



Focus: A Rapid Response Approach to Mitigating the Impact of Local and Massive Workforce Disruptions

A Timely Hospitality and Food Service Sector Monograph

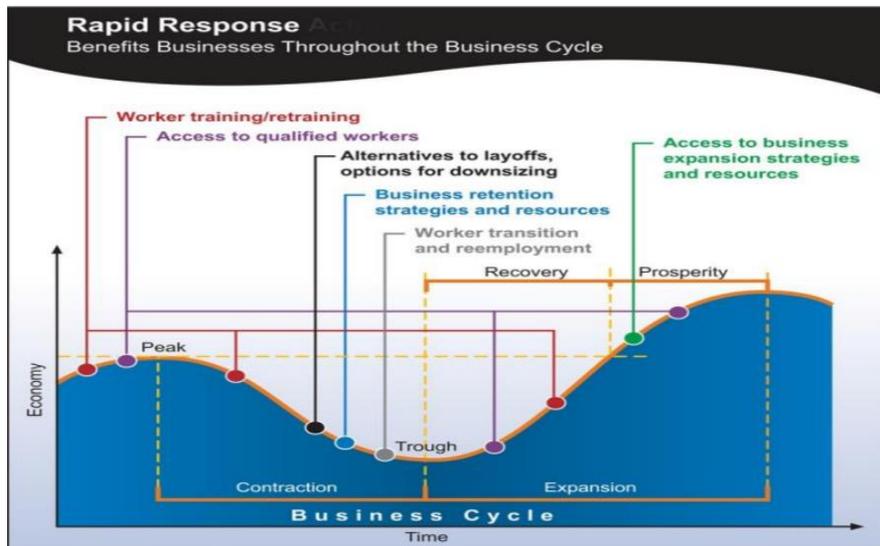
Issue #3, June 2020

In this Issue:

1. What are Rapid Response approaches to workforce disruptions?
2. What can be learnt from Rapid Responses in other jurisdictions?
3. How can sector-focused rapid responses serve to mitigate the impact of retrenchment on workers, their employers, and their communities at large?

Workforce disruptions can be triggered by a variety of community and organizational breakdowns, by unforeseen technological leaps within a particular sector, and/or by the cascading outfall of massive social interrupters – such as the current COVID-19 pandemic. Not surprisingly, such conditions often underpin immense socioeconomic stresses for both workers as well as the businesses and communities that employ them. While the full scale and impact of COVID-19’s immense workforce disruption are yet to unfold, evidence from historical patterns and practices from comparable jurisdictions can inform timely responses, mitigate some of the impacts and alleviate long-term outfall.

A Workforce Rapid Response initiative is a proactive, solutions-focused, and flexible strategy designed to respond to layoffs and closures. Rapid Response activities provide immediate aid to employers and impacted workers in times of community and/or socioeconomic crisis. Rapid Response teams work with employers and employee representative(s) to maximize public and private resources and minimize disruptions associated with job loss. With this approach, Rapid Response initiatives can provide customized services directly to affected companies, and assist organizations and workers through the painful transitions associated with job restructuring and/or loss.ⁱ

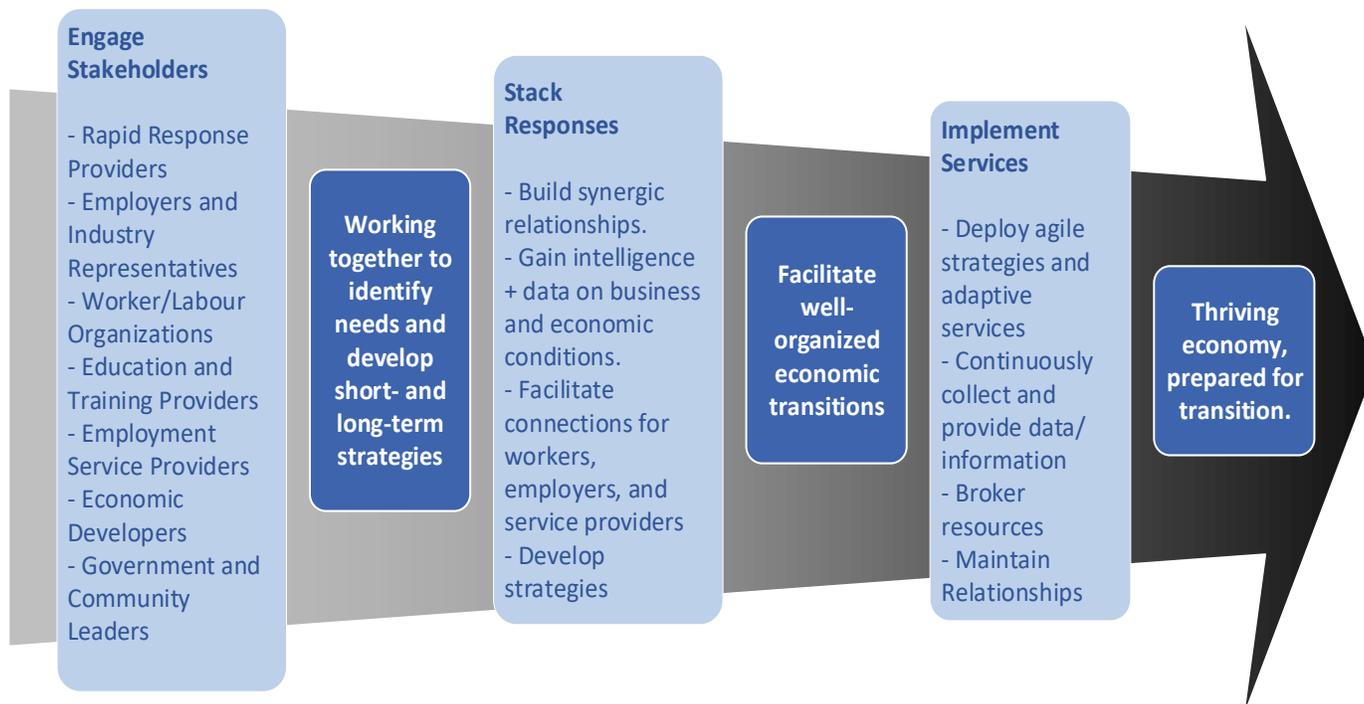


The ultimate goal of a Rapid Response initiative is to work alongside employers, workers and community stakeholders as a first-response in times of workforce crisis, in order to prevent unemployment. Failing that, Rapid Response initiatives strive to assist impacted workers and employers by triaging and expediting priority services through the critical crisis discovery, peak and recovery periods, in order to mitigate the socioeconomic impact of job retrenchment.ⁱⁱ

In the United States, rapid response strategies are a standing element of national and local workforce approaches and underpin economic resilience for businesses, their workers and their communities at large, with promising results (OECD).ⁱⁱⁱ “Rapid Response funds are used to prepare materials, travel to early intervention sites, pay and train staff, pay costs associated with informational meetings, pay costs associated with transition committees and provide disaster and emergency services.”^{iv} With an agile approach that spurs a judicious alignment of social and private resources across a variety of workforce disruption scenarios, the US Rapid Response model presents a timely learning opportunity as we navigate the rippling outfall of the COVID-19 economic crisis.

While the particular services and structures of rapid responses are naturally unique to local circumstances and opportunities, successful rapid response initiatives are generally staggered through crisis discovery, peak, and recovery periods with the same core priorities:

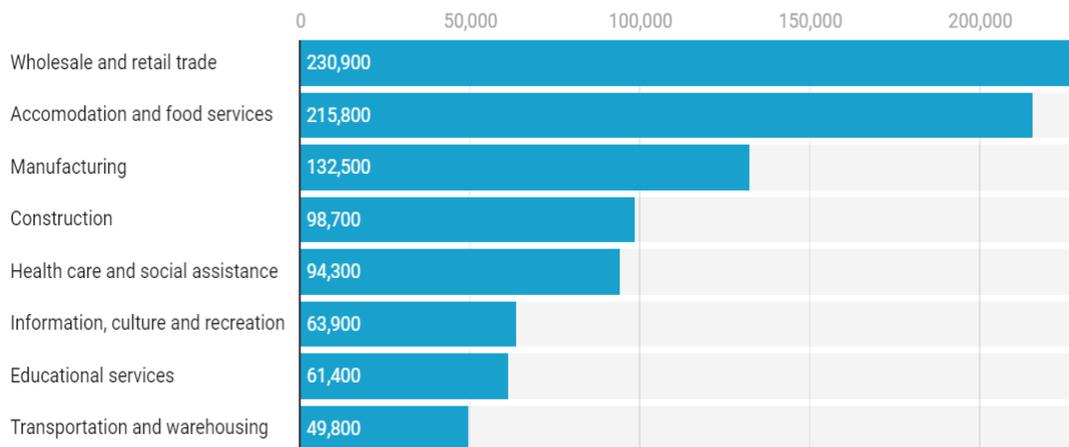
- **Gathering, understanding and acting upon timely insights** necessary to mounting evidence-based strategies, triaged to emerging workforce realities and opportunities.
- **Designing and delivering rapid services agile to labour-market shifts** in order to mitigate negative socioeconomic impacts on (especially vulnerable) workforce stakeholders.
- **Documenting and sharing frontline workforce development insights** that will inform targeted and sustainable responses to immediate, short-term, and long-term industry workforce needs.^v



Effective Rapid Response initiatives plan for and rely continuously on timely data from a number of sources, including real-time information on labour market contractions and growth patterns, as well as information on availability and opportunities of the impacted workforce. Furthermore, well-informed rapid response initiatives value and invest in comprehensive partnerships with all impacted stakeholders who are key to providing a wider array of additional information and data, as well as supporting the response efficacy and community buy-in.

Leveraging these core assets – well-informed strategies and collaborative approaches – Rapid Response service providers are then charged with engaging directly with impacted workers, employers and communities toward stabilization and recovery.^{vi}

COVID-19 in Ontario: Job losses by sector since February



Across Ontario, the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the state of the tourism industry and its workforce rapidly and drastically. The seemingly unceasing announcements of cancellations of conferences and sports events along with flight cancellations as well as travel bans, school and university closures and directives to practice physical distancing are impacting hospitality workers across the full breadth of the industry. Hotel occupancy rates are at historical lows, restaurant service levels, commissary and cafeteria operations have slowed down more than 50%, and tourism attraction activities have all but halted in most regions. This is resulting in income loss for the most vulnerable workers, significant business losses, and massive disruption to the industry at large.^{viiiviii}

Hospitality Workers Training Centre's Rapid Response Service Centre is here to help.

These unfolding and rippling impacts of Covid-19's socioeconomic and workforce disruption across our sector have necessitated a proactive and rapid response from the Hospitality Workers Training Centre (HWTC). Moving forward with an evidence-based approach to a timely sector-focused service delivery, HWTC's Rapid Response Activities include:

1. **Engaging Stakeholders:** Leading the establishment of a labour-management-community expert taskforce to inform and secure buy-in for key project processes and deliverables. Partnering with economic development and other organizations to avert worker dislocations.
2. **Collecting and Sharing Data:** Collecting information related to the dislocations and available worker resources, to be shared with our community and sector stakeholders at large. Taking the lead with province-wide dissemination of sector-specific information on the availability of opportunities, services and activities.
3. **Implementing Stabilization Services:** Directly engaging with impacted employers and workers to provide information and facilitate access to available resources and services as well as providing emergency assistance tailored to closures or layoffs.
4. **Initiating Recovery Services:** Coordinating and providing (where appropriate) integrated training and wraparound services to meet the short and long-term needs of the affected workforce.
5. **Sharing our Learnings:** Developing continuous evaluation and renewal activities, including documenting and sharing learnings of successful strategies and tactics for uptake in other contexts.

Over the coming year, we at Hospitality Workers Training Centre (HWTC) will continue to engage and learn alongside our sector stakeholders, develop responsive services as workforce conditions evolve, and share our frontline learnings to help mitigate the impact of current and future workforce disruptions.

Looking to learn more about Rapid Response Approaches?

[Practitioner's Guide to Rapid Response](#) from the U.S. Department of Labor Employment & Training Administration.

[Dislocated Worker Unit Manual and Rapid Response Guide](#) from the TN Department of Labor and Workforce Development.

[Rapid Response](#) from the Government of Massachusetts.

Want to know more?

Access supports directly at 1-888-777-HWTC (4982).

Learn more about HWTC's sector-specific Hospitality and Food Service rapid response on our website <http://hospitalitytrainingcentre.com>.

Join the conversation on our social media:

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References

ⁱ US Department of Labour ((2020). *Rapid Response Services* Available at: <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/eta/layoffs>.

ⁱⁱ Table adapted from: US Department of Labor Employment & Training Administration (2015). *Practitioner's Guide to RAPID RESPONSE*. Available at: <https://virginiacareerworks.com/wp-content/uploads/Practitioners-Guide-to-Rapid-Response-2015-1.pdf>.

ⁱⁱⁱ Organization Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2016). *Back to Work: United States Improving the Re-employment Prospects of Displaced Workers*. Available at: <https://www.oecd.org/employment/back-to-work-united-states-9789264266513-en.htm>.

^{iv} Tennessee Department of Labour and Workforce Development (2016). *Dislocated Worker Unit Manual and Rapid Response Guide*. Available at: https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/workforce/documents/employers/Dislocated_Worker_3B.pdf.

^v US Department of Labor Employment & Training Administration (2015). *Practitioner's Guide to RAPID RESPONSE*. Available at: <https://virginiacareerworks.com/wp-content/uploads/Practitioners-Guide-to-Rapid-Response-2015-1.pdf>.

^{vi} Table adapted from: US Department of Labor Employment & Training Administration (2015). *Practitioner's Guide to RAPID RESPONSE*. Available at: <https://virginiacareerworks.com/wp-content/uploads/Practitioners-Guide-to-Rapid-Response-2015-1.pdf>.

^{vii} A survey was designed and distributed by the Tourism Industry Association of Ontario (TIAO) and collected 3,457 respondents from every region of Ontario (April 2020).

^{viii} Table adapted from: CBC (May 2020). *Ontario Has Now Lost More than 1 Million Jobs During the COVID-19 Pandemic*. Available at: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/ontario-covid19-april-jobs-1.5562034>.