
- There is a big focus on NEW Connectors
  - New excitement, new growth, new sectors
  - Also ensures that established Connectors don't get fatigued, overexerted, or uninterested
- Connector Program needs to be highly responsive and reactive (i.e., stay alert to changes)
- How do we respond to the never-ending supply of Connectees?
  - Look for the right Connectors to improve connections to the community
  - Social media, personal connections, other programs that complement and strengthen the Connector Program
  - Does not have to be a perfect match between Connectee-Connector
  - Explore a Connector's extended networks
  - Monitor Connector as much as Connectee
- What about the Connectees for whom you cannot find matches?
  - 3 types of Connectees
    - 1. No issues, leading the way
    - 2. They have experience but no networks
    - 3. No experience or networks, and lack of enthusiasm

- How to inform Connectee that you cannot find them a Connector (since there is such a lineup of Connectees)?
  - Do intake and assess
  - If not ready... Group networking events, workshops
  - Set expectations before events/meetings
  - Protect organizational reputation and well-being of Connector
  - Give work for Connectees to do before they come back
- Tip: Encourage potential future Connectees to return after researching the Canadian context of their desired field or career path, or assign "homework" to help them get up to speed!
- Member success - action: Hosting targeted meet-and-greet events in specific fields to connect with individuals who are more likely to offer valuable support.
- Member success - before event: Host a quick 15 to 30-minute meetup with Connectors and Connectees to outline the event, clarify and set expectations.

### ***Labour Market Trend Action-Based Recommendations***

**Trend:** International graduates will be eager to enter the labor market.

**Action:** Employers should adjust their hiring strategies to target this group.

**Trend:** Local graduates face higher unemployment rates than before.

**Action:** They are increasingly seeking support from the NCP.

**Trend:** Newcomers want meaningful careers in their new communities.

**Action:** Focus on connecting them to local job opportunities before they move to larger cities.

**Trend:** Current political shifts, including reduced immigration levels and the upcoming 2025 federal election, may impact our work.

**Action:** Be adaptable and resilient - focus on what's within your control. The NCP has navigated numerous changes and is still here!

**Trend:** With limited staff or resources, focusing on high-interest, high-value opportunities is essential.

**Action:** Prioritize sectors that are growing in your labor market (e.g., Cleantech, Oceans) and stay focused on key targets to prevent burnout.

***Reminder: Not all who are interested are ready to integrate into the program.***

## **Session #2: Connector Best Practises**

We held a fishbowl discussion where Halifax, Cape Breton, Toronto, Moncton, Fredericton all chatted about Connector Engagement and answered the following questions:

- What is your approach to connector engagement?
- How do you support Connectors to do the work they do?
- What have you experienced as a challenge to engaging with Connectors?
- What has been most successful in your Connector Engagement strategy?

### **What is your approach to Connector Engagement?**

- Build a community by celebrating Connectors. This boosts program awareness, showcases engagement and impact, and honours volunteers. Create a #IAmAConnector sign for photos, promotion, and visibility.
- Keep the frequency of your engagement with Connectors light (chats and emails) – this should be a key focus
- Build personal connections – share what you do as part of the program
- Allow them to relax
- Connectors often think it is a more extensive mentorship – reassure them it is a short personal meeting to make meaningful connections and help them share their legacy and experience with Connectees
- Problem is usually finding Connectors not Connectees
- Goal is for connections and eventually jobs for Connectees
- Things happen: Connectors become Connectees – they want to meet your networks as well
- Connectees become Connectors = great success story
  - Stay connected with them, follow up for them to “pay it forward”
  - They know the program firsthand - the struggle, the process, the success
- Coordinators must share and develop their own networks – go to events and actively put themselves out there to expand their networks in the area
- How do you follow up with a Connector after a connection?
  - Survey or call for feedback
- Set expectations for the conversation beforehand
- Tell them about the impact they can make in the community that they can share their skillset and their own connections
- Start the conversation by asking, "What is the legacy you want to leave behind?"—a great way to learn about potential Connector’s interest and foster a strong, ongoing relationship.
- Assure them that it is not a large commitment and that it is not testing them
- Allow emotions and passion to be clear to potential Connectors

- Connectors are usually interested in the program based on coordinators passion for the program and usually want to be involved without having to be asked “Do you want to be a part of it?”
- Meet in person
- Allow them to create meaningful connections with other Connectors
- Connectors will refer you to other Connectors if they feel valued in the community
- Some Connectors will want to know how they can be a better match and how they can strengthen the program

#### How do you support Connectors to do the work they do?

- Understanding that the problem for Connectors is usually a lack of time
- Put Connector’s mind at ease - they can contribute in whatever way they can
- Ask what kind of help or assistance you can provide to support them

Adapting the messaging to address two key questions upfront:

- 1) What's in it for me?
- 2) How much time does this require? And why should I do this?

Fix: Make it clear that this is not mentorship—it's a one-on-one conversation to explore how you can offer connections or referrals. Emphasize that it’s not a big commitment and that it’s perfectly okay if they’re unable to participate. The key is connecting the Connectee with someone in the field, which allows the Connector to give back to their community.

#### Key Activities

- Connector-only events and celebration of Connectors
- Raise awareness of the program through social media
  - Highlighting Connectors in LinkedIn post
  - Share recent achievements of Connectors so that they will want to share and repost
  - Connectors also want exposure/promotion of businesses
  - Personalized messages/posts
- “Coffee with Connectors” or “Build your own Caesar”
  - Drop in - 15 minutes
  - Local coffeeshops, low cost
  - Give out merchandise/gifts/certificates (“proud connector” pins) = recognition and brand awareness

#### What type of strategies do you use to match Connectors?

- Talk to Connector, send them the Connectee profile and skill set
- Golden time - you want matches within the first month

- Ask specific questions to Connectors:
  - Skillsets they look for in a Connectee
  - How many connections they want per year
- Reach out to Connectors 2-3 times per year (but chat with them about how often they want to be matched and try to honor this)
- It does not have to be a perfect match; Connectors have great networks in the community
- Consider the different personalities of Connectors
- Those who are ambitious and attend events are the best ones
- At events, ask what Connectees they liked to help form connections
- When Connectors are unavailable or taking a break:
  - Remove them from emails or list as unavailable

#### Do Connectors ever opt out? Why?

- Yes, usually due to time issues (cannot commit their time)
- High-demand sector; there are many Connectees so Connectors become tired, overwhelmed, or overworked
- Ask if they want to reconnect in a year; things may change
- Try not to close the file completely
- Some may drop out due to exhausting their own connections
- Ask why and see if you can navigate their problem

#### ***Connector Engagement takeaways:***

- Put the Connector's mind at ease—whatever they can contribute will be appreciated.
- Clarify expectations upfront
- Emphasize low commitment
- Focus on personal connections
- Leverage Connectors' strengths
- Provide clear guidelines, offer support, and don't hesitate to send follow-up with reminders—people often need a nudge.

***Connector Strategy Tip 1:*** Keep it simple and direct. When presenting your program, bring your passion into the conversation. Ex: presenting NCP as "We help newcomers find their way by connecting them with local professionals." This sparks interest and engages people emotionally, making them more curious about the program, making it more efficient for recruitment of Connectors versus directly asking them to join.

***Connector Strategy Tip 2:*** Leverage "NCP Alumni" to promote the program. If you're struggling to find Connectors in certain fields (e.g., pharmacy, education), reach out to successful Connectees who have already benefitted from the program. They could be potential

Connectors themselves can help bridge the gap in those areas.

**Connector Strategy Tip 3:** Host Connector-only meetings/events.

**Connector Strategy Tip 4:** Social Media is essential for promotion—organic posts (especially on LinkedIn) are key.

- To encourage Connectors to post on social media (especially LinkedIn), reach out and ask them to share the pictures.
- Consistent follow-ups ensure they share the posts, which in turn provides high-engagement publicity at no cost.
- Benefit: Connectors gain enjoyable exposure, while the program receives the visibility it needs at no extra cost

### **Session #3: Initiatives and Events**

Reflection Questions: What were your most successful initiatives/events in the past year? Why and what could you change?

Below are some initiatives that were discussed during the discussions:

#### **Initiative 1: Social Media Campaign through Organic Media Content**

- During onboarding with Connectors, we took pictures with them (some communities made signs, and the Connectors posed with a sign)
- Posts included Personal details, and the Connectors are asked to repost
- Helps to find new leads for Connectors and spread awareness, and reengage existing Connectors
- It is engaging new content, so it does not get lost/ignored – also high-impact, low cost
- Focusing on personal stories has more impact and reach than regular program promotion on its own.
- When a Connectee is hired or promoted, we should post about it and mention the Connector. This helps get more shares and engagement.

#### **Initiative 2: “Friendship” Cafe Monthly networking event**

- Invite Connectors, Connectees, and guests
- Attracts community organizations and creates better engagement in the community
- Use this event to develop a database to track all potential and existing organizations
- Invite spouses, friends, and other people within their networks
- You could make this social, with different coloured name tags, and have your connectors bring friends.
- You might also be able to use this to match your previously unmatched Connectees.



### Initiative 3: Job Fair

- 35-40 employers / 300-400 people / many job seekers.
- Connector booth to talk to employers on the spot = usually gather 10-20 new Connectors at each session
- Allows you to sign up right away = no delay, no waiting for a follow up – make sure to have a tablet or laptop so people can directly signup.
- Sign forms: to maximize efficiency, creating only one form for multiple activities (i.e. series of workshops) will save time and create a bigger distribution list.

### Initiative 4: Guest Speaker (with Networking afterwards)

- Invite a Connector to be a guest speaker
- Send invites to relevant Connectees
- After the talk, 20-minute sessions with Connectees
- Possibility to hold it virtually if you have several people to help run the event
- This works best if you choose a particular field to contribute to discussion and share knowledge of an industry
  - Instead of 1:1 model, it is 10 clients and 1 Connector
  - It is easier for the Connector to do in one session, less of a time commitment and less individual meetings – Basically “speed connecting”
- You could also accomplish a targeted session without a guest speaker.
- The week before, share Connectee information with Connectors

### Initiative 5: Informal Networking Activities

- Unique team building activity for a group (ex: hike)
- Gives people chance to connect on a different level and network informally
- Food and drinks are always useful to boost activity attendance
- When possible: keep it fun! Events where people connect on a deeper level are ones that help networking and retention.
- Meeting at a local place and having a cultural experience.
- Helps build confidence and networking skills in a single event
- Could also meet at a local park or other place (even make it a barbecue) – make it family friendly too

### Initiative 6: Workshop based events

- A number of organizations held various workshops.
  - One held a three-part event, ending with job fair. They offered two workshops beforehand, to help Connectees prepare for networking success (ex: CV writing workshops).
  - Another runs a regular workshop combined with a Speed Networking session. In the morning, they hold information sessions where Connectees learn how to

approach an employer and how to pitch themselves. In the afternoon they meet employers and Connectors and apply the information learned in the morning session.

- 6-Week Summer Event – 3 Sessions (every 2 weeks), called Elevate Your IT Career. Session 1: a resume workshop with a guest speaker, Session 2: a networking workshop with a small tech expo, Session 3: a full-scale networking event.
- Work with partners or government, and hold sessions specific to jobs in those areas
- Afternoon events need few months to prepare (70-100 people)
- Workplace readiness programming. For example, a 4-week pre-employment training program
  - Connectees can ask questions about networking, resumes, elevator pitches, cover letters, follow-ups after interview, etc.
- Always adapt communications based on targeted group (emails, direct message, social media, QR code sign-up, etc.)

#### Initiative 7: Mini-tennis tournament, networking and connecting

- One in the fall and one in the summer at a tennis club – could be done with any sport!
- Family event with children and adult teams (kids v kids, Connectors v Connectees)
- Goal: boosts retention, community engagement, and helps Connectees network for future employment.
- Bonus: helps local tennis club to get more clients, boosts local partnerships
- 30-minute tennis workshop, 45 minutes of tennis, followed by 2-3 hours of social-networking

#### Initiative 8: Speed Networking

- Can be done with any number – sometimes Connectees will have to double up
- Meet with Connectees to prepare them for speed networking to get the best results. This includes small talk, introducing yourself etc.
- Hold 5-6 rounds of chats, and then have informal networking afterward
- Send questions in advance so people can begin conversations quickly

#### Initiative 9: Launchbox at a Local University

- Entrepreneurship program – Build a Business
- Through a school, help students find Connectors
- Small business owners have a lot to share with students
- Connectors from different industries, for wider reach

### Initiative 10: Panels

- Super Connector Panel where Connectees ask questions about resume writing and interviews
  - 6 Connectors were on the panel, and there was so much engagement.
- Panels could also focus on job transitioning and transferrable skills

**You could also hold multiple events with one unifying theme, for example  
“Super Connectors”**

### ***Key takeaways from Initiatives and Events Discussion:***

- Logistics are absolutely necessary and should be taken seriously.
- Understanding your audience is key to success – think about your audience for your marketing, event location, and what you want to achieve from the activity
- Knowing how to show the value of your event to both parties (Connectors and Connectees) is important for success
- Connecting Connectees to resources – making sure they have access to everything they will need
- Taking the unease and anxiety out of networking– give Connectees the opportunity to prepare and practice
- Having adequate support from management helps increase the success of an event
- Always give a survey and ask for feedback
- Debrief after event with everyone who helped organize

### **Session #4 (A): Pitching the Program**

How do you pitch the program to Connectors and Connectees? And how do you pivot if it's not working?

***Key Takeaway: “For Connectees – Touch their brain; For Connectors- touch their heart”***

When pitching the program, always mention the following for Connectors:

- It's a win-win for you and the Connectee
- You can give back to your community and help build it too!
- Building your own professional network, and creating meaningful connections
- It gives you access to great talent
- You can meet people looking for careers not just jobs
- It's a low time commitment – and there is no contract
- The program, and the time you give it is very flexible depending on their needs and wants
- You don't know where the connection will take you, and how you might benefit from it moving forward

- Manage and explain expectations of the program
  - Be clear that there is no expectation of offering a job to this person, or finding them a job
- Make sure to have flexible messaging depending on the industry – adapt as needed based on your conversation
- Think about your legacy that you are leaving behind – and the successes you can create
  - Recognition is also important – mention events and social media
- DisruptHR events are great events to bring on new Connectors and pitch the program
- Sense of community belonging within the Connector Community. If you can get the movement going, you can get people feeling FOMO
- Define the value proposition, which will be different for every Connector – so listen to them while you are talking
- You might mention “this is why I thought you would be a great Connector” to bring psychology into the discussion

#### For Connectees:

- Tell them that they will always need a guide, and this opens doors
- Building your own professional network, and creating meaningful connections
- Helping find their community
- At best the program helps you find a job, and at worst, it’s a very insightful conversation
- You can leverage the connection, and you never know where it might take you
- If you are looking for a career, this is the place to learn

#### Refining the Pitch when it doesn’t seem to be landing:

- Mention it is part of a National Program, and people across the country are involved
- Don’t “rebut” their issues, ask how you can accommodate them
- Acknowledge their hesitations and try as much as possible to work around them
- Make sure to put all their issues in notes on their account so you remember, and can offer top notch service
- Ultimately, don’t push – you can mention other programs your organization has to keep them engaged, or get them involved in other ways
- Come from a space of curiosity- ask questions, be open to the conversation
- It’s up to you to manage expectations that you are laying out.
- If it fails, reach out again in six months to see if they would be open to another chat

### **Session #4 (B): Making the Match**

#### Best Practises

- Sometimes it is as simple as asking the Connectee for their thoughts (however, it’s important to not overpromise, or create expectations) – not for specific people, but for options

- Know which people, fields, and industries are in demand
- Coordinators know best – trust your instincts and have fun with it!
- Sometimes, this gives you a good impetus to reach out to someone specifically in an industry, or at a certain company
- Use personal interests as ways to make a more meaningful match
- Use organizations that are hiring
- Recognize the importance of transferrable skills and how they can be beneficial in making matches
- Manage expectations – it usually isn't a perfect match
- Use a good, reliable tracking system
- Know your Connectors, but also know their networks
- Ask Connectees for a customized resume
- Make sure you give the Connectees prep work to prepare for their meeting to increase the chance of success
- Give responsibility to the Connectee – ultimately, they make the match successful

#### What to do with Niche Industries?

- Let Connectees know the timelines might be longer, and they should be patient
- You may need to expand beyond direct matches to find people (i.e. in healthcare, expanding to office jobs that are more distantly related)
- Have back up plans!
- Really ensure you understand their transferrable skills
- Have Universal Connectors who simply have a huge network – you can rely on them to connect people who are otherwise hard to connect
- You could make an event with other partners as well, and invite others to create more “bang for the buck”
- Build upon previous Connectee success in that particular field
- Reach out to other organizations in that field – develop relationships with industry associations.
- Go to organizations websites and try to reach out (or go on LinkedIn)
- Hold booths at their events or visit their booths at events.
- Engage with governmental programs such as CASTL Elevate that work in niche industries to help engage Connectees
- Direct Connectees to other organizations if you cannot help them
- Find one Connector, and they'll find you someone else, or at least you'll have name recognition
- Social Media call outs can lead to surprising results
- Use your own networks to find events where you can meet people

### Matching Timelines

- Really depends on how many Connectors you have – but never make strict timelines, and never guarantee a timeline (try to aim for 2-6 weeks)
- Be clear about the process to avoid setting unfair expectations (for yourself too!)
- Engage Connectees while they wait by letting them know about other networking opportunities and events to build their network and skillsets in the meantime

### Ghosting

- Reach out 2-3 times for Connectors (e.g. Email, LinkedIn, Call)
- Try following up on other platforms in case your message has gone to Spam
- Have another coordinator or someone from your organization reach out, for name recognition or to get around the firewall
- Don't take it personally, hustle for other Connectors in the industry/organization
- Use the phone! Don't hesitate to call
- Try not to burn bridges with your Connectors
- If Connectees Ghost you, they may not be ready for the program. It shows a lack of interest and motivation

### ***Key takeaways from Making the Match Discussion:***

- Watch expectations around timelines
- It's never a perfect match – so be open to new possibilities
- Events and partnerships can make matching easier – especially with hard to match industries or connectees

### **Session # 5: Program Improvement Roundtables**

We spent some time on day two of the Learning Exchange discussing various ways to improve the program and ensure its sustainability into the future. Here are some of the discussions – there are no key takeaways, just important points under each heading.

#### Coordinator Continuity

- Toolkit & Best Practices: Create a toolkit that shares key best practices for new coordinators.
- Centralized Data Management: Ensure data is well-organized, centralized, and easily accessible.
- Onboarding & Training: Provide effective onboarding and training and organize meetings with key team members to understand roles and responsibilities.
- One-on-one meetings between coordinators and their Connectors.
- Contact List with Prioritization: Maintain a contact list with clear notes of responsibilities, current engagements, and priority contacts.
- Training Manual: Develop a comprehensive training manual in a Q&A format.

- Troubleshooting manual focused with problem and solution sections
- Templates for events and logistics planning.
- Hold team meetings to discuss difficult-to-match cases.
- Share contacts across teams when potential matches arise
- Train coordinators on writing concise and useful notes for future reference.
- Involve managers in overseeing program operations and processes.
- Delegate tasks where possible to limit redundancy and ensure continuity during staff turnover.
- Designate a manager as the spokesperson for the program to reduce the impact of turnover.

### Best Practises for Program Flow

- Partner with employment services for training and workshops, join their events – or referring Connectees to them if needs be
- Stay involved and active in the community. Collaboration will help ensure regular activities and bigger events more forward effectively
- Know your Connectors and Connectees and maintain strong relationships – especially with Connectors
- Host events to meet new Connectors (follow up on referrals)
- Preparation and setting expectations for both Connectors and Connectees
- Good platform for tracking data (Excel, HubSpot, NCP system)
- Calendar reminders to follow up
- Communication between coordinators to find Connectors – Team meetings!
- Discuss transferrable skills with Connectees (i.e., their willingness to consider alternate options, fields, and careers)
- Ensure Connectees are ready professionally, emotionally, for connections
- Be careful about who you admit into the program – if they aren't ready, send them elsewhere

### What are people Reporting/Tracking and why?

- Connectees, Connectors, Connections, Jobs Found, Connection Day
- But also, interesting to track:
  - Overall satisfaction with the program
  - Ratio of industries – checked with labour market information
  - Ratio of Connectees : Connectors
  - Education and Skillset of Connectees
    - For Labour Market Impact report – we can also use it for other programs because it tells us what we are looking for in future connectors
  - Readiness for program (yes/no/maybe)
  - Immigration status

- Industry type (to find new connectors OR to stop looking at that specific area or industry)
- “Type of Connectee” aka what Stream they are in

#### Who are you partnering with?

- Provincial and federal government IRCC program and service providers
- Universities
- Investors, CBDC, BDC, Invest NS, community sector councils
- Employment service providers
- Local industries, businesses, trades
- Multicultural Associations
- Settlement Services
- Chambers of Commerce
- Incubators and Accelerators

#### Session #6: Connectee Engagement

This session focused on how to ensure Connectees stay engaged throughout the process, and importantly, after their connections so they could be brought on as Connectors at a later date.

#### What are the best practises to help a Connectee be successful?

- Partnerships with other organizations helps your Connectees be successful
- Using various tools provided by organizations like mock interviews, resume building, one-on-one coaching and networking events can help to engage Connectees
- Making the right introduction when matching – country, industry and background is key
- The Four Ps of Connectees
  - **Preparation:** Be ready for every step—whether it's meetings, opportunities, or networking.
  - **Participation:** Stay actively engaged and involved throughout the program to maximize your opportunities.
  - **Patience:** Understand that success takes time, and your journey may evolve in unexpected ways.
  - **Positive:** Keep a good attitude!
- Letting Connectees know that ownership of their experience is important, and gratitude goes a long way
- Ensure they know what Canadian networking is
- Encourage them to allow personal depth into their conversations
- A willingness to understand the Canadian market, and a commitment to the process
- Genuinely following up with their connections!
- Maintaining connections with their Connectors and networks
- Encouraging Connectees to volunteer



- Flexibility to share beyond the program
- Informal connections can be crucial
- Pitch Connectee well to Connectors – tailored to both parties' needs
- Connectees with great potential are: Eager, active, detail-oriented, good energy, motivated, patient, persistent, committed to the process, have a willing to learn
- Considering personal values and social preferences during matching process
- Research before meeting the Connector (i.e., “social stalking”)
- Being professional and staying calm (not letting the stress overwhelm you emotionally)
- Arming Connectees with tool and tricks and do’s and don’ts
- Help relieve stress before the interview
- Stay in touch with them/follow up, “every connection is a lead”
- Connectee debrief
- Survey after connection
- Aftercare program (every 3 months)

### ***Key Takeaways: The Connectee’s 4 P’s***

## **Session #7: Brainstorming the Future and Final Debrief**

We discussed three themes for sustainability of the program into the future. Here is an overview of the discussion:

### **Social Media:**

- Using good hashtags (e.g. #Connector, #IamaConnector, #ProudConnector)
- Which platforms to reach Connectors and Connectees?
  - LinkedIn – engagement, conversations, stay connected
  - Facebook (Meta) – for reach, but less professional
  - Instagram – video content and reels, sharing success stories and testimonials, share events
  - YouTube – promote Connectors, Webinars, for sharing support tools and resources, podcasts
  - X/Twitter - irrelevant
  - TikTok – privacy concerns. Should not be used with vulnerable people.
- How do you engage potential Connectors on social media?
  - LinkedIn – direct messages
    - But before direct messaging, engage with their posts and actions on LinkedIn, so they can know who you are, and you can be at least somewhat familiar to them
  - Tagging – better for established Connectors, may be too public for potential Connectors

- Commenting and interacting with posts is a great way to engage with people, and raise your brand awareness
- What is the best time to post and how frequently?
  - Meta – 3 times per week
  - LinkedIn – 3-4 times per week (~11:30 am is a peak time, lunch break)
- Monitor the analytics on the platform to figure out what works
- Different communities/demographics will respond to different content
- Asking meaningful questions to the community
- Posting on special days (i.e., holiday)
  - However, being cautious not to miss any
- End posts with questions to get responses
  - I.e. What was your educational background, and where do you work now?
- Use polls
- Selfies in community and at events to spread awareness
- Posts leading up to events
- Google ad grant program
  - 10,000USD/month for ads for non-profit organizations
  - TechSoup will help you access programs and apps at a lower cost
- Explore nonprofit rates for systems like HubSpot to ensure the database remains active even with limited funding.

#### Program Funding:

- How to convince people and sponsors to invest in the program?
  - In-kind sponsorship – networking event
  - Corporate Social Responsibility! Use that to convince larger organizations
- Monetary sponsors
  - Sell booths at events or marketplaces
  - Sell Ad spaces
- Networking sessions
  - Use partners or investors for space
  - Public Libraries are usually free or very low cost
- Partnerships with employment services
- Sponsor events to promote company and reach
- Silent auctions
- Bank grants
- Private funding
  - RBC foundation,
  - TD funding for newcomer integration
  - Canadian Tire Foundation
- Partnership with universities and colleges
  - Projects can be done by students (internships, service-learning programs)

### Program Growth:

- Recommend Connectees and Connectors to other Coordinators across Canada
- New Connector programs in new areas e.g., Currently, there is no team in Vancouver - there is a lot of opportunity in this area as it is a main landing spot – it needs a host team (connect Robyn and Alida with anyone you know!)
- Meeting and establishing connections with other coordinators – cross collaboration and reaching out/staying in contact post-learning exchange
- Virtual events
  - Inter-province events between teams
    - This helps find funding for projects that could work in similar regions, helps make funding go further

### Final Debrief:

- What else could we cover next time?
  - Bad Connectee experiences – steps to deal with it
    - It is not your fault if you cannot find Connectee a match they may not be ready
    - Tell them what to work on
    - Protect Connector's time and reputation of the program (non-prepared Connectee can torpedo relationship with the Connector quickly)
- Spreading awareness that the NCP is a national program
- Sharing Connector connections across Canada. This lets the Connectors see how extensive the program is and gives validity to the program
- An opportunity for national company partnerships
- Offering webinars could help rural groups get a larger reach, less strain on small teams and budgets. Different programs across the country could take turns hosting workshops
- Learning session, not a connectee/connector session
  - There is potential to do this on a national scale
- Events to engage Connectors across country hosted by different communities
  - Allows for national networks
    - E.g., The Valley (NS) could host a workshop with a Connector but give access across Canada

Thank you to all Coordinators who came to the Learning Exchange and offered their knowledge, information and time. You all made the experience that much richer. For those who were unable to make it, we hope this summary document offers you information to help you in your role!