

Forum of Labour Market Ministers
Standards for Labour Market Information Products

Prepared for: FLMM Labour Market Information Working Group

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FLMM Standards for Labour Market Information Products

Background

In 1999, the Forum of Labour Market Ministers (FLMM) committed to producing 3 sets of standards for Labour Market Information (LMI). These include standards for 1) LMI data development, 2) LMI products and 3) LMI service delivery. This document sets out the standards for LMI products.

These Labour Market Information (LMI) Product Standards build on standard development work undertaken by the Canadian Labour Force Development Board (CLFDB) just before its dissolution in 1999. In 2001, the CLFDB standards were reviewed in-depth by member organizations of the Forum of Labour Market Ministers (FLMM) with the objective to update these standards, to give them greater national prominence and to promote their adaptation and use by all Canadian providers and developers of Labour Market Information.

Standards exist in Canada for regulating the development and sales of many products and services. Such standards may be voluntary or mandatory. The FLMM believes that the introduction and use of voluntary standards on Canadian LMI products and services would enable consumers to make better informed decisions and the right choices appropriate to their work and life situations.

Why LMI Standards are needed

The development, application and use of LMI product standards address a need, which is long overdue. Labour market information includes a great diversity of goods and services. The LMI consumer (whether an individual, employer, employment counsellor, government or non-government organization) is required to choose from among a wide and often confusing array of information to satisfy his or her needs.

Like many other commodities, LMI goods and services tend to vary in quality and have a limited shelf life. Deficient, outdated and/or incomplete labour market information can have serious consequences for the consumer. The adoption and implementation of this LMI product standards framework would provide users with the assurance that they are accessing products and services that meet their needs and are reliable.

Compelling reasons for LMI Standards.

- In today's competitive labour market environment, quality information about jobs, worker recruitment, trends in skills needed, career and skills training and the changing workplace is a key commodity for enabling people to make informed work- and business-related choices.
- Standards provide developers and suppliers of LMI with guidance as to what best serves the public interest. (Quality information cannot often be readily distinguished from information that is deficient, outdated and/or incomplete.)
- Ethical and privacy standards serve to govern the behavior of governments, institutions and individuals and help ensure that the right purposes are realized.
- Developers and suppliers of LMI too often "dump" information on Internet websites without due regard for whether consumers want it, need it and/or can make sense of it.

Standards Framework Defined

The “Standards Framework” for the development, supply and use of quality labour market information (LMI) consist of a set of standards as well as the means for determining compliance. The standards prescribe the key elements that define quality LMI products, services and systems. However, standards only have meaning if there is a means of knowing that they are adhered to and that the desired results are achieved.

Relevant compliance measures have been formulated for each standard to enable LMI developers and suppliers to develop quality LMI products and services and to provide LMI users the means to trust their reliability and integrity. LMI developers and suppliers can translate these measures in their own performance checklists for the management, production and maintenance of their products and services.

The Standards have been organized in 10 sections. Sections 1 – 4 contain generic standards and compliance measures that are pertinent to all LMI products and services irrespective of the format, – print, electronic, etc., – in which they are produced. Section 5 contains product standards that pertain specifically to Internet delivery. Sections 6 – 10 deal with additional standards and compliance measures that apply to specific information products and services.

Generic LMI Product Standards:

- Section 1 – Privacy and Ethical Practices
- Section 2 – Accuracy, Completeness and Timeliness
- Section 3 – Information Relevance to User Needs
- Section 4 – Accessibility

Internet LMI Product Standards:

- Section 5 – Internet Delivery

Specific LMI Product Standards:

- Section 6 – Program and Services Information
- Section 7 – Jobs and Recruiting Information
- Section 8 – Career Planning Information
- Section 9 – Education and Training Information
- Section 10 – Labour Market Profile Information

Generic LMI Product Standards

1. PRIVACY AND ETHICAL PRACTICES

This section of the standards has been formulated to ensure that suppliers of LMI products and services fully respect the rights of information users and developers with regard to information privacy, the protection of basic human rights and copy right considerations.

LMI PRODUCT STANDARDS	HOW TO COMPLY
<p>1.a Product and service suppliers must abide by the Canadian Standards Association (CSA) voluntary national code for the protection of personal information, and by existing federal and provincial freedom of information, privacy and human rights legislation (e.g. <i>Canadian Human Rights Act</i>).</p>	<p>1.a</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <u>Accountability</u>: An organization is responsible for personal information under its control and shall designate an individual or individuals that are accountable for the organization's compliance. ▪ <u>Consent</u>: The knowledge and consent of the individual are required for the collection, use, or disclosure of personal information. ▪ <u>Identifying Purposes</u>: The purposes for which personal information is collected shall be identified by the organization at or before the time the information is collected. ▪ <u>Limiting Collection</u>: The collection of personal information shall be limited to that which is necessary for the purposes identified by the organization. Information shall be collected by fair and lawful means. ▪ <u>Limiting Use, Disclosure, and Retention</u>: Personal information shall not be used or disclosed for purposes other than those for which it was collected, except with the consent of the individual or as required by law. Personal information shall be retained only as long as necessary for the fulfillment of those purposes. ▪ <u>Accuracy</u>: Personal information shall be as accurate, complete, and up-to-date as is necessary for the purposes for which it is to be used. ▪ <u>Safeguards</u>: Personal information shall be protected by security safeguards appropriate to the sensitivity of the information. ▪ <u>Openness</u>: An organization shall make readily available to individuals specific information about its policies and practices relating to the management of personal information. There is a Privacy statement on the website. ▪ <u>Individual Access</u>: Upon request, an individual shall be informed of the existence, use, and disclosure of his or her personal information, and shall be given access to that information. An individual shall be able to challenge the accuracy and completeness of the information and have it amended as appropriate.

Generic LMI Product standards

<p>1.b LMI products and services must use language that adheres to the principle of equity, is non-discriminatory, inclusive and sensitive to people from different cultures or with special needs.</p>	<p>1.b</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• LMI products should be edited and reviewed prior to publication to ensure that the text, graphics and visual representations are free from gender, racial and ethnic bias or stereotypes and are not offensive to users.• Contact information for suppliers of LMI products and services is identified within the product or service to enable users to initiate and pursue complaints or comments.
<p>1.c Copyright of information featured in LMI products and services must be respected and appropriately attributed.</p>	<p>1.c</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Ownership and contact information is identified on all LMI products enabling copyright owners or their agents to obtain proper attribution and to exercise their rights.

Generic LMI Product standards

2. ACCURACY, COMPLETENESS AND TIMELINESS

The standards in this section serve to ensure the accuracy, completeness and timeliness of labour market information products and services.

LMI PRODUCT STANDARDS	HOW TO COMPLY
<p>2.a Information must be clear, concise, and accurate.</p>	<p>2.a</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The ownership, authorship and sources of information used in LMI products and services are clearly identified. ▪ Information featured is generated using accepted analytical techniques and drawn from or validated by reputable, expert sources; e.g. Statistics Canada, Government Ministries, Sector Councils, professional organizations, etc. ▪ Advice, estimates, forecasts and opinions are clearly distinguished from factual information and the limitations explained to users. ▪ Links are regularly reviewed and evaluated to ensure compliance with information quality standards and / or users are notified when they are referred or linked to information products and / or websites containing content that has not been verified.
<p>2.b Information must be sufficiently comprehensive to enable intended users to make informed labour market decisions.</p>	<p>2.b</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Users of LMI products and services are regularly consulted on whether these are appropriate and sufficient to meet their needs, as well as on the format in which these products and services are delivered (paper, Internet, assisted delivery, etc.). ▪ Users are provided with more than one reputable source of information where these exist. ▪ Users are offered and are able to query comparable data sets and information sources for different geographic areas and communities of interest, where such information is available and reliable.
<p>2.c LMI products and services must be regularly updated to reflect recent findings and developments (job openings, Labour Force Survey data, etc).</p>	<p>2.c</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The date of publication or system entry <u>and</u> the date that the information was last reviewed or amended are clearly indicated for all information products. (e.g. date of last update 01-06-24). ▪ Information is reviewed for timeliness at least once a year: more frequently in the case of short shelf-life information. ▪ Information updated as often as necessary to ensure accuracy and timeliness. Frequency of update will be determined by nature of the information in question.

GENERIC LMI PRODUCT STANDARDS

3. INFORMATION RELEVANCE TO USER NEEDS

This section of the standards is important because it affirms that LMI products and services need to be relevant to particular information needs of target users. The section also implies that different products and services may be required for different users groups, e.g. workers, students, researchers, counselors or other service providers.

LMI PRODUCT STANDARDS	HOW TO COMPLY
<p>3.a LMI products and services must be designed and developed to be client centered and be relevant to life, work and career decision making.</p>	<p>3.a</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ The design, development, promotion and ongoing maintenance of products and services are based on user needs assessments.▪ User feedback methods -- web-based software, etc. -- are in place for measuring client satisfaction and concerns.▪ Contact information, -- postal address, e-mail address, and/or a 1-800 telephone number, -- is provided for users to register their suggestions and comments.▪ Target audiences, learning objective and expected outcomes of using LMI products are clearly stated.

Generic LMI Product standards

4. ACCESSIBILITY

Accessibility standards impose obligations on suppliers of LMI products and services to design, develop and deliver these in ways that accommodate cultural, socio-economic, literacy or disability situations of users.

LMI PRODUCT STANDARDS	HOW TO COMPLY*
<p>4.a Suppliers of LMI products and services must use methods and technology that meet the needs of users with varying ability, experience, and cultural and socio-economic backgrounds. (ACSCI* – p.13)</p>	<p>4.a</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A variety of media methods and channels are used to reach the widest possible audience (i.e. printed format, Internet, kiosks, in-person assisted service, public access points such as CAP sites, etc.) ▪ Print Information is available in government and community information centers. ▪ The needs of people with disabilities are accommodated (e.g. by providing access ramps or computer-based applications, such as voice activation technology.)
<p>4.b Text must be written in plain language and at a readability level that will enable the maximum number of target users to understand the text.</p>	<p>4.b</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Information is presented in plain language and at the reading skill level of targeted groups, applying a recognized readability index, such as International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS).
<p>4.c Users must be provided with information on where to obtain access to free LMI products and services.</p>	<p>4.c</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Suppliers of LMI products and services provide users with a choice of free and fee-charging products and services that meet accepted quality standards. ▪ Users are warned when they are moving to a website or dealing with service where fees may be charged.

** technical standards on Internet accessibility can be found on w3.org (World wide web consortium). The federal government and some provincial/territorial governments apply these standards for websites.*

*** HANDBOOK OF STANDARDS FOR THE OPERATION OF COMPUTER-BASED CAREER INFORMATION SYSTEMS Dec 1999** Published by: Association of Computer-Based Systems for Career Information, ACSCI Administrative Office 6613 Benson Drive Alexandria, VA 22306

Internet LMI Product Standards

5. INTERNET DELIVERY

This section of the standards and corresponding compliance measures has been formulated to ensure that LMI product websites are designed and built to be easy to use and navigate and provide the necessary help features that will enable users to access the content and work with the technology, independently.

LMI PRODUCT STANDARDS	HOW TO COMPLY
<p>5.a Internet-based products and services must be compatible with the level of technology that is accessible by the widest possible audience, for whom the information is intended.</p>	<p>5.a</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Target user views and opinions are sought on website functionality and platform issues. ▪ Products are designed and developed to operate on a wide range of technology and to download quickly. ▪ Servers have sufficient capacity (e.g. memory, bandwidth and server speed) to handle peak demand loads.
<p>5.b The layout and navigation of websites must be intuitive, user-friendly, easy for people to use independently, and interesting to work with. (ACSCI – p.13)</p>	<p>5.b</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Target user views and opinions are sought on website functionality and platform issues. ▪ LMI websites incorporate an appropriate choice of instructions, help menus, indexing, cross reference and dictionary tools, user checklists, tutoring, coaching and navigation software enabling users to effectively access and use featured services and products. ▪ LMI websites are laid-out and organized enabling users to easily migrate between menu areas and / or link to other websites featuring complementary LMI products and services. ▪ The primary function of graphics, colours and sound is to maximize users understanding and navigation of the content. ▪ Links are clearly identified, where necessary annotated to facilitate user understanding of the target site. Webmasters should verify at least once a month that internal and external links on their Web sites function properly and are current. This can be done using currently available software.
<p>5.c Users of LMI websites must be given the choice of going directly to desired information or using a guided approach that will lead them through a structured decision making process tailored to their life and work transition needs. (ACSCI – p.16)</p>	<p>5.c</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ LMI Sites are designed and laid out to encourage users to use a variety of options to obtain the information they need, either on-site or by linking them to other quality sites that feature these options.
<p>5.d Users must have access to on-line help and/or human support.</p>	<p>5.d</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A 1-800 number, hyperlinked e-mail address and / or other help options are prominently featured and explained in LMI products, services and systems. ▪ On-line help and / or human support are designed to be user friendly and provided to minimize user query response times.

Specific LMI Product Standards

6. PROGRAM AND SERVICE INFORMATION

This section of the standards ensures that information on LMI program and service offerings presented to the public is complete and transparent.

LMI PRODUCT STANDARDS	HOW TO COMPLY
<p>6.a Information on programs and services offered by public and private organizations, agencies and institutions must be complete and transparent to enable users to make informed decisions.</p>	<p>6.a</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Users of service offerings are provided with information on:<ul style="list-style-type: none">– the organization's objectives, location, specialties, and programs and services offered;– program and service entry requirements, fees and conditions, and user entitlements such as eligibility for financial help; and– contact sources for additional information, -- postal address, e-mail address, and/or a 1-800-telephone number.

Specific LMI Product Standards

7. JOBS AND RECRUITING INFORMATION

This section of the standards was formulated to ensure the integrity of worker recruitment and job matching systems.

LMI PRODUCT STANDARDS	HOW TO COMPLY
<p>7.a Job vacancy, job recruitment and job matching systems must be designed and built to support and promote fair recruitment, employment, and selection practices.</p>	<p>7.a</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Contact information and opportunity for feedback is provided to enable users to suggest improvements particularly with regard to the promotion of fairness in job matching practices in compliance with Federal and Provincial Labour Standards and Human Rights legislation. ▪ A transparent process is in place to register and resolve complaints.
<p>7.b Job vacancy, job recruitment and job matching systems must be operated and maintained to provide job seekers and employers with the opportunity to provide, enter and access sufficient and accurate information, enabling them to make informed job and work decisions.</p>	<p>7.b</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ System permits employers to enter textual information on work experience or other work-related assets that are required to carry out a job. ▪ Work seekers who fail to match their skill sets with stated job requirements are advised where to obtain other job search and skills training assistance. ▪ Job listings provide information on job duties, working conditions and pay ranges. ▪ Job posting information is removed once vacancies are filled. ▪ Job posting information and worker profiles are periodically reviewed and systems purged for stale-dated information.
<p>7.c Generic occupational descriptions and skill checklists must be compiled and maintained by authoritative institutions or organizations representative of government and / or industry or business sectors.</p>	<p>7.c</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The identity and contact information of organizations responsible for the maintenance and validation of occupational descriptions and skill checklists is readily accessible to users. ▪ Skill checklists are reviewed and validated at least every three years or as needed.

Specific LMI Product Standards

8. CAREER PLANNING INFORMATION

These career-planning standards relate to the quality and comparability of information that users require to make informed career and skill development decisions.

LMI PRODUCT STANDARDS	HOW TO COMPLY
<p>8.a Occupational and skill information must be linked to the National Occupation Classification (NOC/SOC) coding structure.</p>	<p>8.a</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ NOC code for occupations described is indicated.
<p>8.b Career information must enable users to identify:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ occupations that match their skills, knowledge, interests and / or aptitudes as closely as possible , ▪ learning and training opportunities to help them bridge the skills and knowledge requirements of desired occupations, ▪ wage / salary ranges for occupations. 	<p>8.b</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The qualifications profile for an occupation clearly states what is generally mandatory for certain occupations. ▪ Products are designed increasingly to permit users, to obtain occupational matches by entering their personal profiles, including their knowledge, skills, interests and aptitudes. ▪ Users are referred and / or linked to reputable education and training resources / sites. ▪ Wage and starting salaries (given as both salary ranges and averages) for each occupation or group of occupations are provided by geographic area, where available and accurate.
<p>8.c The application and use of Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) standards and / or other learning assessment methods and products must be an integral component of an integrated career and skill development service or system.</p>	<p>8.c</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Users of on-line and in-person career planning services are informed what benefit they can derive from prior learning assessment methods and products.

Specific LMI Product Standards

9. EDUCATION AND TRAINING INFORMATION

The standards in this section address the range of information that is required to enable users to make informed learning decisions.

LMI PRODUCT STANDARDS	HOW TO COMPLY
<p>9.a Public and private suppliers of education and training should provide sufficient information on their institutions and course offerings to enable users to make informed learning decisions.</p>	<p>9.a</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <u>Institutional information</u> includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - tombstone information (location, history, philosophy) - student population - classroom size (if appropriate) - modes of program / course delivery (in-class, correspondence, new learning technologies, etc.) - library holdings - recreational / sports programs and facilities - health and counselling programs ▪ <u>Course information</u> includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - course objectives - course entrance requirements - application requirements - date of approval / rejection notification ▪ Learners are provided with Information on and / or links to regulating bodies that oversee professional accreditation and the issue of trade licenses.
<p>9.b Program or course entry information should list,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ the skills, knowledge and aptitudes that are most likely to lead to success; and, ▪ if available, previous course completion, graduation and employment placement results. 	<p>9.b</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <u>Program / course information</u> includes as a basic requirement: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - actual entry requirements - course prerequisites - other success factors - professional qualifying exam standards ▪ Helpful to learners are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - previous course completion statistics - employment placement statistics
<p>9.c Program and course information must provide full disclosure of the financial assistance programs that are available to students.</p>	<p>9.c</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <u>Financial help information</u> includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - access to financial planning and debt management information, - listings of scholarships, bursaries, grants and other student assistance programs / funds (e.g., childcare, transportation and housing), - the purposes and objectives of these student assistance programs and the obligations they give rise to for recipients, - application requirements and logistics.

Specific LMI Product Standards

10. LABOUR MARKET PROFILE INFORMATION

The standards in this section relate to the quality and comparability of information and information sources that users require for understanding labour market trends and projections.

LMI PRODUCT STANDARDS	HOW TO COMPLY
<p>10.a Employment outlook and earnings information by occupation and/or industry must be useful, reliable and be made available at the national and provincial levels. Local employment and earnings should be made available where this information exists and is reliable.</p>	<p>10.a</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Information featured is generated using accepted analytical techniques and drawn from or validated by reputable, expert sources; e.g. Statistics Canada surveys, Government Ministries, Sector Councils, professional organizations, etc. ▪ Information includes narrative explanations of causes and effects of current and future labour market conditions and trends. ▪ Advice, estimates, forecasts and opinions are clearly distinguished from factual information and the limitations explained to users. ▪ Users are offered and are able to query comparable data sets and information sources for different geographic areas and communities of interest, where such information is available and reliable.