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Integrating Essential Skills Training into the Workplace

This guide is designed to help employers and practitioners develop Essential Skills training for the workplace. It includes a



with Others * Cont 7-step process for developing and integrating Essential Skills * Thinking * Computer Le * Working with Others in training in the workplace, and a series of tools and useful tips * thinking * Computer Le * Working with Others * Continuous Learning * Thinking * Computer Use * Reading * Document Use * Numeracy * Writing * Oral Communication * Working with Others * Continuous Learning * Thinking * Computer Use * Reading * Document Use * Numeracy * Writing * Oral Communication * Working with Others * Continuous Learning * Thinking * Computer Use * Reading * Document Use * Numeracy * Writing * Oral Communication * Working with Others * Continuous Learning * Thinking * Computer Use * Reading * Document Use * Numeracy * Writing * Oral Communication * Working with Others * Continuous Learning * Thinking * Computer Use * Reading * Document Use * Numeracy * Writing * Oral Communication * Working with Others * Continuous Learning * Thinking * Computer Use * Reading * Document Use * Numeracy * Writing * Oral Communication * Working with Others * Continuous Learning * Thinking * Computer Use * Reading * Document Use * Numeracy * Writing * Oral Communication * Working with Others * Continuous Learning * Thinking * Computer Use * Reading * Document Use * Numeracy * Writing * Oral Communication * Working with Others * Continuous Learning * Thinking * Computer Use * Reading * Document Use * Numeracy * Writing * Oral Communication * Working with Others * Continuous Learning * Thinking * Computer Use * Reading * Document Use * Numeracy * Writing * Oral Communication * Working with Others * Continuous Learning * Thinking * Computer Use * Reading * Document Use * Numeracy * Writing * Oral Communication * Working with Others * Continuous Learning * Thinking * Computer Use * Reading * Document Use * Numeracy * Writing * Oral Communication * Working with Others * Continuous Learning * Thinking * Computer Use * Reading * Document Use * Numeracy * Writing * Oral Communication * Working with Others * Continuous Learning



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Overview

Essential Skills are the skills that people need for learning, work and life. They provide the foundation for learning all other skills and enable people to evolve with their jobs and adapt to workplace change. There are nine Essential Skills:

Reading	Writing	Thinking
Document Use	Oral Communication	Computer Use
Numeracy	Working with Others	Continuous Learning

Investing in Essential Skills can lead to many benefits, including increased productivity, and improved employee morale and safety. Essential Skills training can positively impact your organization as a whole, as well as the individuals involved.

Essential Skills training doesn't have to be time consuming or complicated. It can be comprehensive or quick and targeted, depending on your organization's requirements. Whether you are a large organization or small, this guide will help you choose the route that suits your needs.

Literacy and Essential Skills for LEARNING, WORK and LIFE

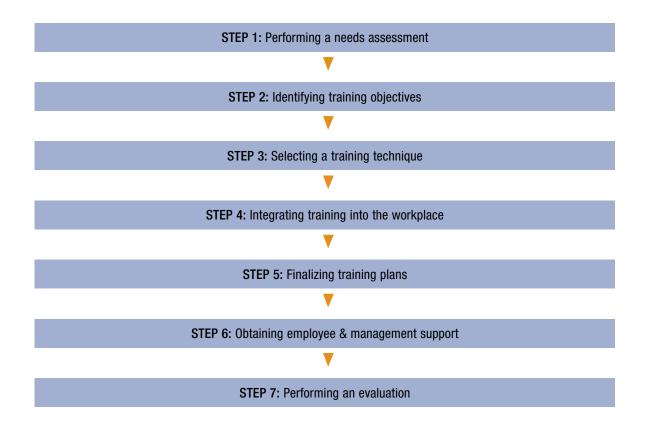
To learn more about Literacy and Essential Skills and other related tools, visit **hrsdc.gc.ca/essentialskills**.

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The Process

The following is the process for developing and integrating Essential Skills training in the workplace. It guides you along the way, from planning to evaluating.

Your circumstances will determine how you use this guide. If you are just beginning to examine Essential Skills in your workplace, you will likely need to complete all 7 steps of the process. If you have already started to address Essential Skills in your workplace, skip ahead to the section that addresses your current needs.



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STEP 1: Performing a needs assessment

Conducting an Essential Skills needs assessment is the first step towards developing an effective training strategy. This section will help you complete a needs assessment in your workplace.

A) Identify performance problems in the workplace

- Observe employees and their performance in the workplace to identify problems that could be related to Essential Skills issues (e.g. common mistakes, unfinished tasks, safety incidents, poor customer service, etc.).
- Seek feedback from employees, supervisors, managers, etc. about performance problems that could be related to Essential Skills issues.
- If you already offer training in your workplace, ask the trainer(s) if they have encountered problems that could be related to Essential Skills issues (e.g. employees seem to struggle with reading and understanding course material).

B) Identify the skills required in the workplace

- Look at internal job descriptions to identify the skills that are used in different jobs.
- Review Essential Skills Profiles (hrsdc.gc.ca/essentialskills) to learn about the required Essential Skills and complexity levels for different occupations.
- Conduct surveys (formal or informal) with employees, supervisors, managers, etc. to determine the skills and complexity levels they think are required in the workplace.

C) Assess employees' skills

Assessment is a good way to help identify skill areas that are strong or require improvement among your employees. Visit the Essential Skills website (hrsdc.gc.ca/essentialskills) to access various assessment tools that can help you gain a better understanding of your employees' skills.

D) Identify learning needs

- □ Identify Essential Skills issues in your workplace using the information collected from job site observations and assessments. Record the information in the chart on the next page.
- Decide whether or not training is required for the skill areas highlighted in the chart. You can seek feedback from employees, supervisors, managers, etc. to help make your decision.

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Example

IDENTIFIED ISSUE (e.g. common performance problem, skill gap)	SKILL(S) INVOLVED (i.e. which skill(s) are related to the issue?)	INDIVIDUAL OR Group Affected	Training Required? Yes/No	DATE
Joe has trouble following written instructions and procedures on a consistent basis.	Reading	Joe Brown in Customer Service	Yes	April 5
IDENTIFIED ISSUE	SKILL(S) INVOLVED	INDIVIDUAL OR Group Affected	training Required? Yes/No	DATE

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STEP 2: Identifying training objectives

This section will help you identify and establish your training objectives.

What would you like to achieve through Essential Skills training?

Improve productivity	Reduce absenteeism and/or turnover
Reduce errors	Improve succession planning
Improve customer service	Improve ability to implement change
Empower employees	in the workplace
Improve communication and/or teamwork	Other:
Improve safety	

What are your training needs? (e.g. employees need to improve their reading skills)

What are your training priorities? Prioritize your training needs according to factors such as budget, established organizational goals, costs of ignoring the problem vs. costs of implementing solutions, etc.

1.	
2.	
3.	



Remember that training is only one way to address Essential Skills issues. Other approaches could include the following:

- ✓ Job restructuring (i.e. changing the way a job is done to simplify it);
- Revising workplace materials (e.g. manuals, procedures) to ensure they are clear and easy to use;

 Helping employees adjust to recent changes in technology, policies, procedures, etc.
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Taking Action: A Guide | 7

STEP 3: Selecting a training technique

This section will help you choose a training technique(s) to improve Essential Skills in your workplace.

Training Techniques

There are two types of training—formal and informal—that can be used to improve Essential Skills in the workplace. Formal training often involves structured activities that have specific learning objectives (e.g. classroom training). Informal training is less structured and often happens through on the job experience/ training (e.g. working with co-workers). The following table describes some typical training techniques.

Training Technique	Description
Classroom Training Takes place in a classroom and is led by an instructor or expert.	 Formal Can be held onsite or offsite. Can be fully or partially funded by the employer. Can be held during working hours at no cost to the employee.
E-Learning Completed through online courses or CD-ROMs.	 Formal Can be self-paced (i.e. the employee learns independently) or facilitated by a tutor.
On-the-job Training Occurs on the job site.	 Formal: Tasks and skills to be learned are clearly identified, and learning follows a particular sequence. Informal: An employee asks a co-worker to demonstrate how to do something. Involves hands-on learning of tasks, skills or procedures.
Mentoring Takes place when one individual teaches another individual how to complete tasks.	 Formal: Coordinated by the organization; deliberate pairing between a more skilled/experienced employee and a less skilled/experienced employee. Informal: Two people independently form a mentoring relationship.

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Training Technique	Description
Self-Study Takes place by oneself without direct supervision.	 Formal: Activities are structured and linked to formal training objectives. Informal: Activities are not structured and are not linked to formal training objectives. May be conducted through the employee's own initiative or through a workplace initiative. May take place at work or on worker's own time. Learning materials may be obtained through employee's own initiative, through a professional association or through the workplace. Employers may provide reference documents or manuals to support an employee's Essential Skills learning: Can be print-based or electronic (e.g. on the company's website). Can include job aids (e.g. tips, reminders), reports, articles, charts, posters, user manuals and reference guides.

Choosing a Training Technique

The following table outlines what you need to consider when choosing a training technique. In the column on the left, select the circumstances that best reflect your workplace by placing a checkmark \checkmark in the box. When you are finished, count the total number of checkmarks under each technique. Those techniques that received the most checkmarks are likely to be the most appropriate training options to meet the needs of your workplace. (**Note:** Using a mix of several strategies is possible).

Classroom Training

Workplace Circumstances	Considerations for Use
 A large number of employees require training. You want to give employees opportunities to share information with each other. You want to give employees the chance to practice job tasks and receive immediate feedback. 	 There are usually higher costs associated with classroom training. It may take employees away from the job and offsite training requires travel time. Will you provide paid release time for employees, or will training occur outside of work hours? You could incorporate Essential Skills training into existing classroom training sessions (e.g. safety training).

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E-Learning

Workplace Circumstances	Considerations for Use
 Employees are not located in one place or cannot attend classroom training. It is difficult to schedule employees' training time. Employees need access to immediate training. 	 Structured e-learning courses can be expensive to develop. You can search for existing learning resources that could be used or customized to your workplace or industry. Will e-learning be self-paced or facilitated by a tutor? Employees will need access to computers. They should be comfortable using computers, or support should be available.

On-the-job Training

Workplace Circumstances	Considerations for Use
 A small number of employees require training. Employees need to use job site equipment and materials. You want to support and reinforce other types of training (e.g. safety training). 	 For formal on-the-job training, you need to identify required learning procedures. For informal on-the-job training, you could provide employees with opportunities to perform more challenging job tasks to enhance their skill levels (with appropriate support).

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Mentoring

Workplace Circumstances	Considerations for Use
 There is a need to enhance oral communication, problem-solving, decision-making, job task planning organization and working with others skills. You want to improve supervisory and leadership skills or you want to build self-confidence in your employees. You want to provide employees with opportunities for networking and career development. 	 For formal mentoring, you need to establish a selection and matching process, and ongoing support for mentors and mentees. You should start with only 1 or 2 mentors to build capacity and refine the program. You should encourage and support informal mentoring relationships.

Self-Study

Workplace Circumstances	Considerations for Use
 Scheduling training for groups of employees is challenging. You want to address specific issues (e.g. employees' specific skill needs). Employees are highly motivated. 	 Can be used on its own, or to support other types of training. Employees' motivation levels and learning styles will differ. Consider incentives and strategies to support self-study. You should provide easy access to learning materials.

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STEP 4: Integrating training into the workplace

This section will help you decide how to integrate training into the workplace.

In-House vs. Outsourced Training

Essential Skills training can be integrated into the workplace using in-house resources or by seeking external expertise. If your workplace has limited internal training capacity or your training needs are more complex, you might need to hire external trainers. If you have sufficient internal training capacity or your training needs are not complex, you could develop and deliver Essential Skills training on your own. The following table outlines what you need to consider when choosing between the two options.

In the column on the left, select the circumstances that best reflect your workplace by placing a checkmark ✓ in the box. When you are finished, count the total number of checkmarks under each approach. The approach that received the most checkmarks is likely to be the most appropriate option to meet the needs of your workplace.

Workplace Circumstances	Considerations for Use
 A small number of employees require training. You don't need to address complex issues. You have a trainer on site that is familiar with your workplace and workplace materials. 	 You could easily integrate Essential Skills training into existing workplace training sessions (e.g. technical training, safety training, customer service training, etc.). You can search for existing training materials that you can use in-house. The trainer on site may not have sufficient Essential Skills expertise. In that case, you might need to provide professional development time to enhance their knowledge of Essential Skills. If you do not have a trainer onsite, you could take this opportunity to develop the training capacity of managers, supervisors, etc. If required, you can partner with someone at your local college or industry association to build internal training capacity.

In-House Training

Outsourced Training

Workplace Circumstances	Considerations for Use	
 A large number of employees require training. You need to address complex issues. You do not have an onsite trainer, or, the trainer is not prepared to deal with complex issues. 	 There are usually costs associated with outsourced training. External trainers have likely developed Essential Skills training which can be customized to your workplace. It is more challenging to provide blended learning (e.g. on-the-job training that supports classroom training). The trainer would need to be well informed about your workplace and workplace materials. External trainers can be used to build your internal training capacity. 	

If you decide to hire an external trainer, the following tips will help you manage the process:

- Start with a clear contract that specifies the roles and responsibilities of your workplace and the trainer.
- Build a project plan that outlines how the work will be carried out and clearly identifies deliverables (e.g. over a 6 week period, the trainer will conduct 6 classes to improve the reading skills of 25 employees).
- Ensure that the external trainer is familiar with your organization (e.g. organizational culture, strengths, challenges, operations, etc.). This is key to the development of effective Essential Skills training.
- Provide the trainer with necessary workplace-related documents and materials.
- Communicate with the trainer on a regular basis.
- Actively monitor the progress of the training to ensure it is meeting targets and deliverables.

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If you decide to develop and deliver training in-house, follow these steps to develop a customized Essential Skills activity.

	Steps for Developing an Essential Skills Activity	1
1.	Make a list of the occupations in your organization.	
2.	Identify the occupational groups that require Essential Skills training.	
3.	Find the Essential Skills Profile (hrsdc.gc.ca/essentialskills) for the chosen occupation(s). (Note: If you cannot find a profile for a specific occupation, use a profile for a similar occupation or refer to an existing job description.)	
4.	Review the Profile(s) to identify the tasks and complexity levels that employees are expected to perform in that occupation.	
5.	Develop training activities that help employees practice these tasks. (Note: Develop training activities that allow employees to progress from less complex to more complex tasks. Ensure that the training activities closely resemble employees' expected work tasks.)	
6.	Select relevant workplace materials (manuals, policy documents, charts, etc.) to support the training activity.	

Visit hrsdc.gc.ca/essentialskills for tools that can help improve Essential Skills in your workplace.

Keys to Success

The following table provides some helpful tips for introducing Essential Skills training into the workplace.

- Build Essential Skills training activities into existing training sessions (e.g. mandatory training, technical training, safety training). For example, you can develop customized training activities that are relevant to different training sessions.
- Where possible, customize existing Essential Skills training for the workplace. For example, use authentic workplace materials (manuals, graphs, timesheets, etc.) from your organization to connect training activities and the workplace.
- Include Essential Skills training activities in other workplace events such as meetings or team-building sessions.

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- Encourage employees to work with co-workers in order to complete training activities. Employees have different skill strengths and can learn from each other.
- Build time into work schedules to accommodate Essential Skills training.
- Support the development of learning or personal development plans. A plan can include opportunities such as taking responsibility for a staff meeting or the completion of a self-study course.
- Provide support and promote a culture of learning (e.g. encourage employees to ask for training).
- Arrange work tasks so that the workers' learning opportunities are maximized.
- Consider providing appropriate incentives for skill gains.
- Consider whether workplace materials could be revised to ensure they are clear and easy to use. Improving workplace materials can help make a job task less complex for an employee.
- Ensure that employees have easy access to workplace knowledge. Develop a structured system for documenting and distributing "how to" knowledge within the workplace.
- Provide sufficient opportunities for workers to share and reflect on their learning experiences.



Incorporate Essential Skills training activities into existing training by:

- ✓ Asking employees to develop a list of common workplace terms and acronyms with definitions;
- Embedding oral communication and problem solving tasks into customer service training;
- Encouraging employees to write a brief summary of what they hope to learn during a training session.

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STEP 5: Finalizing training plans

This section will help you finalize and organize your training plans.

Participation

Participation in the training will be:

- □ Voluntary for all employees
- Mandatory for all employees
- □ Mandatory for certain employees (e.g. all employees in a certain position)
- □ Recommended to certain employees, but voluntary
- □ Voluntary, with successful completion tied to opportunities for advancement

Time

You are willing to provide the following amount of time to employees completing training:

- □ Several weeks of full-time training for up to _____ weeks
- □ ____ day(s) per week for up to ____ weeks
- □ ____ ½ day(s) per week for up to ____ weeks
- □ ____ hour(s) per week for up to ____ weeks
- □ Lunch time for up to _____ weeks

Costs

You are willing to provide the following for training fees, time off from work and transportation expenses:

- □ Reimburse ____ % of training fees
- □ Reimburse ____ % of employees' salary during training
- □ Reimburse ____ % of transportation expenses
- Fully fund training

Will you incur any temporary staffing or other costs while participants are on training? Does any action need to be taken (e.g. apply for increase in budget; hire temporary staff)?

Estimate the overall cost of training: \$ _____

Essential Skills Training Plan

Use the following worksheet to outline your training plans. It will keep you organized and can be useful when presenting your ideas to employees, colleagues or management. (**Note:** Complete separate worksheets for groups or individuals with different training needs.)

Target Individual(s)/Group(s) (e.g. all customer service agents):		
1		
2		
3		
Learning Need(s) (e.g. improve oral communication skills):		
1		
2		
3		
Proposed Training:		
Classroom Training C E-Learning O On-the-job C Mentoring Self-Study		
Other:		
Training Delivery (e.g. outsourced to one local trainer):		
Outsourced In-House Web-Based Other:		
Frequency of Training (e.g. once a week for six weeks):		
Timeline for Training Development & Delivery:		
Training development (Date, Approximate Timeline):		
Training delivery (Datel Approximate Timeline):		
Cost (e.g. \$200 per employee):		
Training Evaluation to Follow? (If yes, see STEP 7)		
□ Yes □ No		

STEP 6: Obtaining employee & management support

This section will help you gain support from employees and management for your training plans.

Tips for obtaining employee support for Essential Skills training:

- Educate employees about Essential Skills. Communicate the benefits of Essential Skills upgrading for employees both at work and at home (e.g. increased self-confidence, improved employee morale, etc.). Visit **hrsdc.gc.ca/essentialskills** for background material on Essential Skills.
- Demonstrate management's commitment to the training.
- Use clear, respectful and positive messaging when promoting Essential Skills training.
- Demonstrate to employees how job tasks can be easier as a result of Essential Skills upgrading.
- Engage employees in the process (e.g. hold open discussions about training objectives).
- Communicate to employees the confidential nature of training information (e.g. clearly communicate how assessment results will be used).
- Include Essential Skills training activities in employees' learning or personal development plans.
- Help employees keep track of their progress with respect to Essential Skills improvements. Always
 recognize employees' skill gains.

Tips for obtaining employee support for Essential Skills training:

- Educate management about Essential skills. Communicate both the organizational and employee benefits of Essential Skills upgrading (e.g. improved productivity, improved employee retention, improved employee morale, etc.). Visit hrsdc.gc.ca/essentialskills for background material on Essential Skills.
- Where appropriate, present a business case for investing in Essential Skills training. You might want
 to develop a business case if the proposed training involves substantial costs. The business case
 should include the reasons for the training, the expected benefits, the options considered, the
 expected costs of the project, the estimated costs of **not** implementing training and expected risks.
 Draw on the results of the needs assessment to build your business case. Identify anticipated
 benefits to staff and demonstrate that the investment has value.
- Communicate regularly with management as you implement training in the workplace. Track the progress of participants and the impacts on the organization. Make the results available to management and staff.

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Possible Roadblocks and Solutions

There are a number of challenges that you could face when trying to obtain support from management. Some common roadblocks and possible solutions are listed below.

Possible Roadblocks	Possible Solutions
Management says there is no time to develop and deliver training	 Integrate Essential Skills training into existing training (e.g. safety, technical or customer service training). Search for and use existing external training materials and resources that can be customized to your workplace. Hire an external training provider. Consider whether informal training strategies are appropriate (e.g. on-the-job training). Deliver training in short segments.
Management says it is too difficult to fit training in with employees' schedules	 Integrate Essential Skills training into existing training. Set up a learning centre for employees. Consider using e-learning. Consider training in small groups, one-on-one tutoring, on-the-job training, on-the-job mentoring, etc. For those organizations that have fluctuations in levels of work activity, consider providing training during "downtime" or less busy periods.
Management says it is too expensive	 Integrate Essential Skills training into existing training. Consider possible partners and networks (see next page). Search for and use existing external training materials and resources that can be customized to your workplace. Calculate and present the costs of not offering training. Essential Skills training can have a number of positive impacts such as reduced safety incidents.

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Networks and Partnerships

Networks and partnerships can help make Essential Skills training more affordable. They can also provide opportunities to share expertise because some organizations can benefit and learn from others. Consider the following potential partners and collaborators when implementing Essential Skills training:

- Community colleges
- Provincial/Territorial governments (e.g. services or programs offered through Labour or Immigration departments)
- Community and business development organizations
- Business associations (e.g. Chambers of Commerce)
- Other organizations with similar training needs
- Sector councils
- Industry associations
- Federal government programs that relate to skills enhancement and/or business/community development
- Co-operative programs offered through high schools, colleges, etc.
- Private trainers and consultants

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STEP 7: Performing an evaluation

The final step in the process is evaluating the training you have provided. This section will help you develop and perform a training evaluation.

Planning the Evaluation

You need to decide what you want to accomplish with an evaluation and what it will look like. You should consider a number of factors including the following:

- The amount of money spent on the training. Generally, the more money you have invested in the training, the higher the cost of the evaluation.
- The purpose of the evaluation: What do you want to find out? If you want to know whether trainees are satisfied with the training, your evaluation could be less extensive. If you want to know what the training impacts are, your evaluation may be more comprehensive.

You may choose to do an evaluation in-house or use external evaluators. Whatever you decide, the following checklist can be used to guide you through the planning stages of an evaluation.

	Steps for Planning an Evaluation	1
1.	Determine the purpose of the evaluation (i.e. what type of information do you want?)	
2.	Determine who the evaluation is for (e.g. business owners, managers, trainees, clients, other partners or stakeholders). This will help you determine information needs.	
3.	Identify and prioritize your information needs.	
4.	Determine the key sources of information (e.g. trainees, supervisors, managers, clients, etc.).	
5.	Determine how the information will be collected (e.g. surveys, interviews, focus groups, observation of worksite and job tasks, pre and post tests, etc.).	
6.	Identify the resources available for the evaluation (e.g. money, time, human, etc.).	

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Possible Questions

The table below shows some key areas in which a training evaluation might focus. It provides example questions for each area. You may not want to ask evaluation questions in all of these areas. Your information needs should guide the development of evaluation questions.

Evaluation Questions		
Evaluation Areas	Types of Questions	Suggested Data Collection Methods
Trainees' Reactions and Perceptions	 To what extent were trainees satisfied with the training? To what extent were trainees satisfied with the instructor/trainer? The facilities? The content? Opportunities to practice skills? To what extent did the trainees feel the training objectives were met? Did the trainees find the information useful? How do training participants plan to use training information? Which areas of the training need improvement? 	Questionnaire Form: This information is usually collected right after the training activity. Follow-up surveys, interviews with trainees.
Knowledge/ Skill Gains	 To what extent did the trainees' skills and/or knowledge improve? Did the trainees acquire skills at acceptable levels? 	Pre and post assessments. Follow-up surveys or interviews with trainees and/or supervisors.
Transfer of training to the workplace	 To what extent are new skills/knowledge being used in the workplace? If skills are not being transferred, why? Are there any barriers that prevent workers from applying their knowledge/skills to the workplace? 	Observations of work site/ observations of job task performance. Interviews/surveys with employees, supervisors, trainees, managers, and/or clients.
Impacts on the workplace	 What impacts did the training have on the workplace (e.g. improved employee retention, improved safety, improved customer satisfaction, improved productivity, etc.)? To what extent can these improvements be attributed to the training? 	Interviews/surveys with employees, trainees, supervisors, managers, and/or clients. Review of company statistics. Observations of work site/ observations of job task performance.

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Possible Indicators

The table below shows some key indicators which can be used to evaluate training. Not all indicators will be applicable to all training activities. Your information needs should guide the selection of indicators.

Indicators to Track and Evaluate Training

Extent of Training (activity and output indicators)

- Number of training activities delivered in the past six months
- Types of training activities (e.g. mentoring, on-the-job training) delivered in the past six months
- · Number of people who participated in the training activities
- Cost per course
- Cost per trainee
- Amount of paid release time for trainees

Perceptions of Training/Perceptions of Challenges

- · Degree of trainee satisfaction with training
- Thoughts on the quality of training activities
- Thoughts on the usefulness of training activities for the job
- · Thoughts on the adequacy and availability of Essential Skills learning opportunities
- Thoughts on the barriers to transferring skills to the workplace
- · Thoughts on factors that enhance the transfer of skills to the workplace

Training Results

- Level of improvement in Essential Skills (e.g. improved writing skills, improved computer use skills)
- Evidence of job performance improvement:
 - Increased productivity
 - Improved quality of work
 - Increased efficiency in the performance of job tasks
- Supervisor ratings of employee job performance (pre and post training)
- Evidence of skills utilization the extent to which a trainee applies new skills to job tasks
- Reduced absenteeism
- Reduced number of safety incidents
- Increased employee retention
- Changes in sales volume

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Indicators to Track and Evaluate Training

Training Results (continued)

- Accuracy of customer orders
- Number of transactions per day
- Number of lost customers
- Number of customer complaints
- Extent of repeat business
- Evidence of impact on employee career development
- Increased customer satisfaction
- Level of improvement in employees' self-confidence
- Degree of employee motivation
- Level of improvement with respect to staff morale

Collecting the Information

The following table provides a description of various data collection methods that are typically used to evaluate and track Essential Skills training activities and results.

Data Collection	Considerations for Use
Interviews A discussion that covers a variety of topics or questions, and gathers information from particular groups such as training experts, employees, trainees, supervisors and/or managers. Can be conducted by telephone or face-to-face.	 You do not have a lot of people to obtain information from. You want opinions on whether employees' skill levels have improved (where pre and post tests were not conducted). Good when you need a flexible, in-depth approach. Interviews may be preferable when the subject matter is complicated or the topic area is sensitive.

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Data Collection	Considerations for Use
Focus Groups A group of people brought together to discuss a certain issue or topic. A facilitator guides the discussion and records the interaction and results.	 Useful when you need to collect information on a specific issue (e.g. whether a training activity is useful, how to improve training). Can only cover a limited number of issues (6 to 8 issues). Requires a good facilitator. Is a less costly alternative to conducting interviews. If there are a large number of questions, consider interviews or surveys. If people are hesitant to be truthful in a group setting, consider interviews or surveys.
Survey Questionnaires A structured list of questions designed to collect information on issues such as perceptions of training and impacts of training. Questions are usually more close-ended, but can also include open-ended questions. Can be conducted in person, via telephone, web or print.	 Use when you have a large group of people you want to collect information from. Useful when you need to collect a lot of information quickly. Requires knowledge of questionnaire design. Easy to quantify results when using close-ended questions (e.g. the training was useful for you in your job - yes or no?).
Pre/Post Tests Tests that are conducted prior to and after training to assess how much the trainee has learned (i.e. assesses knowledge and skill improvement).	 A rigorous pre and post test requires resources and expertise to develop. For rigorous pre and post tests, you need to have a large number of trainees and several training sessions to justify the expense. Depending on information needs, you could develop a more informal pre and post test (e.g. observe employee performance on job tasks before and after training).

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Data Collection	Considerations for Use
Review of Internal Data Data that is collected by the organization for management purposes (e.g. revenue, sales volume, number of clients served, etc.).	 Useful when you need information on service delivery, management practices and business performance. May be difficult to link results to training (i.e. did the training lead to increased productivity?)
Observation of Worksite/ Job Task Performance A method for gathering information about how the worksite operates and how someone performs a job task.	 May need a structured observation guide (e.g. observation checklist) to ensure that observations of job performance are accurate and consistent with other observers' ratings. Requires a knowledgeable observer.
Expert Panel A way to collect opinions from a panel of knowledgeable experts.	 Useful when there is a need to draw on specialized knowledge and expertise (e.g. Essential Skills training expertise). Experts can assess training materials, curriculum and delivery approach. Experts can provide guidance on how Essential Skills training activities can be improved.

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Using the Evaluation Results

The following table provides some tips for increasing the usefulness of evaluation results.

Tips for Increasing the Usefulness of Evaluation Results

- Obtain feedback on the evaluation results from key decision makers and those involved in training design and delivery.
- Improve accessibility to evaluation results. Ensure that evaluation results are available to key decision makers and those responsible for training development and delivery.
- Communicate where the evaluation results are located (e.g. website).
- Monitor the quality of the evaluation results. Have clear guidelines in place for good quality evaluations. Be clear about what is expected from the evaluation. Provide examples of previous evaluations that you were satisfied with.
- Provide evaluation results in a user-friendly format. Useful information should be presented in a user-friendly manner. Recommendations should be clear and provide sufficient detail.

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Conclusion

We hope that this guide has helped you take action on Essential Skills in your workplace. Since implementing training in your organization, have you experienced any of the following:

- □ Improved motivation?
- □ Higher productivity?
- □ Lower turnover?
- □ Employees who embrace change?
- □ Fewer on-the-job accidents?
- □ An easier time meeting business goals?
- Other:

You are encouraged to continue monitoring Essential Skills to ensure employees are well equipped to succeed. This is especially important if your workplace experiences change (e.g. technological, organizational, etc.), which could affect the Essential Skills required in your workplace. Additional assessments or training could be necessary to help ensure employees can effectively adapt and function in the workplace. Visit **hrsdc.gc.ca/essentialskills** for additional resources.

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