

EMPLOYMENT SERVICE TRANSFORMATION (EST)

Input from stakeholders in the
Far Northeast Training Board (FNETB) region

February 2022





FAR NORTHEAST TRAINING BOARD (FNETB)
your local labour market planning network

COMMISSION DE FORMATION DU NORD-EST (CFNE)
votre réseau local de planification du marché du travail

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TABLE OF CONTENT

Introduction	4
Acknowledgements	4
Background	5
What does it mean for our region?	7
The process	7
Summary of input provided by stakeholders	9
Unique needs and complexities that must be considered	9
Recommendation to help guide the development and implementation	11
Conclusion	13
Appendix A – Participants	14
Appendix B - Partners	16
Appendix C – Maps re: suggested NE Ontario sub-regions	17

EMPLOYMENT SERVICE TRANSFORMATION (EST) IN THE FAR NORTHEAST TRAINING BOARD REGION (FNETB)

INTRODUCTION:

In anticipation of the upcoming Employment Service Transformation which is scheduled to be implemented in Northeastern Ontario in 2023, the Far Northeast Training Board organized a two-part facilitated discussion on February 17, 2022. An online survey was also available between February 2 and 28 to collect additional information from stakeholders.

The goal of the discussion which was included on the agenda of the two-day virtual Working Together Conference was to collect input from local stakeholders on what the proposed transformation could mean for the communities within the area serviced by the FNETB. More specifically, the goal was to provide an opportunity for local stakeholders to:

- Highlight the unique and complex makeup of this region of Northeastern Ontario and what they believe must be factored into system design and service delivery planning in this region, and the challenges and opportunities that those complexities might entail.
- Identify suggestions for ensuring a successful implementation, and a smooth transition during the proposed transformation in this region.

This report provides a summary of the input collected from the 102 stakeholders who participated in the facilitated discussions on February 17th, as well as the 11 who provided their input via the online survey.

Collectively, participating stakeholders represent 49 different organizations, Appendix A provides a list of participating organizations. Participants were also representative of different communities across the FNETB region: Chapleau (6), Cochrane/Iroquois Falls (15), Hearst (6), Kapuskasing (6), Kirkland Lake (8), Temiskaming Shores (12), Timmins (24), Other communities outside of the FNETB region (24).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

The Far Northeast Training Board would like to thank the local stakeholders who participated in this important exercise. We also acknowledge that this is a starting point and that further outreach and consultation will be required to ensure that the unique realities of this region are considered during the employment service transformation planning and transition.

BACKGROUND:

On February 12, 2019, the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities announced plans to transform employment services to ensure job seekers and businesses are provided with the best possible employment services. The new model is scheduled to be launched in Northeastern Ontario in 2023.

In the new service delivery model, the ministry will not have a direct relationship with service providers (as it currently does). Instead, the ministry will have a direct relationship with service system managers (SSM), which will in turn manage relationships with individual service providers in their catchment area(s).



Currently, three employment services systems operate concurrently in Ontario:

Employment Ontario (EO) <i>Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development (MLTSD)</i>	Ontario Works Employment Assistance (OW) <i>Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS)</i>	Ontario Disability Support Program Employment Support (ODSP) <i>Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS)</i>
For everyone, including individuals and employers: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Suite of over 30 programs and services delivered by government or third parties.▪ \$1 billion+ invested annually in EO programs and services.▪ Some social assistance clients served through EO.▪ Primarily funded through Federal Labour Market Transfer Agreement.	For unemployed or underemployed people in temporary financial need: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Delivered by Ontario Works delivery partners (municipalities and First Nations and/or contracted third parties).▪ Some clients may be referred to Employment Ontario for direct support in finding employment.▪ Provincially and municipally funded.	For eligible individuals with disabilities: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Delivered by community-based providers, including for-profit and non-profit providers.▪ Provincially funded.



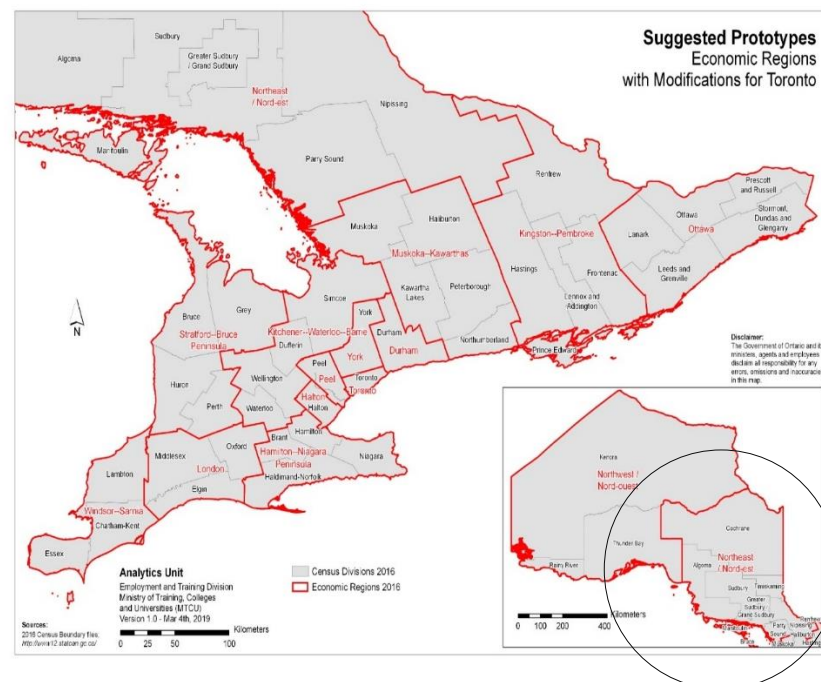
With the proposed service delivery model:

- All clients will be assessed through a common tool co- designed by MLTSD and MCCSS; the tool will be uniform (i.e., the same across all catchment areas), and will be overseen by MLTSD.
- Clients will be divided into segments based on provincially mandated common assessment and receive services targeted to their needs; clients who need greater amounts of service (e.g., persons with disabilities) receive it.
- Clients have access to a range of core employment services, skills training, and specialized services as designed by the SSM.

The ministry is considering using Statistics Canada Economic Regions to establish its service system manager catchment areas, except in higher density areas where Census Division boundaries would be used (see map). Service system managers will be responsible for the delivery of employment services in each catchment area / service zone.

As this map indicates, the proposed SSM for this region encompasses the entire Northeastern Ontario region (circled).

MAP OF SUGGESTED CATCHMENT AREAS



WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR OUR REGION?

In an update released in September 2021, the ministry recognized the uniqueness related to the demographic and geographic complexities of three regions, including Northeastern Ontario.

In the same update, the ministry mentions that roll-out of the Employment System Transformation in this region which is slated for 2023, will be informed through engagement with key stakeholders so that the delivery approach that will be developed will best meet the unique needs of the region.

That is why during the Working Together Conference which focuses on discussing opportunities for improving communication, collaboration, and coordination, the FNETB seized the opportunity to collect input from the 100+ local stakeholders present to inform and support the development of the Employment Service Transformation in this region.

THE PROCESS:

The virtual facilitated discussion took place on February 17 from 8:45 am until noon. Prior to attending the half-day EST discussion, participants received a pre-event document that provided preliminary overview of the proposed transformation, the questions that would be posed during the event, and links to additional information about the EST that is available on the Employment Ontario Partners Gateway (EOPG).

The morning began with an introduction by the facilitator for the event, Lori-Ann Duguay of the People Person HR Solutions who highlighted the purpose of the discussion, shared information on how the morning was going to unfold, the importance of keeping the conversation constructive, and of ensuring that the diverse views and opinions of all were heard.

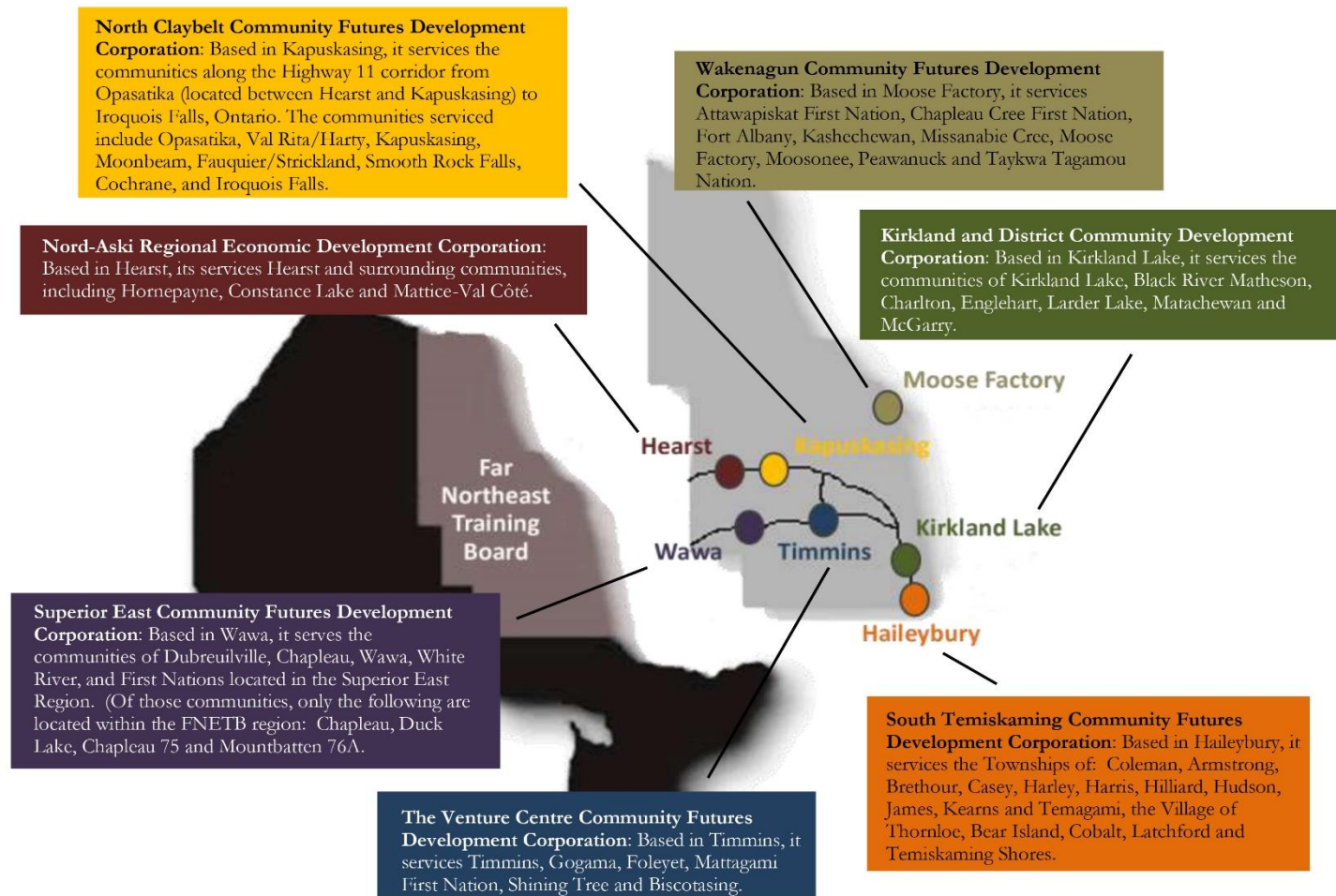
Following the introduction was a presentation by Rob Goodman from the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development. The presentation was intended to provide some context about the Employment Service Transformation.

Attendees were then divided in breakout groups (by community) on two occasions. A moderator was assigned for each breakout group to facilitate discussions, take notes, and report during the plenary sessions. The discussions focused on:

- The unique needs and the complexities that must be factored into the implementation of the employment service transformation in this region.

- The potential opportunities and challenges that the proposed transformation could have on job seekers, on employers, on service providers, and on the communities.
- Suggestions to guide the development and implementation of the Employment Service Transformation in this region.

Note: For the purpose of the exercise, when we refer to 'this region', we are referring to the area of Northeastern Ontario that is serviced by the Far Northeast Training Board (FNETB). As shown on the map below, the FNETB covers a huge portion of Northeastern Ontario. It is also the most Northern portion of the overall Northeastern Ontario region.



SUMMARY OF INPUT PROVIDED BY LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS:

The following pages provide a recap of the response of local stakeholders to the following questions:

1. Based on your knowledge and experience, what unique needs and complexities do you believe must be factored into system design and service delivery planning in this region? What potential challenges and opportunities do those complexities entail?
2. In light of those complexities, what recommendations would you make to help guide the development of the Employment Service Transformation in this region?

As stated earlier, this recap includes the results of the virtual discussions that took place on February 17 as well as the responses to the online survey that was available during the month of February 2022.

UNIQUE NEEDS AND COMPLEXITIES THAT MUST BE TAKEN INTO CONSIDERATION:

- By far the sheer size of the proposed SSM for Northeastern Ontario is the main concern expressed during the discussions about the unique needs and complexities of this region which consists almost entirely of small rural and remote communities. Except for Timmins with a population of just over 40,000 the other 50+ towns, villages, municipalities, townships, and First Nation communities across the FNETB region have populations of less than 10,000.
- Local stakeholders fail to see how one organization can manage the delivery of services and the funding for those services for the massive geographic area that the ministry is suggesting for Northeastern Ontario. Communities across that region have diverse needs. The concern is that we end up with a system that is mostly delivered remotely which does not address the many barriers that exist in many communities, particularly in the smaller rural and most remote regions.
- The existing service providers are aware of the challenges associated with offering much needed employment support services to clients who are spread out in rural areas within a large geography. Having one SSM in the proposed Northeastern Economic Region has local stakeholders worried that the SSMs management and allocation of resources will focus on the larger urban centers to the detriment of smaller remote and isolated communities. As such, they emphasize the need to revisit the proposed plan and to consider more than one SSM for Northeastern Ontario.

- Access to reliable and affordable technology to ensure that local residents have equitable access to online services and resources (or lack thereof in some communities) is another area of concern for local stakeholders. Because of this, many vulnerable and harder to serve clients do not possess a computer or other electronic device and are not tech savvy and/or comfortable with receiving services online. As such, local stakeholders stress the importance of maintaining in person services across this region to ensure a fair and equitable access to services for all residents independently of the community where they reside.
- Local stakeholders express concern about the setting of unrealistic targets for the employment service agencies in light of the make up of this region and its population which has historically had lower educational attainment levels than the rest of the province and consequently clients who need longer-term support and who are best served and more comfortable with personal one-on-one interventions. Therefore, a system that is based largely on online services managed by an organization that is not based in the community will not be conducive to helping those clients achieve their employment goals.
- Ensuring the success of the most vulnerable segments of the local population is also seen as something that needs to be prioritized and available in all communities. Many of the most vulnerable clients need supports for life stabilization such as housing, food security, addictions, etc, and have a longer path to reach employability readiness. Maintaining the local delivery of those services allows the flexibility to provide that support quickly for those critical social and health related supports.
- Access to certain amenities such as housing, public transportation, daycare is limited and, in some cases non-existent in many small rural and isolated communities. This adds a level of complexity and challenge both for employers and for job seekers when it comes to completing interventions that will lead to filling local labour market vacancies. Access to, or the lack thereof of those amenities is therefore also flagged as a potential problem that needs to be considered when establishing targets for local service delivery agencies, and employment outcomes and timelines for clients.
- In addition to the unique and complex challenges mentioned above, local stakeholders emphasize the need to ensure that the SSM is respectful of the cultural make-up of the communities in this region and that through the transformation access to adequate services is maintained for the specific needs of the region's Indigenous and Francophone population.
- The organizations that currently offer employment services across this region are doing it on a cost-recovery basis. Stakeholders express concern with the potential allocation of a contract to a for profit SSM. Given the size of the Northeastern region that is being proposed, they are concerned that a for-profit organization might not see profits in serving the smaller and more remote communities and consequently focus on larger more urban centers.

- Local stakeholders see opportunities for improvements to service delivery and potential savings of time and resources with the proposed employment service transformation. Some even point to how those savings could be put to use to further support clients instead of program management. They are concerned however about potential funding decisions that are based on savings (or profits) which could lead to funding allocations that are based on population density and that as a result the small rural and remote communities that make up this region would not receive their fair share, or the level of funding that they need to offer quality services equitably in all communities.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO HELP GUIDE THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE EMPLOYMENT SERVICE TRANSFORMATION IN THIS REGION:

- The number one recommendation from local stakeholders in this region is to revisit the plan to have just one SSM for all of Northeastern Ontario. Examples cited on how to break up NE Ontario into smaller (yet large enough) sub-regions include the following two options (maps for both are presented in Appendix C).

Workforce Planning Board regions – (4 regions in the Northeast Region):

- Existing network of stakeholders who have a long history of working together to improve local labour market conditions.
- Local labour market information readily available at the community level to inform service planning.
- Manageable size for service planning and delivery.

Census divisions – districts (8 in the Northeast Region)

- Defined region for which labour market information is readily available to inform service planning.
- Manageable size for service planning.
- Existing service delivery capacity (ex: they align with DSSAB regions).

- Local stakeholders suggest that the service providers that will be affected by the change and the existing network of partners be involved in the development and implementation of the employment service transformation for this region, and that their experience, expertise and knowledge of the communities and their complex needs be utilized to inform the delivery of services within the proposed model while ensuring a fair and equitable access to all job seekers and employers independently of the size of the community in which they live. As such local stakeholders suggest the creation of mandatory local service planning tables to guide the planning and transition of the transformation, and to inform the delivery of services once established.

- Beyond representation by existing service providers, local stakeholders suggest that communities have an equal voice and be equitably represented and consulted during the development and implementation of the transformation in this region to ensure that their unique needs are heard and met. Decisions should not be based only on advice from the larger urban centers.
- It is further suggested that employers and job seekers be involved and/or consulted during the development and implementation as users of the services, they would have insight that would help to ensure the delivery of those services aligns with their needs and realities.
- Local stakeholders feel strongly that the SSM for this region must have ties to the region and an understanding of, and respect for the geographic, social, and cultural specificities of this region. As such, they suggest that the region will be best serviced by a SSM that is from the North and that is located within the region that it is mandated to manage.
- Local stakeholders emphasize that the budget allocations, service delivery targets, and client outcomes need to be realistic and reflective of the unique needs of all communities in this region. In the case of this region, that reality means longer interventions with clients, and for many the need for one-on-one interventions in order to address their economic, social, and personal barriers and issues prior to even beginning a conversation about support for employment. Examples of the realities that need to be considered include:
 - small rural and remote communities spread out in a broad geography with limited or no access to technology and as a result many clients without the digital skills and the capacity to receive online services.
 - lack of public transportation to get to and from services and employment.
 - a strong Indigenous and Francophone population with specific cultural needs.
 - a population with lower educational attainment levels than the rest of the province.
 - an increase in the number of clients with multiple barriers to employment (mental health, addictions, housing, food security, etc).
- It is further suggested that the new system be unconventional with service delivery, for example by having specialized workers to deal with and support the 'hard to serve' clients to ensure that they receive services in a timely, client focused, and efficient way and consequently ensure successful employment outcomes in the long-term.
- It is suggested that the same system be developed and used by everyone, including First Nations. At this time, the ministry indicates that services for First Nation communities will not be affected by the transformation. Local stakeholders suggest that by having the same system on and off reserve, the transition is easier when people move around.

- Throughout the discussions and in the survey responses, stakeholders suggest open and transparent communication throughout the development and implementation of the employment service transformation. This suggestion is two-fold. The first part suggests that the ministry keep open lines of communication with local stakeholders as decision are made regarding the employment service transformation and the selection of the SSM for this region. The second relates to the need for the SSM to clearly communicate its intentions and plans for all communities within the region that they are mandated to service.
- Along the same lines, local stakeholders suggest complete transparency about the changes as they unfold, particularly with the service providers in regard to their current positions and whether or not they will be secure. It is further suggested that the transformation be done in increments that are more easily understood by those who need to adopt them. That would allow for a smoother transition if services were affected, if training and upgrading is needed, and if teams need to be shuffled.
- Lastly, local stakeholders indicate that there is no need to complicate the process by starting from scratch when a strong network of service providers and partners is already in place and working successfully. That network needs to be present and involved throughout the employment service transformation planning and transition.

CONCLUSION

The Northeast region is vast and hugely diverse economically, demographically, and socially. There is consensus among the stakeholders who participated in the facilitated discussions and those who provided input via the online survey on the following:

- The proposed Northeastern region is too large for just one SSM.
- The SSM must have ties to, and knowledge of Northeastern Ontario realities.
- The local network of service providers and partners need to be present and involved throughout the employment service transformation planning and transition.
- The unique needs and challenges of the small rural and remote communities must be equally considered.
- A one size fits all model will not work, there needs to be flexibility for regions as complex as Northeastern Ontario.

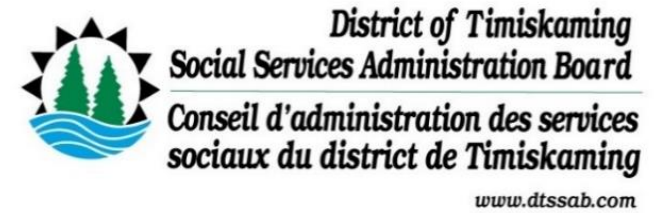
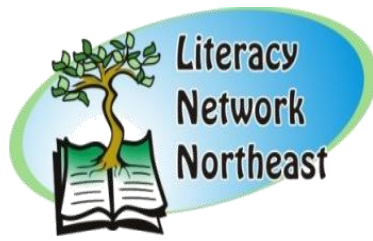
As stated earlier in the report, this is a starting point to capture the unique and complex needs of this region. As the lead organization for this consultation which was done in collaboration with several partners and stakeholders, the Far Northeast Training Board remains available to support further outreach and consultation to ensure that the voice of this region is heard, and that the unique needs and realities of the local communities are understood and considered

APPENDIX A – PARTICIPANTS

Centre de santé communautaire de Kapuskasing
Expedition Helicopters - Cochrane
Centre de formation Cochrane-Iroquois Falls
Employment Options Emploi - Northern College - Temiskaming Shores
Collège Boréal - Timmins
Literacy Council of South Temiskaming
Ontario Disability Support Program - Timmins
Timiskaming District Social Services Administration Board
Employment Options Emploi - Collège Boréal - Kapuskasing
Contact North
Ontario Tourism Education Council
Northern College - Cochrane
Cochrane District Social Services Administration Board – Employment Services - Iroquois Falls
Cochrane Board of Trade
March of Dimes Canada
Société économique
Northern College - Timmins
Cochrane District Social Services Administration Board – Employment Services - Cochrane
Manitoulin-Sudbury District Social Services Board - Chapleau
Regional Municipality of Durham
South Temiskaming Community Futures Development Corporation
RLDM Consulting Inc. - Sudbury
Durham Region – Social Services Department
Literacy Network Northeast
Northern College - Kirkland Lake
Adult Learning Centre – Iroquois Falls
Ministry of Heritage, Sports, Tourism and Culture Industries - Timmins
Employment Options Emploi - Northern College - Kirkland Lake
Cochrane District Social Services Administration Board
Northern College – Training Division Kirkland Lake
Literacy Council of North Timiskaming

Mattagami First Nation
 Earlton Construction Solutions
 Centre d'éducation alternative - Kapuskasing
 Enterprise Temiskaming
 Timmins Chamber
 Ministry of Labour Training and Skills Development – Timmins and Toronto
 Literacy Council of South Temiskaming
 Chapleau Learning Centre
 Centre Partenaires pour l'emploi - Hearst
 Collège Boréal - Kapuskasing
 Timmins Learning Centre inc.
 Employment and Social Development Canada – Timmins and Sudbury
 Employment Options Emploi - Northern College - Timmins
 Timmins Economic Development Corporation
 Ininew Friendship Centre - Cochrane
 Services Canada - Sudbury
 Centre d'éducation des adultes - Temiskaming Shores
 La Clef
 District Multicultural Center - North Bay
 Centre de formation de Hearst
 Société économique de l'Ontario
 FormationPlus - Chapleau
 Réseau du Nord - Kapuskasing
 Mushkegowuk Council Employment & Training (rep 8 First Nations)
 Ministry of Northern Development, Mines, Natural Resources and Forestry - Kirkland Lake
 Ontario Public Service - Toronto

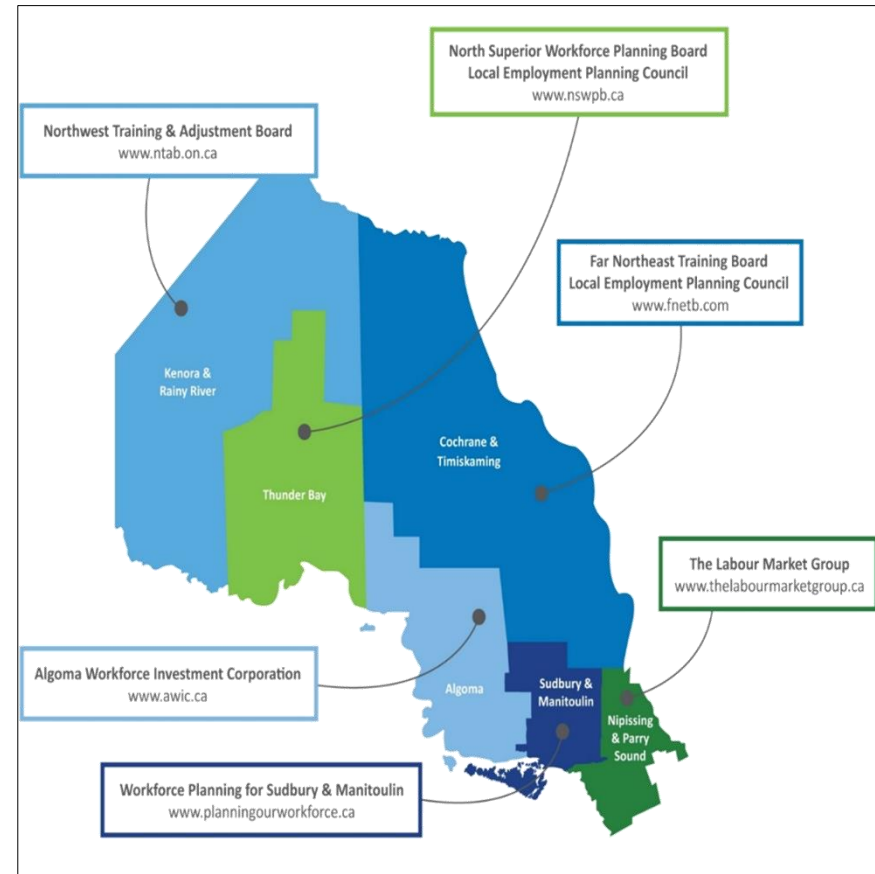
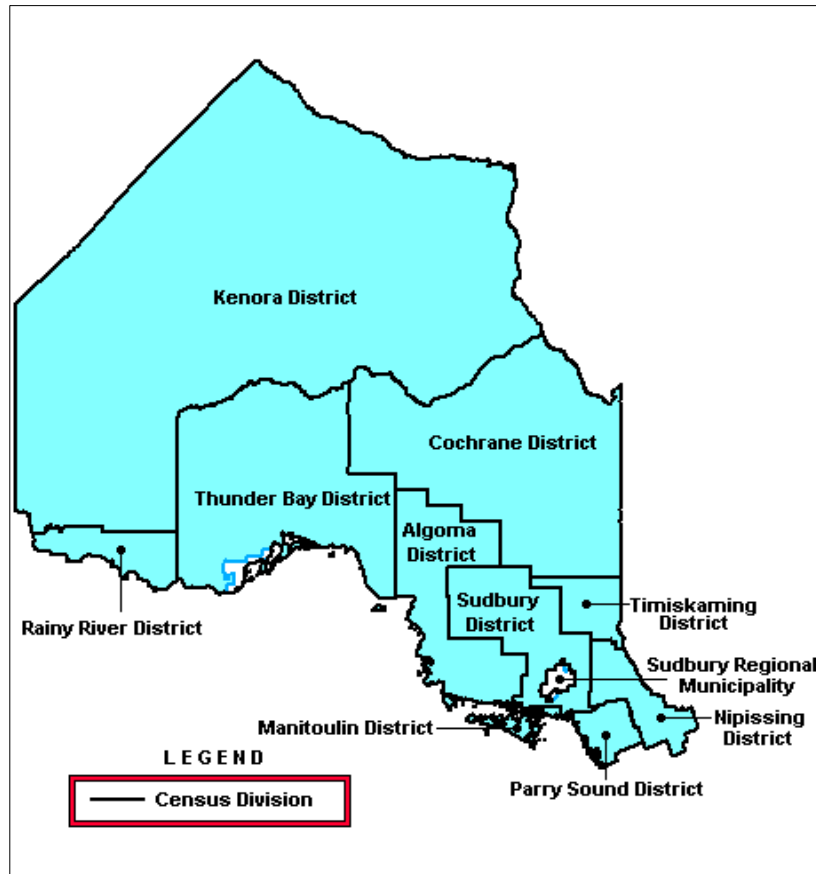
APPENDIX B: PARTNERS WHO HELPED TO PLAN AND ORGANIZE THE FACILITATED DISCUSSIONS:



FAR NORTHEAST TRAINING BOARD (FNETB)
your local labour market planning network

COMMISSION DE FORMATION DU NORD-EST (CFNE)
votre réseau local de planification du marché du travail

APPENDIX C: OPTIONS FOR NORTHEASTERN ONTARIO SUB-REGIONS



A word cloud graphic featuring the words 'COORDINATION', 'COLLABORATION', 'COMMUNICATION', 'TOGETHER', 'WORKING', 'PARTNERS', and 'TOGETHER' repeated in various sizes and orientations, creating a dense, abstract pattern. The words are arranged in a way that suggests movement and interconnectedness, with some words appearing more prominently than others. The overall effect is a visual representation of the concepts of teamwork and collaboration.