

# WHAT WORKS:

Career-building strategies for people from diverse groups  
**A COUNSELLOR RESOURCE**

## Introduction

<b>About What Works</b> .....	1
<b>Client-Driven, Strength-Based Approach</b> .....	1
<b>Multicultural Counselling Approach</b> .....	2
Counsellors' personal beliefs .....	2
Knowledge of other world views .....	2
Counselling skills .....	2
<b>Structure of What Works</b> .....	3
Chapter sections .....	3
<b>How to Use This Resource</b> .....	3
As a tool for reflection .....	3
As an aid in client interaction .....	3
As a way to build hope .....	4
<b>In Conclusion</b> .....	4
<b>Endnotes</b> .....	4

This is one of 13 chapters of an online resource for counsellors titled *What Works: Career-building strategies for people from diverse groups*. Visit [alis.alberta.ca/publications](http://alis.alberta.ca/publications) to view, download or print other chapters.

For copyright information, contact:  
Alberta Employment and Immigration  
Career and Workplace Resources  
Telephone: 780-422-1794  
Fax: 780-422-5319  
Email: [info@alis.gov.ab.ca](mailto:info@alis.gov.ab.ca)

© 1999, 2000, 2006, 2010, Government of Alberta,  
Alberta Employment and Immigration

This material may be used, reproduced, stored or transmitted for non-commercial purposes. However, Crown copyright is to be acknowledged. It is not to be used, reproduced, stored or transmitted for commercial purposes without written permission from the Government of Alberta, Alberta Employment and Immigration. This publication is not for resale unless licensed with Government of Alberta, Alberta Employment and Immigration. Every reasonable effort has been made to identify the owners of copyright material reproduced in this publication and to comply with Canadian copyright law. The publisher would welcome any information regarding errors or omissions.

Government of Alberta, Alberta Employment and Immigration publications may contain or reference publications, trademark, patent or copyright held by third parties (“third party material”), identified with a credit to the source. This does not grant the user a licence or right to that third party material. Users who wish to reproduce any third party material in this publication should seek permission from that third party.

Information in this publication was accurate, to the best of our knowledge, at the time of printing. However, legislation, labour market information, websites and programs are subject to change, and we encourage you to confirm with additional sources of information when making career, education, employment and business decisions.

The Province of Alberta is working in partnership with the Government of Canada to provide jointly funded employment support programs and services.

**ISBN 978-0-7785-8836-8**

This professional resource is available online only.

**Photos on the front cover are for illustrative purposes only. They are not actual photos of any individuals mentioned.**

## About *What Works*

This is the fourth edition of *What Works: Career-building strategies for people from diverse groups*, a guide for career counsellors in their work with diverse populations. This edition is available as an online resource to view, download or print by chapter.

Seasoned counsellors and the literature remind us that career counselling is a vibrant and growing discipline. Indeed, the current climate of “career development growth and solidity” demonstrates that career counselling is a “strong cousin” among counselling specializations.<sup>1</sup> Career counselling is a complex discipline, building on the competencies and craft of counselling: “...good career counsellors are, without exception, first and foremost skilled counsellors.”<sup>2</sup>

*What Works* is a multidimensional, interdisciplinary resource with multiple views about helping people from diverse groups manage change and recognize their potential. *What Works* summarizes research findings and the expertise of those writing books and articles. *What Works* draws upon the experience of people with a variety of backgrounds. Professionals in career development and related fields were asked how they help clients recognize and build on their strengths. They were asked what ideas they would like to pass along to other counsellors.

In this resource, the term *counsellor* refers to career educator, career advisor or career practitioner.

## Client-Driven, Strength-Based Approach

*What Works* has a client-driven, strength-based approach. Client-driven implies client ownership in the career-building process. A strength-based approach emphasizes clients’ competencies, capacities and resources, both internal and external, including family, community and environment.

### Taking time to know clients

“To help clients build on their strengths, you need to know their strengths, and that means taking time to get to know them.”

Brian Mader

Alberta Employment and Immigration

The theoretical basis of the strength-based approach cannot be attributed to any one source. Rather, it represents a combination of approaches that includes

- positive psychology that focuses on work, such as Martin Seligman’s signature strengths<sup>3</sup>
- resiliency strategies that recognize the ability of people to achieve positive outcomes and overcome challenges, barriers and negative circumstances<sup>4</sup>
- hope-focused counselling that helps clients access their hope, and thus facilitates the career-building process<sup>5</sup>

An effective strength-based approach involves asking questions to prompt client identification of strengths. Because self-esteem and self-confidence are, in many cases, challenging to the client groups featured in *What Works*, asking the following questions may be helpful:

- *Survival questions.* Given what you have gone through in your life, how have you managed to survive so far?
- *Support questions.* What people have given you special understanding, support, guidance?
- *Possibility questions.* What are your hopes, visions, aspirations?
- *Esteem questions.* When people say good things about you, what are they likely to say?
- *Exception questions.* When things were going well in your life, what was different?<sup>6</sup>

These questions can be woven throughout the career-building process to help clients focus on the positive aspects of their lives as they move forward.

# Multicultural Counselling Approach

Because the diverse groups featured in the *What Works* chapters represent minorities of the dominant population, it is useful to draw from multicultural counselling theory. This approach identifies the importance of counsellor competence in three dimensions: counsellor's self-awareness, knowledge of other world views and counselling skills.<sup>7</sup>

## Counsellors' personal beliefs

Culturally aware counsellors focus on their own belief system by

- examining their own assumptions on human behaviour, values, biases, preconceived notions and personal limitations
- becoming aware of their own world view
- understanding how their own cultural experiences relate to their beliefs and attitudes
- examining how their own world view impacts their interactions with clients

In addition, counsellors need to be aware that their cultural background may, at times, result in their beliefs and world views contrasting with those of their clients. The process of professional reflection about personal culture supports the development of self-awareness, identified as a core competency in the domain of multicultural counselling.<sup>8</sup>

## Knowledge of other world views

Culturally aware counsellors broaden their own world view by

- attempting to understand the world view of culturally different clients without making negative judgments
- respecting and appreciating the world views of culturally different clients
- accepting client world views as a legitimate perspective

There are many ways to gain knowledge of other world views. Counsellors may

- be open to clients and learn from them
- talk to career counsellors who are experienced in the field
- attend workshops or training events
- seek out and learn from resources in the community
- read books, journal articles and information on websites<sup>9</sup>

## Counselling skills

Culturally aware counsellors seek skill development by

- practising appropriate, relevant and sensitive intervention strategies and skills
- acknowledging the cultural values and life experiences of clients
- incorporating the values of clients into the counselling process, as appropriate<sup>10</sup>

### Building client relationships

"Put clients first, work collaboratively, be respectful, build trust and don't judge."

Janet Hammel

Alberta Employment and Immigration

The self-awareness, knowledge and skills developed in this approach give counsellors the skills that help them become more effective with diverse clients from under-represented populations.

## Structure of *What Works*

Each *What Works* chapter focuses on a specific population:

- Aboriginal Peoples
- Ex-Offenders
- Gender
- Immigrants
- Older Workers
- Persons with Developmental Disabilities
- Persons with Learning Disabilities
- Persons with Low Income
- Persons with Mental Health Disabilities
- Persons with Physical and Neurological Disabilities
- Sexual Minorities
- Youth

You may be working with groups not represented here. Many of your clients could likely claim membership in more than one group. It is important to remember that each person is an individual with unique talents and strengths. Indeed, there is as much diversity throughout one of the groups represented as there is across the continuum of diversity.

### Chapter sections

Each chapter includes the following sections:

#### Statistics

- provides statistics on the trends of this client group

#### Context

- defines terminology
- identifies issues and characteristics for this population
- includes challenges that clients may face
- includes, in some chapters, history and legislation related to the population

#### Responding to Challenges: Strategies and Practices

- includes suggested approaches to address challenges faced by clients
- includes tips and strategies provided by current practitioners and theorists

#### Focusing on Employment

- includes suggestions for helping clients move toward meaningful employment

#### In Conclusion

- provides additional considerations for counsellors

#### Endnotes

- identifies the sources of theories, studies, statistics and quotes
- assists with further research (hyperlinks included)

## How to Use This Resource

### As a tool for reflection

*What Works* may provoke readers to reflect on beliefs, assumptions and accepted ways of assisting people from diverse populations and backgrounds. The theories and practices cited in *What Works* may also provide additional food for thought and inspire you to try new career counselling approaches or coaching practices.

### As an aid in client interaction

In keeping with a client-centred, strength-based focus, the following are some suggestions for interacting with clients:

- Clients are the very best resource about themselves. Go to them first for clarification and information.
- It is important to work collaboratively with people. This helps ensure the process is always about them and they always know what is happening.

It is assumed that the strategies described in this resource will be used over time and in a manner that builds on a base of effective career counselling skills.

## As a way to build hope

“One of our first tasks as counsellors is to instill a sense of vision or hope in our clients.<sup>11</sup> The work of Martin Seligman<sup>12</sup> and H. B. Gelatt,<sup>13</sup> among many others, points out the momentum-building forces of optimism and hope. Pessimism and despair cannot support people as they try to make changes in their work and lives. Optimism, hope and a positive world view certainly can.

Hope-focused counselling<sup>14</sup> encourages counsellors to intentionally look for and help clients explore hope. The process of facilitating clients’ discovery of their own hope can be woven through counselling interactions, providing extra energy and support to help clients move forward.

## In Conclusion

It is important to build and maintain relationships in your community and within your discipline. A key message in *What Works* is to consider clients’ needs in a holistic manner. Knowledge of other community agencies and their mandates can help you make informed referrals, so that clients get the help they need to address basic needs, access in-depth counselling or acquire additional help. Knowledge of community resources can also benefit your professional development. Building a supportive professional network is another way to enable you to continue to grow and share your expertise.

While the career development strategies and practices in this publication address a wide range of circumstances and situations, there are limitations in all possibilities. *What Works* is designed to be a career counselling reference and does not attempt to address underlying behavioural, learning or medical issues. Practitioners are advised to refer individuals to experts who can address issues beyond their scope of career counselling.

This resource may help you continue to apply, personalize and extend your skills and knowledge. *What Works* is just the starting point from which you are encouraged to add relevant articles and ideas regarding the diverse populations you choose to learn more about.

## Endnotes

1. Lynne Bezanson, *The Career Counsellor: A Publication of the Canadian Career Development Foundation* (January 1999).
2. Kris Magnusson, *Career Counselling Techniques* (Edmonton, AB: Life-Role Development Group, 1992), 5.
3. Martin E. P. Seligman, *Authentic Happiness* (New York, NY: The Free Press, 2002).
4. Rory R. Rickwood, Jillian Roberts, Suzanne Batten, Anne Marshall and Kendra Massie, “Empowering High-Risk Clients to Attain a Better Quality of Life: A Career Resiliency Framework,” *Journal of Employment Counselling*, 41 (September 2004): 98–104, ERIC EJ699197, eric.ed.gov (accessed October 20, 2009).
5. Audrey Stechynsky, *The Role of Hope in Career Counselling* (1999), ualberta.ca/hope/literature/goodreading/Stechynsky.pdf (accessed October 20, 2009).
6. Adapted from Rebecca Deguara, “Utilizing a Strengths Perspective in Parole Supervision with Women,” *Forum on Corrections Research* 16:1 (2004), csc-scc.gc.ca/text/pblct/forum/vol16no1/v16-a18-eng.shtml (accessed November 13, 2009).
7. Derald Wing Sue, et al., *Multicultural Counselling Competencies* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1998).
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. Kris Magnusson, *Career Counselling Techniques* (Edmonton, AB: Life-Role Development Group, 1992), 3.
12. Martin Seligman, *Authentic Happiness* (New York, NY: The Free Press, 2002).
13. H. B. Gelatt, “The Process of Illumination: Looking at Your Worldview,” *NATCON Papers* (2002), contactpoint.ca/natcon-conat/2002/pdf/pdf-02-19.pdf (accessed October 20, 2009).
14. For more information on hope-based counselling, see the Hope Foundation of Alberta at ualberta.ca/hope.