

## THE STAGES OF CHANGE BEST PRACTICES

A three-year study on work readiness; testing the application of the Transtheoretical Model of Change (Stages of Change Model – SOC) and Motivational Interviewing to employment development.

### CONCEPT OF STAGES OF CHANGE

Many organizations in Winnipeg and elsewhere assist unemployed, low-income individuals to prepare for, acquire, and maintain employment. A large variety of services are provided, and many different approaches are used to achieve this result. It is common for organizations to invest substantial resources in preparing people for work, only to have the participants drop out or fail at the time when they should be transitioning from programming to employment.

As a result of sub-urbanization and intergenerational unemployment, many inner city residents appear to have lost confidence in their ability to secure employment; in some cases it may simply be that they have lost their motivation. Although the causes of these phenomena are structural, the manifestations are likely behavioural and attitudinal. It is believed that lacking in self-confidence or low self-esteem can manifest itself as a lack of motivation and it can become a challenge for people to overcome these circumstances.

The Stages of Change Model provides for change as a process that is gradual and progressive over time, rather than dramatic. Estimates are that less than 20% of people who are making changes in their lives are in the Action stage at any given time, but about 90% of all programs designed to assist with change are intended for people in that Action stage. (Prochaska, J.O., Norcross, J.C., & DiClemente, C.C., 1994). Those that have been labelled as “failures” to make or sustain change in programs that center around the Action stage may not be as “resistant” to change as some might want you to believe, but rather the services offered possibly did not meet their needs by addressing the Stage of Change they were in at the time.

Opportunities for Employment Inc. (OFE) tested the application of the Transtheoretical Model of Change (Stages of Change Model – SOC) and Motivational Interviewing (MI) to employment development. The study used a previously untested approach to increase the labour market participation of those currently underemployed or unemployed by addressing ambivalence and motivation through the application of specific interventions to increase work readiness. Approximately 2,854 people volunteered to participate within the 3-year study.

The purpose of this document is to support organizations in implementing the Stages of Change and Motivational Interviewing interventions to regular programming as well as to share some of the lessons learned through the research study that was carried out at OFE. This Best Practices Document reflects the concept, models used, as well as an overview of processes and tools required to implement Stages of Change and Motivational Interviewing for employment development.

### **THE MODEL: STAGES OF CHANGE AND MOTIVATIONAL INTERVIEWING**

The Stages of Change Model, developed by James Prochaska and Carlo Diclemente, is an innovative approach to motivational issues facing job seekers with the potential to move people along the “Stages of Change” to employment.

The SOC Model speaks specifically to the problem of motivation and ambivalence. Change is viewed as gradual and progressive over time, rather than dramatic. The SOC Model presents stages that are part of the change process as well as a phenomenon of regression known as recycling. (Please see the Stages of Change Wheel opposite page)

### **MOTIVATIONAL INTERVIEWING (MI):**

Motivational Interviewing (MI) was developed by Miller and Rollnick (1991) and is defined as a client-centered, directive method for enhancing intrinsic motivation to change by exploring and resolving ambivalence. It focuses on the person’s current interests and concerns and it is consciously directive in that the interviewer elicits and selectively reinforces change talk and also responds to resistance in a manner intended to extinguish it. MI is a communication method intended to move the person toward change, focusing on exploring and resolving ambivalence as a key to eliciting that change. Within MI, change arises through its relevance to the person’s own values and concerns (Miller and Rollnick, 2002).

This approach provides client-centered employment interventions and also addresses motivation as a factor influencing successful transitions to the labour market.

### **THE TOOLS:**

MI and a series of SOC workshops are used to facilitate behavioural change with regard to labour market integration. A modified version of the University of Rhode Island Change Assessment Scale (URICA) is used to assess the participant’s stage of change.

### **THE URICA OR WORK READINESS ASSESSMENT (WRA):**

The WRA should be given to clients at intake and at various points within the participant’s engagement to measure the stage of change that the client is in at a specific point in time. The modified WRA is a 12 item, self-report assessment that includes 3 subscales that measure the following three of five stages in the SOC

Model: Pre-contemplation, Contemplation, and Preparation. Responses are given on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Scores for the subscales are determined by adding the Likert scale values of all items in that subscale. Subscale scores are combined (Contemplation + (Preparation\*2) – Pre-contemplation) to yield a continuous readiness to change score. This overall score provides the most accurate representation of the stage for the participant. To view a copy of the modified URICA, please visit our website at [www.ofe.ca](http://www.ofe.ca).

#### **STAGES OF CHANGE - WORK READINESS WORKSHOP:**

This three-hour workshop was designed by OFE for participants who are assessed in the Pre-Contemplative or Contemplative stages and who may be considered as not being “ready, willing, and able” to obtain and sustain employment. Workshop participants are introduced to the concept of the six Stages of Change and explore the advantages and disadvantages of being employed by taking part in a decisional balance exercise. Workshop activities are designed to facilitate forward movement in the SOC Model and include emotional arousal, consciousness raising, environmental re-evaluation, and self re-evaluation. To view a copy of the module outline, lesson plan and participant handouts for the Work Readiness Workshop, please visit our website at [www.ofe.ca](http://www.ofe.ca).

#### **STAGES OF CHANGE PREPARATION WORKSHOP:**

This three-hour workshop is designed for participants who assess in the preparation stage and centers on reinforcing the decision made to move towards engagement in the labour force. SOC concepts utilized in this workshop include environmental control, social liberation, countering, and commitment. An important concept that underlies this understanding of change is the acceptance that people rarely start at one point and progress through the Stages of Change without interruption. Such interruptions, or set backs are referred to as Recycling. Recycling is framed as “normal” in this model, and not as a failure. To view a copy of the module outline, lesson plan and participant handouts for the Preparation Workshop, please visit our website at [www.ofe.ca](http://www.ofe.ca).

#### **MOTIVATIONAL INTERVIEWING:**

Motivational Interviews conducted within this study are designed to focus on a participant’s employment situation and the identified stage of change the individual is currently in. The interviewer uses empathy, open-ended questions, reflections and affirmations. Interviews are concluded with a summary of the discussion while focusing on the individual’s strengths. The goal is to elicit change in the participant by talking about the benefits of employment and subsequently by having the participant formulate an action plan towards employment. Motivational Interviews are offered on a one-on-one basis and generally last one hour. An assessment is performed at the end of each session and is used to determine if additional sessions are required.

## CREATING AN EFFECTIVE INTEGRATION PLAN: THE STEPS

### STEP 1:

Organize an appreciative inquiry; the inquiry is used in place of the traditional problem solving approach of identifying a problem and finding a solution. An appreciative inquiry focuses on what the organization is doing right and designs a framework for imagining a healthy, productive and effective future. This method uses mind, heart, and imagination to identify success. Invitations to the discussion could include stakeholders in the community, referring agencies and funders.

### STEP 2:

All staff will need to be trained on the Stages of Change Model in order to effectively refer participants to interventions. Employ a counsellor trained in MI to provide SOC services including the facilitation of workshops and the delivery of one-on-one MI sessions. Depending on agency size, it may be beneficial to have a back up facilitator for additional support.

### STEP 3:

Administer the WRA to identify what stage of change the participant is experiencing in relation to employment.

### STEP 4:

Review the WRA and refer for an intervention; the total score (Contemplation + (Preparation X 2) – Pre-contemplation) determines where the individual is in relation to the Stages of Change.

- If the total score is less than 40, the participant attends the Work Readiness Workshop. The WRA is administered again at the end of the workshop. The new score will determine what further intervention is required. Those participants scoring below 40 would be referred to an MI. Reassess the individuals stage after each MI and continue with MI's until the individual's score is above 40.
- When the participant scores 40 or above they would be referred to the Stages of Change Preparation workshop.

### STEP 5:

Engage the participant in employment assistance programming.

### STEP 6:

Monitor for recycling; if participant shows signs of recycling refer to the earliest intervention not received (Work Readiness Workshop or an MI).

### STEP 7:

Self-referral: inform participant that they may self refer for an intervention at any time. Signs of recycling might look like: Missed appointments, reduced job search activity.

## CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

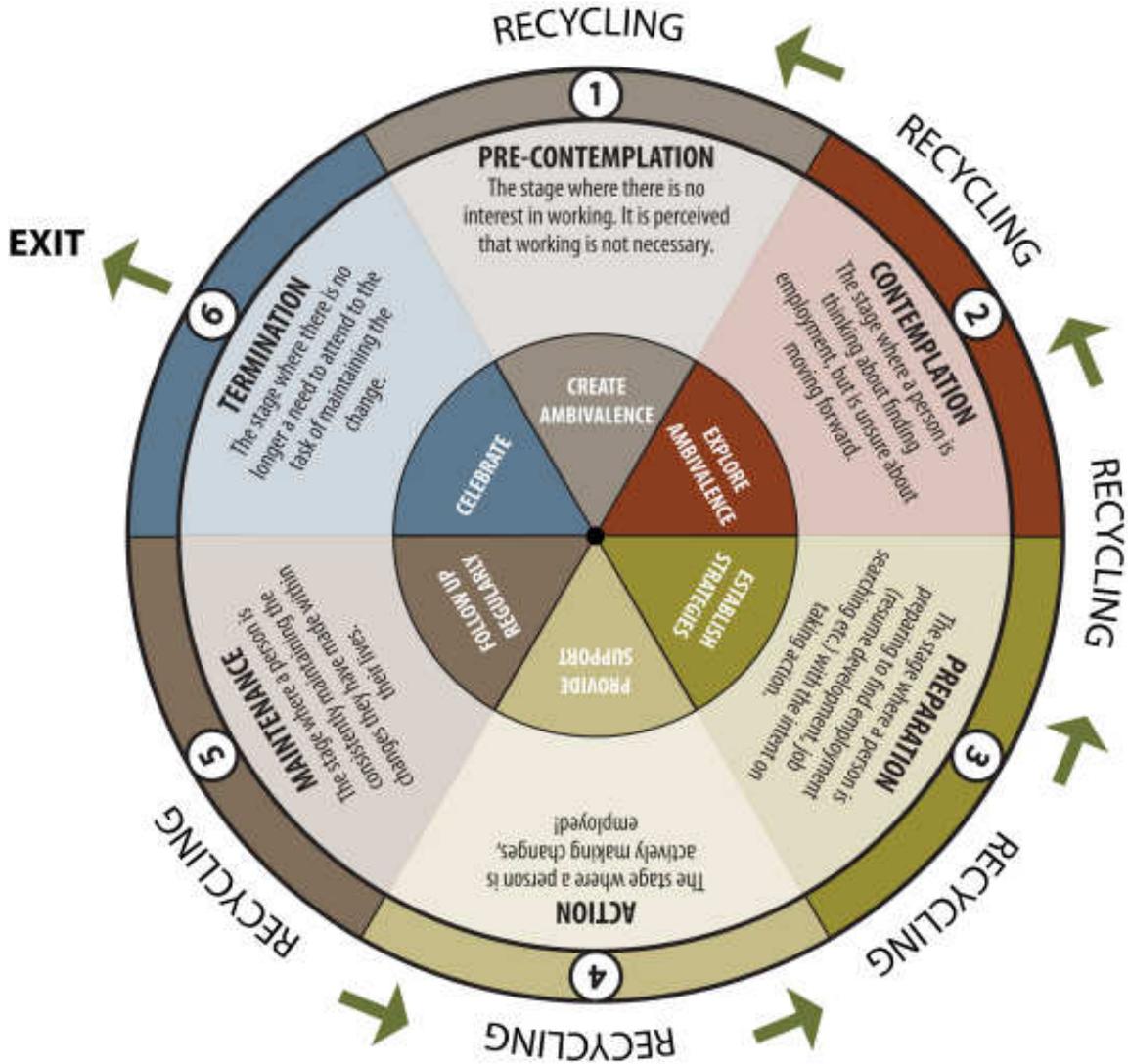
### CHALLENGES:

- Ensuring understanding and gaining buy-in from all organizational employees in regards to the benefits of utilizing the Stages of Change model.

### LESSONS LEARNED:

- Participating in an orientation prior to engagement in employment assistance services ensures service providers are working with individuals ready for employment.
- By addressing motivational levels and referring to appropriate interventions prior to engaging in traditional job search activities or skill development, we found an increased program retention rate.
- When first implementing URICA we used the subscale score to determine the stage of change for the individual. However, we found participants were wrongly assessed and referred to an intervention not suitable for their actual stage. By using the combined score (Contemplation + (Preparation X 2) – Pre-contemplation) we got an accurate assessment of the individual's stage of work readiness.
- All SOC interventions should be scheduled as soon as possible after the most recent engagement to keep up momentum for the change that has been initiated by the participant.
- Regularly re-assess participants and develop a process to reengage participants in interventions based on stage indicators and behaviours. This provides support to those who recycle.
- Encourage staff to read the assessment questions to participants with lower literacy or comprehension levels as these individuals can be assessed inaccurately if the questions are not understood. To view a copy of this URICA, please visit our website at [www.ofe.ca](http://www.ofe.ca).
- Clearly define the roles of service delivery to staff members. Interventions should be delivered by staff trained in Stages of Change and Motivational Interviewing. He or she should be partnered with an employment consultant whose role is to support and direct the individual in job search activities.
- A clear assessment needs to be developed in order to distinguish between motivation and other barriers to employment.
- Some participants do not benefit fully from workshops but would gain more from an MI.
- Make reminder phone calls to participants about up-coming orientations. If the caller notices resistance or ambivalence, notify a facilitator to follow-up with the participant.
- Meet with Employment Consultants regularly to catch potential motivation issues with their clients.
- For information on the study, including results and demographics, please contact Opportunities for Employment at: (204) 925-3490.

# THE STAGES OF CHANGE WHEEL



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