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Skills and Employment  
Office of Literacy and Essential Skills

**TAKING ACTION**

# A Guide

## *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 7-step process for developing and integrating Essential Skills training in the workplace, and a series of tools and useful tips that will help you work your way through the process.**





# 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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### E-Learning

Workplace Circumstances	Considerations for Use
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Employees are not located in one place or cannot attend classroom training.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> It is difficult to schedule employees' training time.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Employees need access to immediate training.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• Will e-learning be self-paced or facilitated by a tutor?</li> <li>• Employees will need access to computers. They should be comfortable using computers, or support should be available.</li> </ul>

### On-the-job Training

Workplace Circumstances	Considerations for Use
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> A small number of employees require training.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Employees need to use job site equipment and materials.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> You want to support and reinforce other types of training (e.g. safety training).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For formal on-the-job training, you need to identify required learning procedures.</li> <li>• 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).</li> </ul>

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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. 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 ( <a href="https://hrsdc.gc.ca/essentialskills">hrsdc.gc.ca/essentialskills</a> ) 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](https://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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## 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)?

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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     E-Learning     On-the-job     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 (Date/ 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](https://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](https://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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrate Essential Skills training into existing training (e.g. safety, technical or customer service training).</li> <li>• Search for and use existing external training materials and resources that can be customized to your workplace.</li> <li>• Hire an external training provider.</li> <li>• Consider whether informal training strategies are appropriate (e.g. on-the-job training).</li> <li>• Deliver training in short segments.</li> </ul>
Management says it is too difficult to fit training in with employees' schedules	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrate Essential Skills training into existing training.</li> <li>• Set up a learning centre for employees.</li> <li>• Consider using e-learning.</li> <li>• Consider training in small groups, one-on-one tutoring, on-the-job training, on-the-job mentoring, etc.</li> <li>• For those organizations that have fluctuations in levels of work activity, consider providing training during "downtime" or less busy periods.</li> </ul>
Management says it is too expensive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrate Essential Skills training into existing training.</li> <li>• Consider possible partners and networks (see next page).</li> <li>• Search for and use existing external training materials and resources that can be customized to your workplace.</li> <li>• Calculate and present the costs of <b>not</b> offering training. Essential Skills training can have a number of positive impacts such as reduced safety incidents.</li> </ul>

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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. 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.).	

## 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To what extent were trainees satisfied with the training?</li> <li>To what extent were trainees satisfied with the instructor/trainer? The facilities? The content? Opportunities to practice skills?</li> <li>To what extent did the trainees feel the training objectives were met?</li> <li>Did the trainees find the information useful? How do training participants plan to use training information?</li> <li>Which areas of the training need improvement?</li> </ul>	<p>Questionnaire Form: This information is usually collected right after the training activity.</p> <p>Follow-up surveys, interviews with trainees.</p>
Knowledge/Skill Gains	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To what extent did the trainees' skills and/or knowledge improve?</li> <li>Did the trainees acquire skills at acceptable levels?</li> </ul>	<p>Pre and post assessments.</p> <p>Follow-up surveys or interviews with trainees and/or supervisors.</p>
Transfer of training to the workplace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To what extent are new skills/knowledge being used in the workplace?</li> <li>If skills are not being transferred, why? Are there any barriers that prevent workers from applying their knowledge/skills to the workplace?</li> </ul>	<p>Observations of work site/ observations of job task performance.</p> <p>Interviews/surveys with employees, supervisors, trainees, managers, and/or clients.</p>
Impacts on the workplace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What impacts did the training have on the workplace (e.g. improved employee retention, improved safety, improved customer satisfaction, improved productivity, etc.)?</li> <li>To what extent can these improvements be attributed to the training?</li> </ul>	<p>Interviews/surveys with employees, trainees, supervisors, managers, and/or clients.</p> <p>Review of company statistics.</p> <p>Observations of work site/ observations of job task performance.</p>

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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
<p><b>Extent of Training (activity and output indicators)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of training activities delivered in the past six months</li> <li>• Types of training activities (e.g. mentoring, on-the-job training) delivered in the past six months</li> <li>• Number of people who participated in the training activities</li> <li>• Cost per course</li> <li>• Cost per trainee</li> <li>• Amount of paid release time for trainees</li> </ul>
<p><b>Perceptions of Training/Perceptions of Challenges</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Degree of trainee satisfaction with training</li> <li>• Thoughts on the quality of training activities</li> <li>• Thoughts on the usefulness of training activities for the job</li> <li>• Thoughts on the adequacy and availability of Essential Skills learning opportunities</li> <li>• Thoughts on the barriers to transferring skills to the workplace</li> <li>• Thoughts on factors that enhance the transfer of skills to the workplace</li> </ul>
<p><b>Training Results</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Level of improvement in Essential Skills (e.g. improved writing skills, improved computer use skills)</li> <li>• Evidence of job performance improvement:           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increased productivity</li> <li>- Improved quality of work</li> <li>- Increased efficiency in the performance of job tasks</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Supervisor ratings of employee job performance (pre and post training)</li> <li>• Evidence of skills utilization – the extent to which a trainee applies new skills to job tasks</li> <li>• Reduced absenteeism</li> <li>• Reduced number of safety incidents</li> <li>• Increased employee retention</li> <li>• Changes in sales volume</li> </ul>
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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
<p><b>Interviews</b></p> <p>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.</p> <p>Can be conducted by telephone or face-to-face.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You do not have a lot of people to obtain information from.</li> <li>• You want opinions on whether employees' skill levels have improved (where pre and post tests were not conducted).</li> <li>• Good when you need a flexible, in-depth approach.</li> <li>• Interviews may be preferable when the subject matter is complicated or the topic area is sensitive.</li> </ul>

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