

Access Solutions Project Final Report

**to the
Ministry of Training, Colleges & Universities**

September 30, 2004



**Ontario Regulators
for Access**

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A Introduction

In June 2002, the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities provided funding to the Steering Committee of Ontario Regulators for Access to conduct the Access Solutions project. The funding was part of the Ontario government commitment to help skilled immigrants enter the labour force quickly so they can reach their full potential and contribute to the economy.

The goal of the Access Solutions project was to increase access to Ontario's regulated professions by international candidates while maintaining high standards for public safety. The project provided opportunities for regulators to benefit from each other's accomplishments and generated practical resources to help regulators implement access initiatives in their professions.

The Access Solutions project concluded on September 30, 2004. This report documents the project's success in meeting its deliverables and evaluation criteria.

B Project deliverables

In a contract dated June 17, 2002 with the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, the Steering Committee of Ontario Regulators for Access agreed to the following deliverables, all of which have been achieved:

Deliverable	Details
Project Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Project management subcommittee▪ Project manager▪ Planning
Workplan and critical path	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Research plan and methodology▪ Outreach plan for communicating with regulators▪ Evaluation framework and plan, including performance/success indicators
Product development and launch	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Research including survey of regulators

Deliverable	Details
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Compendium of promising practices ▪ Guiding principles ▪ Self assessment kit
Outreach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Website ▪ Communication with regulators throughout the project
Reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Report outlining initial options and directions for self sustainability ▪ Interim evaluation and progress reports ▪ Final report and evaluation results ▪ Audited financial statements

C Success in meeting deliverables

This section of the report describes how the Access Solutions project met each of the contracted deliverables.

C.1 Project management subcommittee

The Steering Committee, comprised of representatives from 12 to 13 Ontario regulatory bodies provided overall direction for the project. The Maytree Foundation and the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities served as advisors to the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee and the Ministry approved all key deliverables.

Four members of the Steering Committee served as a management group for the Access Solutions project. The management group liaised on an ongoing basis with the Ministry, consulting team, and Steering Committee members. The Management Group reviewed items before they went to the Steering Committee.

From December 2002 through September 2004, there were 10 full Steering Committee meetings and thirteen meetings of the management group. In addition, conference calls were arranged on occasion to address emerging issues.

C.2 Project manager

In a contract dated November 13, 2002, the steering committee contracted with the consulting firm of Karen Cohl & Associates to provide project management, conduct research, and develop publications and tools including a website and compendium of promising practices.

The consulting team consisted of a senior consultant/project manager, researcher, web developer, writer, and special advisor. The steering committee organizations provided in-kind administrative support.

In addition, The Jeffery Group was retained to provide specialized communications expertise for public education and outreach.

C.3 Workplan and critical path

The project plan and critical path were approved in March 2003. The plan set out:

- The overall project framework, sequencing, and structure
- A high-level critical path of major milestones
- Month-by-month activities for the consulting team, management group, steering committee, and ministry

The plan acknowledged the need for adjustments on an ongoing basis during the course of the project to respond to actual events, new ideas, and unanticipated circumstances. A revised project plan was approved for the period July 2003 to June 2004.

In July 2004, the ministry agreed to extend the deadline for completion of the project deliverables from June 30 to September 30, 2004.

C.4 Research plan and methodology

The research plan was approved in March 2003. The purpose of the research was to collect information to be used in products and tools for regulators. A key feature was including regulators themselves as research sources—through surveys and one-on-one interviews—both to find and document promising practices and to increase regulator engagement.

C.5 Outreach plan for communicating with regulators

The communications plan was approved in March 2003. Its primary objective was to increase the commitment, engagement, and action of Ontario regulators to improve access to professions by international candidates while maintaining high standards for public safety.

Communication opportunities have been a standing item on steering committee and management group agendas. (See also section C.14 - below on Communication with Regulators.)

C.6 Evaluation framework and success indicators

The evaluation plan was approved in March 2003. The plan identified success indicators that could be measured during and after the Access Solutions project. See evaluation of success indicators in section D below.

C.7 Research including survey of regulators

ORA conducted research between January and June 2003. There were four main purposes: to document promising practices of regulators in Ontario and other jurisdictions, increase understanding of the access issue, identify supports that would help regulators to improve access for international candidates, and identify gaps and challenges regulators face in addressing access issues.

The research included a literature and web search of approximately 40 sources, contacts with other jurisdictions (Quebec, British Columbia, Manitoba, Australia), a survey of regulators, and one-on-one interviews. 30 Ontario regulatory bodies completed surveys for a response rate of 79% and 28 regulators participated in follow-up interviews.

The research findings are posted on the Regulators' for Access website and were distributed to participants of the October 2003 regulators' forum.

C.8 Compendium of promising practices

The research results were used to create a compendium of 29 promising practices of Ontario regulators—practices that are innovative and that have improved, or have the potential to improve, access for international candidates while maintaining standards. The compendium

was distributed at the first regulators' forum and is available on the Regulators for Access website. Regulators are encouraged to submit additional or updated promising practices.

C.9 Guiding principles

ORA developed proposed guiding principles for regulators to use as they evaluate their policies, practices and approaches for internationally educated or trained candidates. The principles centre on five themes: fairness, objectivity, transparency, accountability, and collaboration.

The guiding principles were posted on the Regulators for Access website in February 2004 and were distributed at the second regulators' forum in June 2004. ORA members have agreed to provide the principles to their governing councils for information or adoption. The following are the results as of September 30, 2004:

Regulatory Body	Results
Institute of Chartered Accountants of Ontario	Endorsed the guiding principles
College of Massage Therapists of Ontario	Endorsed the guiding principles
Professional Engineers Ontario	Endorsed the guiding principles
College of Physiotherapists of Ontario	Endorsed the guiding principles
Ontario Association of Architects	Endorsed the guiding principles
Ontario College of Physicians & Surgeons	Incorporated the guiding principles into their own principles.
Ontario College of Pharmacists	Support the principles as being consistent with their own
Ontario College of Teachers	Accepted the guiding principles as information

C.10 Self assessment kit

ORA has also prepared a Regulators' Guide for Promoting Access to Professions by International Candidates. This is a practical assessment tool regulators can use to evaluate and design programs that support the access to professions by qualified international candidates. The guide sets out the underlying rationale, tips and challenges in the following six areas, as well as where to go for additional information:

Topic area	Details
Providing information and support for international candidates	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Covers information kits and fact sheets▪ Helps candidates prepare for exams▪ Facilitates access to mentors and counsellors
Assessing international qualifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Covers assessing international academic credentials, competencies and language skills
Bridging the gaps	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Identifies gaps in a candidate's qualifications▪ Includes suggestions on programs and collaborative approaches to fill the gaps
Offering appeals and rewrites	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Outlines an arm's length appeal process▪ Provides opportunities to retry exams and obtain feedback on results
Reporting on progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Covers collecting statistics and reporting on access initiatives in annual reports
Conducting regulatory reviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Talks about reviewing legislation and policies for relevance and fairness, reviewing compliance with human rights legislation and reviewing fees for reasonableness

The regulators' guide was posted on the Regulators for Access website in May 2004 and distributed at the second regulators' forum in June 2004.

C.11 Supplementary product: business case

ORA prepared a business case setting out a rationale for implementing initiatives to improve access to professions by internationally educated and trained candidates. The business case articulates benefits for the economy, society, and the professions. The business case was posted on the website in May 2004 and distributed at the second regulators' forum in June 2004.

C.12 Supplementary products: public education

ORA also produced the following public education products:

Product	Details
Success Stories	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Translated five promising practices into story format to highlight unique solutions involving regulators to improve access for international candidates.
Discussion Guide	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Created a tool for regulators to answer inquiries about the role of regulatory bodies in the registration and licensing process, and how regulatory bodies are working with other partners to improve access to professions

C.13 Regulators for Access website

ORA launched the Regulators for Access website in October 2003. A search capacity was added to the website in January 2004 and the website has been updated as new materials or information become available. The Institute of Chartered Accountants hosts the web-site on their in-house server.

The primary purpose of the website is to provide regulatory bodies with easy access to:

- Best practices, benchmarks, and highlights of successful and innovative access initiatives for international candidates;
- Contacts and leaders in the access field;

- Progress, outcomes, and products of the access solutions project (e.g., research report and compendium, guiding principles, regulators’ guide, and business case);
- Related information, e.g. events;
- Media reports;
- Extensive links to relevant information;
- A feedback form; and
- A form for submitting promising practices

C.14 Communication with regulators

In addition to the regulators actively participating as Steering Committee members, many more regulators have been engaged through consultation, regulators’ forums, sharing promising practices and using the tools that have been created.

During the course of the Access Solutions project, ORA engaged in the following communications activities in accordance with its communications plan.

Activity	Details
Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Designed a logo and tag line—“ Access To Ontario’s Regulated Professions By International Candidates” —for visual identity on the Access Solutions website and products.
Communiqués	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sent communiqués to regulators on ORA’s work ▪ Wrote to relevant Ontario government ministries to advise them about ORA’s work and accomplishments ▪ Produced and updated a fact sheet to distribute to interested parties and also made it available on the website ▪ Sent letters to MPPs
Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Communicated with regulators and partners via two regulators’ forums

Activity	Details
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Gave presentations at the Conference of the Council on Licensure, Enforcement and Regulation (CLEAR) in Toronto and at the National Forum on Prior Learning Assessment and Qualification Recognition of the Canadian Association for Prior Learning Assessment (CAPLA) in Winnipeg
Website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Promoted ORA's work and products through the Regulators for Access website ▪ Designed book marks to publicize the launch of the Regulators for Access website
Database	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Developed a stakeholder database to facilitate future communications and collaboration

C.14.1 First regulators' forum: October 2003

The first of two regulators' forums took place October 17, 2003. The forum was hosted by the Ontario College of Teachers. The forum provided an opportunity for regulators of Ontario's self regulated professions to learn about the work of the Access Solutions Project, share information and ideas, and begin to identify areas for collaboration on improving access to professions by international candidates.

At the forum, ORA presented its research findings, launched the Regulators for Access website, and led small group discussions on the role of the regulator, information and support for international candidates, engaging other partners, Canadian work experience, and promoting change to legislation and regulations. Each group came up with observations and ideas for making progress in their subject areas. The forum results appear in a report posted on the Regulators for Access website.

There were 43 regulators in attendance from 25 professions. Most were senior staff; some were volunteer board members.

C.14.2 Second regulators' forum: June 2004

A second regulators' forum took place on June 7, 2004. This forum was hosted by the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario. The purpose of the forum was to identify ways for regulators to work collaboratively with each other and with educators, employers, community groups and governments to improve access to professions for international candidates. Attendance was therefore broadened to include partners from the community, employers, educators, and government. A secondary objective was to launch new products of the Access Solutions project, i.e., the guiding principles, regulators' guide, and business case.

There were 105 individuals from 56 organizations at the second forum. Participants included 53 regulators from 26 Ontario regulatory bodies as well as individuals from community service and advocacy organizations, educational institutions, the employment sector, and the Ontario and federal governments.

At the forum, participants received the guiding principles, business case, and regulators guide as well as an updated fact sheet.

ORA has begun to prioritize ideas generated at the first and second forum for further discussion with partners and to help chart the course for ORA's next phase of activities.

C.15 Initial options and directions for self sustainability

Since the fall of 2003, ORA has been discussing the following sustainability issues:

- How to continue and build on the momentum of regulator engagement on access to professions
- The priorities for future activities to be undertaken under the leadership of the regulatory community
- How to continuously improve the Regulators for Access website

ORA has articulated its commitment to continue in-kind contribution for an additional 3-year period. This includes hosting and attending meetings and forums, reviewing materials, hosting the website, providing financial services, and providing infrastructure support to a proposed secretariat. The in-kind contribution has been estimated at \$158, 000 per year.

In addition, ORA has sought funding from the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities to help sustain its work on priority

collaborative initiatives and to continue as a catalyst for change within the regulatory community.

C.16 Interim evaluation and progress reports

The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities MTCU participates in steering committee meetings and receives minutes from those meetings. In addition, detailed progress reports were submitted to the ministry in June and November of 2003.

C.17 Final report and evaluation results

This report meets the deliverable for a final report and evaluation results.

C.18 Audited financial statements

The steering committee has provided interim financial statements as required by the Ministry and will provide an end-of-project audited financial statement. The end-of-project statement will reflect a slight surplus over expenses.

D Evaluation: Indicators of success

The evaluation plan contained six success indicators during the life of the project:

Indicator	Result
1 Participation by at least 20 regulators in one-on-one interviews during the project.	30 Ontario regulatory bodies completed surveys and 28 participated in interviews.
2 Representation by at least 18 of Ontario's 38 regulatory bodies at the two forums.	At the first forum 43 regulators attended from 25 regulatory bodies. At the second forum 53 regulators attended from 26 regulatory bodies.

Indicator	Result
<p>3 Over 70% of regulators attending each forum find the event to be “useful, very useful, or extremely useful.”</p>	<p>100% of regulators - and other participants - who completed evaluation forms at both the first or second forum found the event to be useful, very useful, or extremely useful.</p>
<p>4 The majority of regulators attending the second forum find the products generated by the project to be “useful, very useful, or extremely useful.”</p>	<p>The second forum was broadened to include many non-regulators and to focus on priorities for collaboration rather than ORA products. At the forum, participants received 3 new products: guiding principles, business case and regulators’ guide. Many also took copies of the research report & compendium of practices.</p>
<p>5 More than 10 downloads of each publication produced by the project.</p>	<p>This criterion is no longer relevant as the publications are available in hard copy and PDF format. However, statistics indicate that the website materials are being accessed. Between October 14, 2003 and July 4, 2004, the website received 3,951 visits from 2,404 unique visitors for an average of 452 visits per month.</p> <p>In addition, over 100 hard copies of the business case, guiding principles and regulators’ guide were distributed at the second regulators’ forum.</p> <p>Approximately 125 hard copies of the research report & compendium of practices were distributed at the first and second forums.</p>
<p>6 Participation by project spokespersons in at least two conference presentations during the life of the project.</p>	<p>ORA members gave presentations to the Council on Licensure, Enforcement and Regulation (CLEAR) and the Canadian Association for Prior Learning Assessment (CAPLA).</p>

Conclusion

Through the Access Solutions project, Ontario Regulators for Access has increased regulator engagement and provided practical tools and resources. The project was completed on time using the financial and in-kind resources effectively. ORA is well positioned to build on this momentum and engage in collaborative initiatives with regulators and other partners to improve access to Ontario's professions by international candidates.

E Appendix: Access Solutions Project overview

