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# Evaluation of the Workplace Skills Initiative

## Final Report

August 2012

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## ***List of Abbreviations***

HR	Human Resources
HRSDC	Human Resources and Skills Development Canada
SIP	Sectoral Initiatives Program
SMEs	Small- and medium-sized enterprises
WSI	Workplace Skills Initiative

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# Executive Summary

## The Workplace Skills Initiative

Introduced by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) in 2005, the Workplace Skills Initiative (WSI) aimed to contribute to the achievement of the Workplace Skills Strategy (WSS) priorities by stimulating and supporting partnership-based projects. Implicit in these projects was the development of human capital in, and for, the workplace. The WSI was designed to support projects of up to three years that tested innovative approaches, and addressed one or more of the following objectives:

- Demonstrating new approaches to workplace skills development;
- Supporting the adoption of improved human resources management practices and sharing of best practices, particularly for small- and medium-sized enterprises;
- Piloting approaches to skills identification, recognition and utilization; and
- Piloting approaches to promote partnerships, networks and information flow within and across firms.

The WSI issued three Calls for Proposals (2005-06, 2007-08 and 2008-09). On April 24, 2009, HRSDC suspended funding for new projects under the WSI. Although project proposals were received from the third Call for Proposals, no projects were funded due to the program's suspension. A total of 29 projects were funded by the WSI. Projects funded under the WSI Terms and Conditions typically had a 24-36 month timeframe. HRSDC's contributions to these projects totalled \$37,139,516 over the life of the WSI.

### Bridging the Gap

The objective of the project was to contribute to the integration of skilled immigrants in small - and medium-sized enterprises in Ontario and Québec. A bilingual online learning game (TalentNet) was developed in order to help employers to improve organizational competencies in inclusive talent management.

## Evaluation Purpose

The overall objective of this evaluation was to determine the extent to which the WSI approach was effective in achieving the expected short-term outcomes, as well as identify best practices from the projects and lessons learned for future programming and policy discussions. The evaluation covered all 29 projects funded during the life cycle of WSI, between 2006-2007 and 2010-2011. The Evaluation fieldwork was conducted between October 2011 and January 2012.

## Methodology

The evaluation methodologies used to gather the lines of evidence included a review of program and project documentation and administrative data collected from funded projects. Evidence was also gathered from key informant interviews with 10 HRSDC staff and managers involved in the implementation of the WSI, interviews with unfunded project proponents and partners of projects that went ahead in the absence of WSI funding and case studies of 12 funded projects. A comparative analysis of alternative programs and approaches and an expert panel were also conducted.

While interviews were planned with unfunded project proponents and partners difficulties were encountered in contacting representatives of unfunded projects and a very limited number agreed to participate. As a consequence, the analysis of the results of the WSI funded projects relative to the unfunded projects did not take place.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For the WSI projects that went ahead in the absence of WSI funding, what were the key drivers for the projects proceeding, what were their results in comparison to funded WSI projects and did they operate at the same level as proposed in the application?

The key strength of the evaluation approach used was the adoption of various sources of information and methodologies to cross-validate the findings from different lines of evidence. Limitations of the methodologies employed include the accuracy of the administrative data collected; low response rates for interviews conducted; and, the length of time that lapsed since the completion of many projects, resulting in poor recall and difficulties contacting individuals who had been involved in projects.

## Summary of Key Findings

***The partnership approach adopted for the development and implementation of new instruments, tools and models was considered positive in terms of increased and on-going collaboration, despite some challenges.*** Project partners played an active role in the design and testing of new instruments, tools and models, and partnerships were regarded as highly successful. The requirement for leveraging 25 per cent of total project costs from project proponents and partners was perceived as having resulted in meaningful partnerships. Partners have continued to work together on related or new initiatives since the completion of the WSI project.

***WSI projects developed tools, instruments or models that resulted in increased knowledge among proponents and partners.*** Projects most often developed tools, instruments or models related to workplace skills training, and somewhat less often to support recruitment, retention or skills recognition. Project proponents and partners agreed that WSI projects resulted in an increase in knowledge about workplace skills development and human resource management.

***The extent to which WSI projects can be considered innovative varies depending on perspective, but projects were often innovative within the context of their implementation.*** The WSI projects were innovative or new to those involved in the project but were not necessarily innovative from a broader perspective. Most WSI innovations were based on adaptations of known approaches in a new context. Some experts contended that there were some innovations among these projects that seemed promising, and suggested that benefit could be derived from further study and applications of these models. An example of a promising approach is training linked with learning pathways and certification programs for some professions. Three experts also pointed out that more study is needed to ascertain how online-based portals and interventions as innovative approaches could be most effectively used.

***The potential for knowledge transfer was not fully realized as dissemination tended to be limited.*** Few projects implemented a fully developed or formal communications strategy or dissemination plan. The dissemination ability or capacity of partners and proponents was inconsistent, with some indication that pre-established networks and sectorial or professional links were important where projects achieved wide dissemination. In most projects, dissemination tended to be limited to immediate partners and stakeholders engaged in the project. While there is evidence that some projects continue to disseminate project results and tools online, few activities were conducted for dissemination or knowledge transfer following the conclusion of projects.

***Changes in workplace skills development and Human Resources management practices were adopted by partners and participating organizations during project implementation.*** However, in most instances, changes were limited to the life of the project. Project proponents provided evidence of changes in workplace skills development and Human Resource (HR) management practices, or evidence that changes would occur in the future as a result of the project. There were challenges in adopting the models, tools and instruments in the longer-term among recipient and partner organizations such as the cost of wages for backfilling during training release time, wage subsidies for trainees, and salaries of intermediaries implementing tools with small- and medium-sized enterprises. These are costs that proponents or partners were not in a position to provide on an ongoing basis.

### Working in Nova Scotia

The objective of the project was the integration of newcomers into the workplace by helping them to reach their employment goals. The project was based on a partnership involving all three levels of government and more than 130 private-sector investors who focused on the employment needs of newcomers in the Halifax region.

***There is little evidence of broader adoption of WSI project outputs and best practices by external stakeholders.*** Case study analysis found that six out of twelve projects shared information with external stakeholders; and four out of the twelve projects were able to indicate evidence that elements of the project had been re-purposed, modified or adopted in some way by external stakeholders. A number of projects analyzed in the case studies indicated that broader adoption of best practices, tools and resources developed was not achieved, primarily because of financial barriers.

***Many of the tools, instruments and models developed in projects may be broadly applicable to other Canadian workplaces, but are more likely to be beneficial to workplaces that share similarities to those that were engaged in the WSI projects.*** Even though some tools, instruments and models developed have the potential for broader applicability, important barriers exist that could restrain the future replication of projects. Examples of tools, instruments and models developed included: training via peers in a train-the-trainer model, tools related to skills-related training, mentorship and certification in specific sectors and industries (e.g., health care, nursing, tourism); human resource tools designed to contribute to business development and growth in a specific sector (e.g., export readiness in the information and communications technology, sector and business development in agricultural and rural settings); tools focusing on the management of diversity and integration of new Canadians in the workforce; and models for individual career assessment and development.

***A number of challenges were identified in the implementation of funded projects.*** These included delays in funding decisions; challenges in regards to managing projects and contribution agreements by proponents; turnover in WSI analysts during project implementation; difficulties securing employer participation; and, in some instances, the burden required for employers or employees to participate (e.g., time investment). The most significant challenge in the sustained adoption of practices among recipient and partner organizations had to do with the cost of wages for backfilling during training release time, wage subsidies for trainees, and salaries of intermediaries implementing tools with small- and medium-sized enterprises. These are costs that proponents or partners were not in a position to provide on an ongoing basis. Cost considerations were exacerbated, according to some, by the economic downturn.

## **Summary of Lessons Learned**

1. **The WSI reinforced the importance of cultivating collaborative approaches and partnerships to foster workplace skills development and HR management.** The WSI partnership approach had a positive impact on collaboration and this element should be considered as a model for future initiatives.
2. **There is value to the approach taken by the WSI.** Strengths identified include the focus on HR management and workplace skills development, the development and testing of innovative approaches and the focus on employer needs. Many best practices were identified by project proponents and partners based on project experience. These include the following:
  - The value of using a variety of approaches (e.g., in-person interventions, on-line delivery, training by peers) to engage small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and to reach employers who are geographically dispersed or isolated;
  - The importance of collaborative approaches in the development and implementation of tools, models or instruments;
  - The need for balance between standardized tools that are easily replicated and flexible approaches to tailor offerings to individual employers when working with SMEs;
  - The importance of practicality in tools and communications directed at SMEs; and
  - The need of employers to better understand the reality and diversity of new Canadians and to assist their integration into the workplace.

3. Any future initiatives to support workplace skills development should:
- **Ensure active and systematic dissemination and knowledge transfer.** Without an effective and active dissemination strategy and a broad-based approach to knowledge transfer, there is a risk of not getting sufficient return on the investment. Active dissemination strategies are best developed early and should be required or specified at the proposal or agreement stage to ensure broad-based dissemination beyond immediate partners;
  - **Ensuring rigorous project measurement.** There is a need for evaluation and the measurement of impacts within projects to test innovation and measure their value. Up-front planning for the measurement of project results and the implementation of systematic, articulated and rigorous monitoring and evaluation would help demonstrate the value of new approaches;
  - **Demonstrating needs and readiness.** Project proposals should demonstrate that they are grounded in existing literature and knowledge of best practices, and demonstrate evidence of client needs and readiness for the proposed innovation and approach;
  - **Sufficient time-line.** The three-year time frame of the WSI was considered by some to be too brief for the type of workplace innovation projects funded and insufficient to allow for successful knowledge transfer.
4. **The WSI showed the importance of facilitating broader application and sustainability of projects. However, there are obstacles to broader adoption of new approaches tested through an initiative such as the WSI, regardless of their success.** Investment in knowledge transfer and efforts to foster connections between funded projects and relevant stakeholders or funding sources could help encourage the replication and broader adoption of models, tools and instruments developed. However, obstacles should not be underestimated and explicit mitigation strategies should be factored into the design of the initiative. Obstacles include:
- The heterogeneity in the needs of SMEs and the need to customize and adapt tools or instruments developed;
  - The need to customize and adapt tools or instruments developed;
  - Costs associated with adaptation and implementation;
  - Challenges ensuring take-up and engagement among employers (particularly SMEs); and
  - Resources required for successful project management.
5. **Dissemination of information on best practices and tested approaches, and easy access to this information, may be a priority for future focus.** External experts noted that HRSDC can play an important supporting role in helping employers (including SMEs) learn of and access best practices, tools and instruments that have already been tested. HRSDC could obtain a higher return on investment by focusing on the diffusion of tried and tested best practices.



## ***Management Response***

The Skills and Employment Branch (SEB) Management is in agreement with the Summative Evaluation of the Workplace Skills Initiative (WSI) findings and lessons learned. SEB worked closely with the Evaluation Directorate all along the course of the evaluation to provide pertinent information, comments and advice. As the results of the evaluation became available in the technical reports, they were shared with the Skills and Employment Branch for its consideration. The following paragraphs present the Management Response and reactions vis-à-vis the lessons learned from the evaluation and their application to current and future programming related to employment and skills.

Management agrees that leveraging funds from partners in the project has a positive impact on the quality of projects and the partnerships. The findings from the evaluation reinforced the importance of cultivating collaborative approaches and partnerships. The importance of partnerships in addressing workplace skills issues is informing the development of the Sectoral Initiatives Program (SIP).<sup>2</sup> This new program, launched in August 2012, aims to fund partnership based projects through a competitive process that supports the development of: industry-validated labour market information; national occupational standards; and/or accreditation and certification regimes.

While the WSI was designed to test pilot projects and innovative approaches, Management recognizes that employers are primarily responsible for making investments in workplace training and skills development of their employees, followed by provinces and territories who receive federal transfers for the provision of skills development programming. However, SMEs still experience financial and capacity barriers to the development and adoption of innovative practices that can enhance workplace skills.

Management also agrees that any future initiatives to support workplace skills development should have a performance measurement framework which clearly identifies expected outcomes. This was taken into consideration in the SIP development and a performance measurement framework is being developed which will identify the indicators and outcomes for SIP projects. Specifically, the SIP is exploring theory-based evaluation where the objective and expected outcomes of the projects are continuously validated through ongoing testing. With the involvement of all key players including evaluators, program managers and stakeholders, progress of the project would be monitored to ensure that expected results, including dissemination, are met. This process would lead to better reporting of results in a partnerships-based funding program, and a more accurate determination of the project's contribution to the achievement of program outcomes.

Regarding the dissemination of WSI project results, the implementation of the dissemination plan for WSI as well as for the results of individual projects was curtailed when the WSI was suspended due to a change in departmental priorities. A fully developed and approved plan was ready to be put in place; however the reallocation of WSI resources prevented this work from going forward.

Dissemination and knowledge transfer will be important features of SIP, and the Working in Canada (WiC) Portal will be used to disseminate the information developed from projects and will also feature proactive dissemination to complement partners' and Departmental dissemination strategies.

Regarding the challenges faced in the implementation of WSI-funded projects, many of the issues identified are being addressed in the context of the Modernisation of Grants & Contributions Initiative in HRSDC.

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<sup>2</sup> The development of the new Sectoral Initiatives Program is used in this Management Response as illustrative only. This new program was not developed in response to the closing down of WSI but as a response to the Strategic Review of the Sector Council Program. As the WSI evaluation was performed at the same time as the development of SIP, the lessons were shared and some were applied.



# **1. Introduction**

This report presents the results of the summative evaluation of the Workplace Skills Initiative (WSI) for its entire duration from 2005-06 to 2010-11. The evaluation fieldwork was conducted between October 2011 and January 2012.

This introductory chapter provides a description of the WSI and information about its implementation. Chapter 2 presents the evaluation questions, methodologies and approach used while Chapter 3 presents the findings from all lines of evidence undertaken. Chapter 4 provides a summary of key findings and Chapter 5 presents the overall lessons learned from this evaluation.

## **1.1 Program Description**

### **Context**

The Canadian economy is being transformed by global, technological, and demographic shifts, each of which has skills implications. To be competitive in the emerging knowledge-based and globalized economy, Canada needs to ensure that Canadian workers have the skills, knowledge and supportive environment needed to excel, to contribute to innovation, and to remain flexible and resilient in the face of ever-changing work demands. To respond to these changing demands, the Government of Canada announced the Workplace Skills Strategy (WSS) in 2004. In the view that human capital development is a shared responsibility of both the public and private sector, the WSS was an important element of the Government of Canada's commitment to playing a partnering and leadership role in supporting Canada's workplaces to increase their skills capacity and improve productivity. This was to be achieved through investment in innovative approaches to skills development and adoption of a learning culture.

The WSS focused on the promotion of workplace skills investment, skills recognition and utilization and partnership, networks and information in the areas of skills development. The Workplace Skills Initiative, which is the focus of this evaluation, was a component of the WSS. The other two components, not addressed by this evaluation, were: The Trades and Apprenticeship Strategy and the Workplace Partners Panel.

The Trades and Apprenticeship Strategy focused on working with provinces, territories and stakeholders to strengthen apprenticeships in the 45 Red Seal trades and to tackle the serious problem of low essential skills in the trades for the success of apprentices and certified trades people by enabling them to complete their training and increase access to employment opportunities within the skilled trades. The Trades and Apprenticeship Strategy also supported awareness and engagement of employers on opportunities for Aboriginal Canadians in the skilled trades.

The Workplace Partners Panel was a national, independent, arm's-length body comprising leaders from business and labour. The Panel provided Canadian industry and the Government of Canada with a forum to exchange perspectives and intelligence, and a research capacity focused on workplace skills issues. It was charged with galvanizing Canada's industry, educational partners and governments to integrate the workplace into Canada's learning system. The Workplace Partners Panel completed its work and was disbanded in the Fall of 2006.

### **Program Objectives**

Announced in Budget 2004 and introduced by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) in 2005, the WSI aimed to contribute to the achievement of the three WSS priorities by stimulating and supporting partnership-based projects. Implicit in these projects was the development of human capital in, and for, the workplace. The WSI was designed to support projects of up to three years in length that tested and evaluated outcomes-focused approaches to address one or more of the following objectives:

- Demonstrating new approaches to workplace skills development including essential skills and literacy; management, supervisory and leadership skills; technical skills (for example engineering skills, project management skills); and other non-technical or soft business skills;

- Supporting the adoption and sharing of improved Human Resources (HR) management practices and sharing of best practices relating to recruitment, development and retraining, and retention of employees—particularly for small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs);
- Piloting approaches to skills identification, recognition and utilization, e.g., skills passports, talent portfolios, facilitating skills matching and inter-regional and inter-sectorial worker mobility; and
- Piloting approaches to promote partnerships, networks and information flow within and across firms, as well as across sectors, such as collaborative partnerships between the business and education sectors.

## **Workplace Skills Initiative Logic Model**

A schematic of the Workplace Skills Initiative Logic Model is found in Appendix A. The logic model delineates the set of activities that make up the program and the sequence of outputs, outcomes (short-, medium-, and long-term) and ultimate outcomes that are expected to flow from these activities. The three key activities of the WSI were identified as:

- Support the development and implementation of WSI projects, and the uptake of models and instruments for workplace skills development and human resource management among workplace stakeholders;
- Collect, analyze and evaluate project results, models and instruments for workplace skills development and human resource management; and,
- Create awareness of the WSI program and WSI projects among workplace stakeholders.

In the short-term, efforts were expected to increase collaboration among workplace stakeholders in the development of models and instruments for workplace skills development and human resources management. The projects were expected to increase knowledge of best practices and lessons learned, and increase awareness among workplace stakeholders of effective models and instruments for workplace skills development and HR management.

In the medium-term, WSI activities and efforts were expected to help workplace stakeholders learn from and use best practices and tools for skills and human resource development. It was anticipated that by using models, workplace stakeholders would be convinced of the benefits of skills development and human resource management strategies. As well, based on lessons learned, it was expected that WSI would inform policy and influence programs.

The long-term outcomes expected for the WSI were an increase in the levels of skills and their optimal utilization in Canadian workplaces; an increase in stakeholder investments in workplace skills development; and the adoption or change in workplace human resource management practices.

The ultimate outcome of the WSI was identified as increased productivity and competitiveness of Canadian workplaces. The short-term outcomes were expected to be achieved within three years of project approval. Specific timelines were not defined for the medium-term and long-term outcomes. This evaluation focuses primarily on the short-term outcomes, given that 8 of 29 projects were approved in 2008-09 and the funding period for five projects ended as late as March 2011.

## **Implementation of the Workplace Skills Initiative**

The original WSI program duration covered three fiscal years (2005-06 to 2007-08) with a budget allocation of \$94 million. The WSI experienced delays in its implementation which extended the original duration. The majority of projects approved from the first Call for Proposals did not begin until mid-2007, resulting in delays in subsequent Calls and re-profiling of approved funds into future years. In 2006, the Terms and Conditions of the WSI were first extended for two years (2008-09 and 2009-10). In 2008, the Terms and Conditions were further extended to March 31, 2011 to allow for a third Call for Proposals. On April 24, 2009, HRSDC suspended funding for new projects under the Workplace Skills Initiative (WSI) but allowed projects already underway to receive funds for completion in fiscal year 2010-11.

The WSI issued three Calls for Proposals. The first call (in 2005-2006) invited eligible organizations and their partners to develop projects that addressed one or more of the WSI objectives. The second call in 2007-2008, identified three critical but underutilized worker groups as priorities: older workers, low-skilled workers, and newcomers to Canada. The third call, in 2008-2009, focused on identifying, testing, and demonstrating innovation in workplace skills development that addressed skills shortages or innovation to workplace environments that could contribute to improve productivity.

A total of 29 projects were funded by the WSI from the two first Calls for Proposals. Annexe B presents a list of the funded projects with some baseline information and key features. Although project proposals were received from the third Call for Proposals, no projects were approved, due to the suspension of funding for new projects as announced in April 2009. Projects funded under the WSI Terms and Conditions typically had a 24-36 month timeframe. WSI projects tended to be large or very large (18 of 29 projects were over \$1,000,000 in terms of budget), and a significant proportion (12 of 29) were located in Ontario. The distribution of WSI projects by theme, by funding size and by region is described in Table 1.1.

<b>Table 1.1</b> <b>Characteristics of WSI Funded Projects</b>	
<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Number of Projects (n=29 funded projects)</b>
<b>Theme:</b>	
I – Workforce development for SMEs	5
II – Improved HR skills/tools	5
III – New sectoral upskilling models	9
IV – SME workforce integration	7
V – Income support for upskilling	3
<b>Project Size (Total project cost):</b>	
Small (<\$500,000)	5
Medium (\$500,000 to \$1,000,000)	6
Large (\$1,000,000 to \$3,000,000)	12
Very Large (>\$3,000,000)	6
<b>Province:</b>	
Ontario	12
Quebec	5
Saskatchewan	3
Manitoba	4
BC	2
Nova Scotia	1
Newfoundland	1
New Brunswick	1
Source: HRSDC Falcon Database.	

Projects submitted for consideration under the WSI had to meet the following criteria:

- Be partnership-based;
- Test and evaluate or pilot outcomes-focused approaches to skills development for employers and employed Canadians;
- Be an employer or organization among those identified as recipients (described below);
- Demonstrate that applicants and/or partners would provide cash and/or in-kind contributions at a minimum of 25 per cent of the eligible costs of the project;
- Demonstrate that applicants and partners were willing to share lessons learned and best practices;
- Be promising, demand-driven and targeted to Canadian employers and their workers;
- Develop skills for workers or human resources tools and practices for the workplace; and
- Build on current and leading edge trends in human resources which address skills gap impacts.

## Target Groups

Recipients, partners, stakeholders and beneficiaries of the WSI are described as follows:

- **Recipients:** Recipients refer to employers or other organizations that received funding, administered project activities and potentially redistributed funding under WSI contribution agreements. Eligible recipients included:
  - Businesses and private sector organizations (including SMEs);
  - Unions;
  - Not-for-profit organizations such as employer and labour associations, sector councils, training organizations;
  - Public health and educational institutions;
  - Band, tribal and Aboriginal Human Resources Development Agreement holders;
  - Municipal governments, their corporations or agencies; and
  - Provincial and territorial government boards, commissions or agencies.
- **Partners:** Partners refers to employers or other organizations that contributed financially or in-kind to WSI projects and/or provided expertise.
- **Stakeholders:** A stakeholder is a party who affects, or can be affected, by an organization's or initiative's actions. In the WSI context, stakeholders included employees, labour unions, employer associations and industry trade groups. Indirectly, they may have included a company or organization's stakeholders and investors (including governmental funding entities). By extension, stakeholders could also refer to academic or governmental entities that by their research and policies impact other stakeholders.
- **Beneficiaries:** Project beneficiaries refer to employers and employees participating in, or affected by, project activities (workplace training and skills development) and for whom the benefits of the activities can be measured in the short-term.

## 1.2 Program Administration and Resources

The Skills and Employment Branch of HRSDC adopted a tripartite governance structure for the WSI, which was expected to foster coherence and consistency, and allow for the strategic selection of projects against the WSS priorities, WSI objectives and priorities and WSI Terms and Conditions.

- The Innovation Division of the Skills and Employment Branch delivered, monitored and managed the program nationally. This division was responsible for development of administrative documents, review and assessment of proposals, negotiation of approved proposals, management and monitoring of contribution agreements, as well as the project close-out summary.
- The Grants and Contributions Delivery Support Division of the Skills and Employment Branch was responsible for conducting financial monitoring, processing payments and project close-out.
- The Program Policy Division of the Skills and Employment Branch was originally responsible for policy development, outreach, external relations and program assessment. In practice, specific areas of responsibility included: up-front and as needed policy support; assistance with priority setting; and proposal assessment input.

WSI recipients received funding through contribution agreements. Potential WSI applicants were provided with a WSI proposal template and application form to guide their submission. An internal assessment of proposals was undertaken in each Call for Proposals. In the second Call for Proposals, the review of WSI proposals included an external review by a panel of experts, although HRSDC staff was not bound by the results of such external expert assessment in the final funding decisions. The internal and external assessments of proposals were conducted using a structured approach. Project proposals were first examined on the basis of a list of mandatory criteria. Projects which met the mandatory criteria were then point-rated on a number of categories such as the degree to which the project met WSI objectives; the extent to which objectives were specific, measurable, achievable, and outcomes identified; the potential for the project to be replicated; the ability of the applicant to deliver the pilot project; the viability of the proposed evaluation plan; and assessment of the proposed budget. Internal reviewers then provided a written decision, reasons for their decision, identified strengths and weaknesses of the proposal, and provided a narrative justification for their decision.

While projects could be approved for up to three years, funding was subject to year-to-year budget considerations of HRSDC and funds appropriation. In addition, funding of contribution projects was subject to review by HRSDC regarding the project's progress in meeting its objectives and, where appropriate, monitoring and audit reports.

Table 1.2 identifies the various sources of funding for WSI funded projects, including HRSDC contributions, and in-kind and cash contributions made by proponents and partners. Contributions by proponents and partners were equal to 35 per cent of the total value of projects, thereby exceeding the minimum requirement of 25 per cent. The original program budget was \$94 million total, and \$37 million were used contributions.

<b>Table 1.2</b> <b>WSI Projects – Sources of Funding, 2005-06 to 2010-11</b>		
<b>Sources of funding – Type of contribution</b>	<b>Total for all 29 projects</b>	<b>Distribution</b>
Project proponents and partners - In-kind contributions	\$ 13,884,927	24%
Project proponents and partners - Financial contributions	\$ 6,284,010	11%
HRSDC – Financial contributions	\$ 37,139,516	65%
Total projects funds	\$ 57,331,977	100%
Source: WSI Individual Project Files.		

Table 1.3 indicates the number of proposals that were received and approved by year and by Call for Proposal.

<b>Table 1.3</b> <b>Number of Proposals Received and Approved</b> <b>by Fiscal Year and Call for Proposal</b>						
	<b>2005-2006</b>	<b>2006-2007</b>	<b>2007-2008</b>	<b>2008-2009</b>	<b>2009-2010</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>First Call for Proposal</b>						
Proposal received	173					173
Proposal approved		11	7			18
<b>Second Call for Proposal</b>						
Proposal received			101			101
Proposal approved			3	8		11
<b>Third Call for Proposal</b>						
Proposal received				128	44	172
Proposal approved						0
<b>Proposal Received - Total</b>	<b>173</b>		<b>101</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>446</b>
<b>Proposal Approved - Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>8</b>		<b>29</b>
First Call for Proposal: Focused on one or more WSI objectives. Second Call for Proposal: Focused on older workers, low-skilled workers, and newcomers to Canada. Third Call for Proposal: Focused on identifying, testing and demonstrating innovation in employee skills development. Source: Common System for Grants and Contributions and WSI database.						



## **2. Evaluation Approach and Methodology**

### **2.1 Evaluation Objectives, Context and Issues**

The overall objective of this evaluation was to determine the extent to which the WSI approach was effective in achieving the expected outputs/outcomes, as well as identify best practices and lessons learned for future programming and policy discussions. The evaluation reviewed all 29 WSI projects approved between 2006-2007 and 2008-2009 and was conducted following their completion and the termination of the program.

The initial evaluation strategy for WSI included a two-phased approach. In 2008, HRSDC conducted a Baseline Survey of funding recipients, project partners, and unfunded applicants to measure satisfaction with the administration of the WSI, challenges experienced in implementation, and expected and early project impacts. The current summative evaluation, conducted after the termination of the WSI focussed on performance (effectiveness) issues but excludes the review of rationale and continued relevance, given the program termination. This evaluation focuses primarily on the short-term outcomes, given that 8 of 29 projects were approved in 2008-09 and the funding period for some projects ended as late as March 2011. An Evaluation Matrix, which identifies the summative evaluation questions, indicators, and data sources, is included in Appendix C.

The evaluation questions addressed by this evaluation are:

1. To what extent have WSI projects led to increased partnerships, networks and information flows among workplace partners and stakeholders in the development of new models, tools and instruments for workplace skills development and HR management?
2. To what extent have the projects implemented increased the recipient, partner, stakeholder and beneficiary organizations' knowledge of best practices for workplace skills development and HR management?
3. To what extent have recipient and partner organizations changed or adopted workplace skills development and HR management practices as a result of WSI projects?
4. To what extent have WSI projects resulted in dissemination of new workplace initiatives, instruments, models, tools and strategies for the development of workplace skills and best practices in human resource management beyond direct project partners?
5. To what extent are workplace stakeholders (other than immediate project partners) aware, and do they share, adopt and use best practices, tools and instruments for workplace skills development and HR management practices?
6. What other approaches existed to achieve similar results as the WSI and to what extent was the WSI approach effective relative to other similar approaches?
7. Are there any key best practices and lessons learned generated by WSI with a high potential to inform/influence other workplaces/other HRSDC programs in the area of workplace skills development and human resources management?
8. For the WSI projects that went ahead in the absence of WSI funding, what were the key drivers for the projects proceeding, what were their results in comparison to funded WSI projects and did they operate at the same level as proposed in the application?<sup>3</sup>
9. Were program design, delivery mechanisms and structures appropriate and effective?

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<sup>3</sup> This question was not answered due to insufficient and unreliable data collected for this purpose.

The approach to the evaluation of the WSI included the following methodologies:

- A review of program documents, project files, and administrative data collected by HRSDC;
- Interviews with HRSDC managers and staff involved in the implementation of the WSI;
- A comparative analysis of complementary or similar approaches supported by governments in Canada or internationally;
- Interviews with unfunded project proponents and partners (for projects that went ahead in the absence of WSI funding);
- Case studies of funded projects; and
- An expert panel composed of academia, non-governmental research organization, and private sector.

Each of these is described in turn below.

## 2.2 Document, File and Administrative Data Review

A detailed review of project and program documents and files was conducted. More specifically, this line of evidence included the review and analysis of:

- **Program documentation:** To increase familiarity with the WSI, its funding components and operating environment, relevant WSI, HRSDC and Government of Canada documents were reviewed. These included the Integrated Results-Based Management and Accountability Framework, Risk-Based Audit Framework, the Performance Measurement and Evaluation Framework completed in 2007, and documents pertaining to the three calls for proposals held under the WSI. The information collected by the Evaluation Directorate in the 2008 Baseline Survey of WSI project proponents, project partners, and unfunded applicants, and the results of a survey of project proponents, undertaken by the WSI (program) in July of 2008, were also analyzed. The latter survey of project proponents focused on challenges in implementation and on project short-term impacts.
- **Project documents:** Final reports, evaluation reports and close-out summary reports for all the 29 funded projects were reviewed in order to obtain quantitative and qualitative evidence on indicators that measured the extent to which WSI project outputs and outcomes were achieved. The use of a template for the review of project documents ensured that consistent information was collected on each project.
- **Falcon Database:** This database included information gathered through a survey of WSI funding recipients administered in August 2009. The survey included over 100 closed-ended and open-ended questions that focused on the achievement of objectives, project outputs and outcomes. Responses from 24 projects were received and inputted in the database. The other five projects did not provide responses, either because the project did not submit their survey responses or the project was completed before the survey was developed. Where information was missing, project reports (e.g., evaluation report, final report) were reviewed for comparable data.

## 2.3 Interviews with Human Resources and Skills Development Canada Staff and Managers

A total of 10 interviews were conducted with HRSDC program delivery staff and managers involved in the implementation of the WSI. The purpose of these interviews was to collect views of program analysts and managers on project success or failure, lessons learned, and the overall effectiveness of the WSI approach.

A list of 28 analysts and managers was compiled for the interviews. All potential respondents were sent an advance letter via email notifying them of the evaluation and the interviews. Follow-up emails and phone calls were then placed to potential respondents to schedule interviews. While the WSI Evaluation

approach targeted for the completion of 15 interviews with staff and managers, only 10 responded (6 analysts and 4 managers).

All interviewees were sent an interview guide by electronic means in advance of their scheduled appointment to permit preparation for the interview. Interviews were conducted in person or by phone, according to the preference of the respondent. Interviews were also conducted in the official language of choice of the respondent and lasted between 60 and 90 minutes.

## **2.4 Interviews with Unfunded Applicants**

A total of 24 interviews were targeted with unfunded applicants (n=8) and their project partners (n=16) for projects implemented without WSI funding. The interviews were designed to obtain information on key drivers for the project proceeding, if the project operated at the same level as proposed in the WSI application and results achieved. The intent was to compare findings from this line of evidence with information gathered from funded WSI projects.

Results of the 2009 Baseline Survey indicated that, of the 106 unfunded project proposals whose applicants responded to the survey, 25 projects were implemented without WSI funding. These respondents were asked to indicate if they would be willing to participate in a follow up survey to examine impacts, and 19 agreed.

The 19 unfunded applicants who had agreed in 2009 to participate to an interview were sent an invitation to participate in the evaluation. After several attempts, 16 were contacted from which only three agreed to participate in an interview. Moreover, those who agreed to participate to the interview were not able to identify project partners for interviews. At the end, only three of the planned 24 interviews were completed and all of those interviewed were applicants. The data gathering from this source of information was terminated early due to the data limitations. As a consequence, evaluation question 8 which focussed on an examination of proposed WSI projects that went ahead in the absence of WSI funding could not be addressed.

## **2.5 Comparative Analysis**

The purpose of the comparative analysis was to review available literature in order to:

- Uncover duplicate or complementary programs supported by other federal departments, agencies or levels of government with similar objectives; and
- Obtain insights on the design and delivery of germane programs for future policy development.

More than 450 national, provincial/territorial and international programs were identified through a web-based search. These included programs tailored to adults, specific populations (e.g., Aboriginal, First Nations, Inuit, people with disabilities, immigrants, women, youth or students), and those providing specific skills or work experience (summer programs, internship programs, apprenticeship programs). The thirteen programs retained for the comparative analysis were identified based on three criteria: partnership was a key program component; the eligible recipients were organizations; and the program had at least one objective similar to WSI.

The literature review also included reports on the topic of workplace learning in Canada, developed by organizations such as the Canadian Policy Research Networks, Canadian Council on Learning, the Conference Board of Canada, and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

## **2.6 Case Studies**

Case studies of 12 WSI funded projects were undertaken to obtain detailed information on project outputs and outcomes. The approach taken to the selection of case studies was based on an effort to ensure a broad representation of projects based on a number of variables, including project theme, project size, sustainability, call for proposal, time lapse since completion of the project, and province or territory where the project took place.

Each case study included a review of project documentation and administrative data and interviews, as outlined below.

## **Document and Administrative Data Review**

Each case study included a review of relevant project documents, which provided data and information on the objectives, activities, implementation, achievements and performance of the projects including: project documentation (e.g., full funding application, project final reports, and WSI reports); project outputs (e.g., materials, reports, and communications); funding and partnership agreements; and performance/outcome data. WSI program administrative data from the Falcon Database was also reviewed for the case studies.

## **Interviews**

Interviews were conducted to obtain in-depth qualitative data on project implementation, achievements and performance. Up to six interviews were planned for each case study. Interview respondents could include the HRSDC analyst responsible for the project, the project proponent (e.g., businesses, labour unions and councils, Aboriginal councils, non-profit organizations), project partners (e.g., employers, businesses, labour unions and councils, Aboriginal councils, municipal/provincial governments, non-profit organizations), beneficiaries (e.g., employees), as well as other stakeholders (e.g., employer and professional associations, educational institutions, industry trade groups) involved in the selected project.

The project proponent was first contacted and asked to identify potential partners and stakeholders for interviews. The number of interviews completed varied depending on the number and nature of partners involved in the project, and whether partners or stakeholders were available and willing to be interviewed. In total, across all 12 case studies, interviews were conducted with four analysts (representing 7 of 12 case studies); 20 proponent representatives; 17 partners; 2 beneficiaries; and 3 stakeholders. The 46 interviews conducted fell short of the targeted number.

The project proponents were also asked to identify beneficiaries and project participants for interviews. However, few names were provided as contact information was not retained or maintained for participants. In some instance, project proponents felt it would be inappropriate to contact participants so long after their involvement or were concerned about protecting the confidentiality of individuals. This limited the ability to measure the final outcomes from the perspective of the ultimate beneficiaries. Only 6 beneficiaries were interviewed. This limitation was addressed to the extent possible by seeking information on impacts on beneficiaries in project reports and documentation.

## **2.7 Expert Panel**

A panel of five experts with extensive knowledge and expertise in workplace skills and human resources management was chosen based on criteria developed for the selection of panel members. The Panel consisted of three experts who had no prior involvement in the WSI, and two experts who were involved in the review of WSI proposals in the Second Call for Proposals. In total, three experts were recruited from academia, one expert from a non-governmental research organization, and one expert was a private sector consultant.

Panel members received an information package to enable them to prepare for the online discussion, which included information on the WSI program and evaluation, summaries of twelve case studies and the draft lessons learned identified through evaluation research.

The expert panel was asked to provide analysis of the best practices and innovative character and value of the tools, models and instruments developed, as well as the expected benefits and challenges of their adoption and transferability. The expert panel was conducted online from January 10 to 12, 2012 as a 'virtual' panel, with the discussion occurring through a bulletin or discussion board format. The expert panel was conducted using a customized online consultation platform.

Each panel member received a link and password to participate on-line. Panel members were required to log in each day for the three-day duration of the panel to respond to questions. The panel was designed to limit influence across participants: panel members could only view the responses of other panellists to

a question once their own answer was posted. Panel members were then able to post additional comments. The themes of questions posted each day were as follows:

- **Day One: WSI Funded Projects (limited to the 12 Case Study Projects):** Panellists were asked to comment on the extent to which the models, tools and instruments developed and tested through the WSI were new and/or innovative, their opinion of the overall value of these projects, and the potential broader value of these projects in terms of applicability or transferability to other Canadian workplaces.
- **Day Two: Lessons Learned and Best Practices:** Panellists were asked to comment on the lessons learned identified by case study projects, and to identify best practices that could be retained from the case study projects.
- **Day Three: Future HRSDC Directions:** Panellists were asked to comment on the overall effectiveness and efficiency of the WSI approach, to identify potential alternatives, to comment on the extent to which there is a continued need for innovation in workplace skills development and HR management, and how the federal government could best support work in this area.

## 2.8 Reliability and Limitations

The WSI evaluation approach was developed to ensure reliability of evaluation findings by including multiple lines of evidence for most indicators. Furthermore, case studies were carefully selected to ensure representativeness of funded projects, and were conducted with over 40 per cent of all WSI projects funded (12 of a total of 29 funded projects). A variety of stakeholder audiences were consulted throughout the evaluation, including HRSDC managers and staff involved in the delivery of the WSI, funded proponents, partners and beneficiaries. The views of external experts were also sought through the Expert Panel.

Despite the efforts to ensure the reliability of the evaluation findings, it is important to acknowledge the challenges experienced and limitations associated with the evaluation. In some cases, these challenges were due to the quality and availability of information collected for administrative purposes and the low response rates achieved for the interviews conducted. Finally, some of the desired program outcomes such as increased awareness and knowledge of effective models and instruments for workplace skills development and human resources management, and changes in human resources management practices, are very difficult to measure as they are a function of a variety of factors beyond program activities:

**Limitations in the reliability of administrative data:** The accuracy of the information collected and entered in the Falcon Database is unknown. To address this limitation, findings were reported only when they could be confirmed through data from more than one line of evidence. As well, confirmation of findings from the Falcon Database was sought by comparing data to information collected during the case study (for 12 of the 29 projects).

**Potential bias in response:** Evaluation findings are largely based on the views of respondent groups consulted, many of whom had a vested interest in projects or the program. Some respondents benefited directly or indirectly from WSI funding (e.g., proponents, partners or beneficiaries), while others were involved in the program delivery (e.g., HRSDC managers and staff and some experts). Consequently, the findings are potentially biased towards favorable program results. This weakness is addressed by confirming findings through data from more than one line of evidence.

**Length of time since project completion:** A significant amount of time had lapsed since the completion of most WSI funded projects (with most having been completed in 2009 or 2010). This resulted in a number of challenges for data collection:

- Memory loss affecting the level of detail obtained in responses in interviews with staff, managers, project proponents and partners. Many staff and managers interviewed had difficulties recalling specific details or examples related to WSI projects, given a lack of involvement with projects and proponents since the conclusion of the WSI. Despite this, staff and managers had many insights from their experience with the design and delivery of the WSI, and provided additional documentation to support

the evaluation. Difficulties were also encountered in locating and surveying project proponents and partners, who in some instances had changed organizations or employment since project conclusion.

***Inability to compare unfunded projects that went ahead with funded WSI projects:*** The WSI Evaluation approach included obtaining results achieved from unfunded projects that went ahead without WSI funding, which was to provide a comparison group to the WSI funded projects. However, challenges encountered included the low response rate from unfunded project proponents (3 of the 24 planned interviews); the difficulties contacting individuals who were involved in the original WSI proposals; the inability of unfunded proponents to identify partners for interviews; and the limited usefulness of evidence collected as no unfunded projects were described as being innovative or involving significant partnerships. As a result, the analysis of the results of the WSI funded projects relative to the unfunded projects did not take place.

***Lack of information from beneficiaries:*** As noted, it was only possible to interview 6 beneficiaries in the 12 case studies undertaken. This severely limited the ability to measure the final outcomes from the perspective of the ultimate beneficiaries. This limitation was addressed to the extent possible by seeking information on impacts on beneficiaries in project reports and documentation.

***Level of involvement:*** Some of the HRSDC managers and staff interviewed were directly involved in the implementation of the WSI, while others had more limited interaction with the program towards its conclusion, when it had been transferred to another program area. The level of involvement of interviewees in the management of the program or projects had an influence on their capacity to respond to interview questions.

Despite those challenges, sufficient evidence was available to address most of the evaluation questions. However, better response rates and information from unfunded projects and beneficiaries would have augmented the precision, reliability and quantity of findings from the evaluation.

## 2.9 Interpretation of Qualitative Findings

Throughout the text, findings from qualitative methods are presented using the following “scale” which corresponds to the proportion of respondents that held similar views:

- “All/almost all” – findings reflect the views and opinions of 90% or more of the group;
- “Large majority” – findings reflect the views and opinions of at least 75% but less than 90% of the group;
- “Majority/most” – findings reflect the views and opinions of at least 50% but less than 75% of the group;
- “Some” – findings reflect the views and opinions of at least 25% but less than 50% of the group; and
- “A few” – findings reflect the views and opinions of at least two respondents but less than 25% of the group.

Where possible, differences in perspective across respondent groups on evaluation questions and issues are noted throughout the report.

### 3. Findings

This section examines the results from all lines of evidence and addresses each evaluation question.

#### 3.1 Partnerships and Collaboration

**Evaluation Question 1: To what extent have WSI projects led to increased partnerships, networks and information flows among workplace partners and stakeholders in the development of new models, tools and instruments for workplace skills development and HR management?**

One of the short-term outcomes identified for the WSI was an increase in collaboration among workplace stakeholders in the development of models and instruments for workplace skills development and human resource management. In the evaluation, collaboration was assessed by measuring the number and type of partners involved in projects, their engagement, their contribution and the sustainability of their engagement. In the context of the WSI program, a partner was defined as being an organization, other than HRSDC and the project proponent, who contributed financial or in-kind resources to the project.

**WSI projects involved various types of partnerships. The number and type of partners engaged and their involvement varied significantly.**

Most of the case study projects included a small number of core partners who held primary responsibility for project design, implementation and dissemination activities. The nature of the role partners played in case study projects varied significantly. Their collaboration included active participation as co-lead, contributing to research and development of instruments or tools, and/or involvement on an advisory committee to oversee the project. Advisory committees played an important role in the success and implementation of these projects. Projects with large numbers of partners usually included some from the private sector who typically contributed in-kind resources by providing expertise and allowing their employees to participate in the testing of tools and instruments. Given the wide variation in projects implemented, there is no indication that a specific type of partnership was more effective than others to work together towards the same goal.

A total of 257 partners were identified as being involved across all 29 WSI funded projects at the outset of projects (when contribution agreements were signed).<sup>4</sup> The number of partners identified varied significantly: 11 of 29 projects identified one or two partners; 11 projects had between 3 and 10 partners, and 7 projects had more than 10 partners. This variability in number of partners was confirmed through case study research with the number of partners engaged in case study projects ranging from two to 147.

Based on an analysis of administrative data, project documentation and case study findings, the types of organizations engaged in WSI projects included private sector businesses (often SMEs), non-profit organizations, educational institutions and academics, provincial governments, community organizations, chambers of commerce, Aboriginal organizations, HR or training organizations, and unions. The type of partners varied based on the objectives and the design of the project.

#### **Preparing a Nursing Workforce to Advance Health Services**

The objective of the project was to create a pathway for nurse educators and interested nurses to achieve various levels of certification, thus contributing to the recruitment and retention of nurse educators. Project partners included the Vancouver Coastal Health Authority, the Nurses' Bargaining Association (NBA), Fraser Health Authority, University of British Columbia School of Nursing (UBC), and the University of Victoria School of Nursing.

<sup>4</sup> Taken from CSGC and identified based on information contained in Contribution Agreements.

**Qualitative evidence suggests that some WSI projects experienced an increase in partners engaged during the implementation of the project.**

An analysis of case study findings and administrative data indicates that there was some growth in the number of partners during the implementation of WSI projects. The design of the WSI program allowed for the addition of partners during the course of project implementation to complement existing project capacity or to address gaps. Several case study projects (seven of twelve) added new partners during implementation. The role of these additional partners varied, but included advisory committee membership, intermediaries to deliver the project, or SMEs recruited to participate in the development or testing practices, tools or instruments. The increase of partners was also confirmed by the 2008 Baseline Survey and the 2008 survey conducted by the WSI program of funded projects.

**Project proponents and partners provided in-kind and/or financial contributions to projects. The leveraging objective of 25 percent of total project costs was met or exceeded by most projects with an average of 35 percent leveraged across all projects.**

Each WSI funded project obtained in-kind and/or financial contributions from project proponents and partners. HRSDC contributions to WSI funded projects totalled \$37,139,516 over the life of the Initiative. A total of \$20,192,461 was leveraged through in-kind and financial contributions from proponents and partners which equates to an average leverage of 35 per cent of total project costs of \$57,331,977, thereby exceeding the minimum requirement of 25 per cent required under the WSI. In-kind contributions were made by partners in all WSI funded projects, while cash contributions were provided by proponents and/or partners in 14 of 29 WSI projects.

Based on evidence from case studies, administrative data and results from the 2008 Baseline Survey, in-kind resources received included time (e.g., to participate in an advisory capacity); expertise; the provision of employees' time during work hours to participate in project activities; and assistance with marketing, promotion or networking components of projects.

The amount of in-kind and financial contribution leveraged by project varied significantly among projects, from a minimum of 16 per cent to a maximum of 83 per cent of total project costs. Most projects (24 of 29) met or exceeded the goal of 25 per cent of project costs leveraged. Five of 29 WSI projects leveraged less than 25 per cent of total costs; eight of 29 projects leveraged between 25 per cent and 29 per cent; nine of 29 projects leveraged between 30 per cent and 39 per cent; and seven projects leveraged more than 40 per cent of total project costs (Table 3.1). The reasons that the leveraging goal of 25 per cent was not met by five projects were: 1) some initial project partners were not able to contribute as much as initially anticipated; 2) certain partners had to remove themselves from the project, and/or 3) in-kind contributions were less than initially forecasted.

As illustrated in Table 3.1, most projects from Theme I (workforce development for SMEs) and Theme IV (SME workforce integration) obtained less than 30 per cent leveraging from project proponents and partners. There is no clear pattern in variance from the two calls for proposals in terms of leveraging success of projects.



<b>Table 3.1</b> <b>Leveraging by Theme and Call for Proposal</b>					
	<b>Number of Projects, by Percentage of Leveraged Costs Received from Proponents and Partners</b>				
	<b>Less than 25% Leveraging</b>	<b>25-29%</b>	<b>30-39%</b>	<b>40% or more</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Theme:</b>					
I – Workforce development for SMEs	2	2		1	5
II – Improved HR skills/tools		2	2	1	5
III – New sectoral upskilling models		1	5	3	9
IV – SME workforce integration	2	3	1	1	7
V – Income support for upskilling	1		1	1	3
<b>Total Number of Projects</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Call for Proposal:</b>					
Call for Proposal 1 (2005-2007)	3	6	5	4	18
Call for Proposal 2 (2007-2008)	2	2	4	3	11
<b>Total Number of Projects</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Size of Project:</b>					
Small	1	1	1	2	5
Medium	2	2	2		6
Large	1	3	5	3	12
Very large	1	2	1	2	6
<b>Total Number of Projects</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>29</b>
Source: HRSDC, Individual WSI project files.					

**The partnership approaches employed had positive and ongoing impacts on collaboration, despite initial challenges experienced with employers' participation.**

The analysis of administrative data, case study findings, and findings from interviews with staff and managers indicate that WSI funded projects had positive impacts in terms of increased collaboration between project partners.

HRSDC staff and managers interviewed viewed WSI as having had a positive impact on partnerships, and indicated that the WSI was a good approach to support collaboration. The requirement for leveraging of 25 per cent of total project costs was perceived as having resulted in meaningful partnerships within projects. This is consistent with results from the 2008 Baseline Survey where 87 per cent of project proponents and 88 per cent of partners reported that WSI projects had moderate or high impacts on increased collaboration among workplace stakeholders in the development of tools, instruments and models. Several expert panel members noted that WSI confirmed the importance of collaborative approaches in the development and implementation of new tools, instruments and models, identifying the focus on partnership and collaboration as a key strength of WSI funded projects. According to the expert panel members, such a partnership approach was previously demonstrated as an established best practice to increase collaboration.

In interviews conducted for the case studies, the partnerships in the WSI projects were described for the most part as very successful, regardless of the number or type of partners engaged. Partners played an active role in projects and most expressed a high level of satisfaction with the experience. Many case study project proponents and partners counted partnership as a success or positive outcome of the project. In most instances, the ongoing success of the partnership transcended the individuals engaged and organizations continued to partner even though the individuals engaged may have changed.

For most WSI projects analysed in case studies, some partnerships formed as part of the project were ongoing after project end and partners have continued to collaborate together on related or new initiatives. In a few instances, new partnerships, focusing on furthering the development or adoption of models, tools or instruments developed through the WSI funded project have formed since completion of the WSI projects.

Despite the fact that project partnerships were regarded as successful, program documentation and some case study project proponents indicated that challenges were experienced in securing the participation of employers within projects. These challenges included:

- Employer and employees of partner organizations had limited time available to participate in training or other project activities.
- In some projects, HR knowledge and capacity in participating employer organizations was found by proponents to be more limited than expected. Preliminary learning or development was needed before project activities could be fully implemented.
- Difficulties were experienced in recruiting or confirming employer partner commitment to project activities in a number of projects, as the level of commitment exceeded their expectations, or employers experienced unexpected difficulties with recruitment of employee participants or fulfilling other work commitments.

### Work in Nova Scotia

An Employer Advisory Committee was created to provide feedback and support to the WSI proponent on project activities. The committee has remained in place after the project termination to coordinate, facilitate and act as a liaison for various initiatives assisting immigrants and involving employers in Nova Scotia.

## 3.2 Knowledge Development and Innovation

### **Evaluation Question 2: To what extent have the projects implemented increased the recipient, partner, stakeholder and beneficiary organizations' knowledge of best practices for workplace skills development and HR management?**

Increased knowledge of best practices, models and lessons learned is identified as a short-term outcome of the WSI. The design of the program suggested that increased knowledge was to flow from the synthesis, reports and documents resulting from the project evaluation.

**Each WSI project resulted in the development of at least one new model, tool or instrument. Tools developed were most often related to workplace skills training, but in some instances were also linked to HR recruitment, retention or skills recognition.**

A variety of models, tools and instruments were developed through WSI funded projects. Based on findings from the administrative data review, interviews with HRSDC staff and managers and case studies, at least one new instrument, tool or model was developed by each WSI funded project.

In the questionnaire used to populate the Falcon Database, proponents were asked to quantify the number of tools, and/or instruments produced during the project. The reported number of tools or instruments identified as being developed by each project varied significantly among the 21 projects for which responses to this question were provided.

As illustrated in Table 3.2, information compiled for 27 of the 29 funded projects indicated that tools, instruments or models developed were most often related to training. Roughly three in ten projects developed tools, instruments or models related to recruitment, retention, or skills recognition. A total of eight projects developed tools, instruments or models focusing on other objectives including support for mental health and personal issues in the workplace; respect for diversity; general improvement of HR practices; and rural economic development.

<b>Table 3.2</b>	
<b>Objectives of Models, Tools or Instruments Developed</b>	
<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Number of Projects (n=27) *</b>
Workplace Skills Training	23 projects
Recruitment	8 projects
Retention	8 projects
Skills recognition	7 projects
Other	8 projects
Source: Falcon Database.	
* Projects could have multiple focuses.	

Most instruments developed in case study projects had a regional or provincial scope. Few were national in their focus. In all case study projects, models, tools and instruments were tested by a group of participants during the life of the project. Specifically, the instruments, tools and models developed by the case studies projects included:

- Practical tools and templates and workshops for small- and medium-sized enterprises to improve their human resources management;
- Tools related to skills-related training, mentorship and certification in specific sectors and industries (e.g., health care, nursing, tourism);
- Human resource tools designed to contribute to business development and growth in a specific sector (e.g., export readiness in the information and communications technology, sector and business development in agricultural and rural settings);
- Tools focusing on the management of diversity and integration of new Canadians in the workforce; and
- Models for individual career assessment and development (e.g., Bilan et développement de compétences).

### **Proponents and partners increased their knowledge about workplace skills development and human resources management practices.**

Based on the administrative data review and the findings from the case studies, WSI funded projects resulted in new knowledge of best practices for project proponents and partners. Expert panel members also considered that case study projects demonstrated the immediate value of these projects to the organizations involved through the recognition of a gap in knowledge and perceived benefits of knowledge gained to their workplaces.

Information in the Falcon Database indicated that WSI projects resulted in an increase in the knowledge of the benefits of skills development and human resource strategies. Similarly, from the Baseline Survey results, most proponents and partners reported a moderate or high impact on increased knowledge of best practices, and on increased awareness of effective models and instruments. They also identified a moderate to high impact on increased use of effective models and instruments for workplace skills development and HR management. Project proponents and partners interviewed in case studies indicated having gained new knowledge through the development and testing of new models, tools and instruments.

In some instances, projects were able to demonstrate new knowledge and/or impacts from instruments, models or tools tested as a result of pre- and post-testing, evaluation or research. Impacts and improvements observed in case study projects included evidence from pre- and post-intervention data collected from participating employees or workplaces; evidence of improvements in retention; evidence of improvements in HR practices and management within participating SMEs; and improvements in proficiency in core competencies as a result of training introduced.

## **The extent to which WSI projects can be considered innovative varies depending on perspective, but projects were often innovative within the context of their implementation.**

Opinions on the innovative character and value of tools, instruments, and models developed through WSI funded projects were explored through interviews with staff and managers, case studies and the expert panel. In the view of HRSDC staff and managers and case study project proponents and partners, all WSI funded projects included an element of innovation. Elements of innovation identified resided in the tools or instruments themselves, the delivery model or feature used for the tool or instrument, or the target audience. Typically, the project involved only one innovative component. Innovations identified in WSI projects included:

- **Instruments, tools:** In some instances, proponents and partners viewed the actual tool or content of what was developed through the project as being innovative. Examples of tools and instruments considered as innovative included: on-line training tools, development of tutorials and accompanying informative website, interactive 3D training, language and workplace culture training within the workplace, mentorship and workplace skills upgrading courses.
- **Delivery model:** Some projects' proponents viewed their approach to delivery as involving innovation (e.g., training via peers in a train-the-trainer model, offering intervention to SMEs through an experienced intermediary, or web-based delivery of tools).
- **Delivery features:** Several projects identified features of their delivery as particularly innovative (e.g., the provision of networking or exchange opportunities across participants, collaboration between employers, unions and governments).
- **Focus of intervention:** Some identified the innovation as being the project focus on employer needs while at the same time addressing employee needs (e.g., model of skills in the management of diversity for successful recruitment, screening and hiring and integrating cultural diversity within the workplace).
- **Target audience:** Some interviewees identified the innovation as including the focus of the project on a specific audience such as recently arrived immigrants or rural leaders.

### **HR Practices in Smaller SMEs (Restigouche Community-New Brunswick)**

The project focused on pressing workplace issues faced by rural small- and medium-sized businesses in Canada.

- 37 HR tools developed for diagnostics, leadership practices, staffing, hiring, retention, training and performance management.
- 100 participating SMEs worked with 45 business development corporations in their area to test tools and templates and implement HR management practices.
- SMEs reported improvements in staff retention, in HR practices and management, and knowledge of HR management.

Expert panel members were divided over the question of whether models, tools and instruments developed and tested through the WSI-funded projects were new and/or innovative. Experts grappled with the definition of the term, questioning whether "innovative" referred to any adaptation, variant or tailored approach within a given context, or whether innovation was exemplified only by projects that struck new ground with broadly applicable models, tools and approaches.

Panellists conceded that not all WSI projects were necessarily new or innovative, although they could be seen as new or novel given their context (i.e., the organization or industry in which they were applied). Several projects were identified by experts as workplace or industry-specific adaptations of models that are important to learn from, even though not necessarily innovative in a broader sense. Some experts thought that some projects could be seen as innovative by the way in which they addressed a given challenge. For example, two experts drew attention to projects that sought to handle geographic challenges through the use of collaborative partnerships, online delivery and peer-to-peer training.

Some experts contended that there were some innovations among projects that seemed promising, and suggested that benefit could be derived from further study and applications of these models. An example of a promising approach is training linked with learning pathways and certification programs for some professions. Three experts also pointed out that more study is needed to ascertain how online-based portals and interventions as innovative approaches could be most effectively used.

### 3.3 Dissemination

#### **Evaluation Question 4: To what extent have WSI projects resulted in dissemination of new workplace initiatives, instruments, models, tools and strategies for the development of workplace skills and best practices in human resource management beyond direct project partners?**

The program design implicitly included the knowledge transfer of the best practices beyond the direct project partners, through active dissemination activities. The evaluation approach examined the extent to which WSI projects resulted in dissemination of new instruments, models, tools, best practices and strategies for the development of workplace skills and HR management beyond direct project partners.

#### **Various dissemination activities were undertaken by project proponents to share knowledge and tools developed.**

The dissemination activities, events and approaches undertaken by WSI projects were examined through the review of program administrative data and case study research. As part of the project proposal, each project was required to present a dissemination plan. The number of project events to share or disseminate knowledge varied significantly by project as illustrated in Table 3.3.

<b>Table 3.3</b> <b>Number of Dissemination Activities</b>	
<b>Number of projects events to share or disseminate knowledge, lessons learned, tools, methodologies, best practices, etc.</b>	<b>Number of Projects (n=26)</b>
10 or fewer	3
11-50	12
51-100	1
More than 100	10
Source: Falcon Database.	

According to case study analysis and the file and document review, common dissemination activities included presentations and appearances at meetings or conferences/ symposiums. Other knowledge sharing activities included release or launch events, educational events like training sessions and workshops, presentations, press conferences, print items like newsletters or articles, conference calls, and radio advertisements. Using online modes of dissemination was also common to more than half of case study projects examined. In case studies, a variety of products were described as being provided on a website, including videos, journal articles, project summaries, training resources, brochures, and community resources. This was sometimes complemented by other strategies such as presentations or

articles that promoted the site and directed interested parties to the site. Most projects with web-posted products appear to have continued to maintain the website and tools with expectations for continued access. Plans for website maintenance were usually unspecified.

**Few WSI projects developed comprehensive communication strategies to disseminate best practices and lessons learned from projects beyond direct project partners. Dissemination activities focused on immediate partners and stakeholders engaged in WSI projects. Pre-established networks and national links were important where projects achieved wide dissemination.**

Based on the administrative data review, interviews with HRSDC staff and managers, and case study findings, there is little evidence that comprehensive communications strategies or dissemination plans were developed and implemented as part of most projects. Only two case study projects indicated having a structured communication or knowledge-sharing plan. In most instances, dissemination was limited to the immediate partners and stakeholders engaged directly in the project. Dissemination to a broader audience was often through posting project materials online. Some case study projects adopted a “multi-audience” approach to dissemination through organizations like sector councils, research or academic organizations and education institutions. However, while there is evidence that some projects continue to disseminate project results and tools online, few activities were conducted for dissemination or knowledge transfer following the conclusion of projects.

Dissemination activities were not well tracked in case study projects: only a small number of projects were able to provide an estimate of the reach of their dissemination activities, and these figures were often partial. The case study analysis revealed that pre-established networks and national links were key for projects’ results dissemination in cases where projects achieved wide dissemination.

According to program staff and managers interviewed, the dissemination ability or capacity of proponents and partners was inconsistent and limited to direct WSI project partners and proponents. In a few case study projects, proponents had the capacity to conduct dissemination more broadly within their sector (e.g., some of the health sector projects).

**The potential for broader knowledge transfer was not fully realized and dissemination tended to be limited.**

Based on an analysis of findings from interviews with staff and managers, case studies and expert panel members, the potential for knowledge transfer was not fully realized during the implementation of the WSI. Some HRSDC staff and managers and case study project proponents indicated that knowledge transfer was a missed opportunity in the context of the WSI. In addition to broad communication of project best practices and lessons learned, these interview respondents expected additional knowledge transfer to be made more broadly within HRSDC and to other federal partners (e.g., Industry Canada, Health Canada and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada).

Expert panel members also identified limits to active dissemination and knowledge transfer activities as a challenge to the broader adoption of best practices. Three experts commented on the absence of any vehicle for disseminating the results of these projects, and noted that few projects articulated a dissemination plan, making it difficult to evaluate potential for further take-up. Expert panel members identified a number of potential vehicles and organizations for promoting or facilitating dissemination and transfer that could have been used. These include: sector councils; professional

**New Skills for Nurses project**

*The project aimed to provide opportunities for new and experienced nurses to upgrade their skills through mentorship and training.*

**Communication Plan**

- Project summary and outcomes posted on the websites;
- Articles on project outcomes published in two journals;
- Progress reports provided to affiliates and nursing stakeholders;
- Final report highlighting approach, outcomes and lessons learned shared with ministries of health and health care stakeholders; and,
- Presentations made at various conferences.

organizations such as the Human Resources Professional Association; industry organizations; the Conference Board of Canada; provincial networks linked under the Canadian Literacy and Learning Network, which share tools and results through the National Adult Literacy Database; inter-provincial initiatives, such as the working group of Federal Labour Market Ministers; and the Association of Canadian Community Colleges.

It must be acknowledged, however, that some broader knowledge transfer activities were undertaken by HRSDC. These activities included a conference that brought together WSI project proponents from across the country, representatives from several departments and HRSDC program officials. Also, several events were organized where proponents came to Ottawa to present their findings and meet with HRSDC representatives from different branches. The early termination of the WSI limited the broader knowledge transfer, as additional planned activities were not implemented.

### **3.4 Adoption of Practices by Proponents and Partners**

#### **Evaluation Question 3: To what extent have recipient and partner organizations changed or adopted workplace skills development and HR management practices as a result of WSI projects?**

WSI activities included the development of workplace skills development and human resource management tools, and their adoption within the proponent and partner organizations is an important indicator of impact.

**The organizations involved in WSI projects adopted new tools and practices related to workplace skills development and human resources management during project implementation, and reported direct benefits from this adoption. In most instances, however, changes were limited to the life of the projects.**

There is evidence that changes in workplace skills development and/or human resources practices occurred in workplaces as a result of participation in funded projects. Based on an analysis of administrative data available from the Falcon Database:

- 25 projects resulted in changes in skills development (e.g., replacement of on-the-job-training with formal training, the integration of cultural diversity training, use of competency standards, use of formal assessment and employee development plans);
- 22 projects resulted in changes in human resources practices;
- 15 projects indicated that their projects resulted in increased investment in skills development and human resources practices (e.g., such as establishing ongoing training activities or a training position within the organizations); and
- 13 projects indicated there was evidence that investment in skills development and human resources practices would increase in the future (e.g., based on investments made to date by partner organizations and expressed interest in the tools, establishment of ongoing mentoring or skills development programs).

Case studies of WSI projects provided an opportunity to examine the impacts on partner organizations in more depth. Most proponents and partner organizations were enthusiastic about the WSI project during its implementation, and it was perceived to have provided tangible benefits to the organizations involved. However, they noted that there were challenges in adopting the models, tools and instruments in the longer-term. Of twelve case study projects examined, there was evidence of sustained adoption of instruments or models by the project proponent or partners in only three projects. The most significant challenge in the sustained adoption of practices among recipient and partner organizations had to do with the cost of wages for backfilling during training release time, wage subsidies for trainees, and salaries of intermediaries implementing tools with small- and medium-sized enterprises. These are costs that proponents or partners were not in a position to provide on an ongoing basis. Cost considerations were exacerbated, according to some, by the economic downturn.

Reported benefits to recipient and partner organizations varied somewhat depending on the WSI theme. The Falcon database indicates that benefits took the form of improved organizational human resources policies and practices, the development of worker skills, and improvements to productivity and cultural diversity.

Evidence provided of benefits achieved includes:

- Improved HR management within participating SMEs, resulting in observed improvements to recruitment efforts;
- Improved retention and reduced employee turnover within participating organizations;
- Satisfaction with and use of instruments developed; and
- Positive impacts or benefits self-reported by participating employees and employers.

### **3.5 Broader Adoption Beyond Partners**

**Evaluation Question 5: To what extent are workplace stakeholders (other than immediate project partners) aware, and do they share, adopt and use best practices, tools and instruments for workplace skills development and HR management practices?**

**Overall, there is only fragmented evidence that external workplace stakeholders are aware of the outputs and outcomes of WSI projects and have adopted best practices, tools and resources developed by WSI projects.**

Evidence of broader dissemination and use of best practices, tools and instruments resulting from WSI projects was limited to data collected through case studies and the administrative database. Limited information on projects after their completion makes it difficult to fully assess the broader adoption of WSI projects. However, there was evidence that information on some WSI projects has been shared with external stakeholders about the results of the project with the intention of achieving broader adoption of elements of the project. Case study analysis indicated that six of twelve projects shared information with external stakeholders, beyond the immediate project partners and proponents, about the project results, with the intention of achieving broader adoption of elements of the project. Evidence of information sharing included requests for information, resources, advice; access and viewing of online content; collaboration between proponent and external stakeholders; and proponents' or partners' observations of use of tools, resources or models by external stakeholders.

A limited number of projects analyzed in case studies showed broader adoption of elements of their project. Four of twelve projects were able to indicate that elements of the project had in fact been re-purposed, modified or adopted in some way by stakeholders. Examples of broader adoption included adopting a project model into a new national project; a stakeholder adopting the project as its own by taking over responsibility for funding; development of training courses based on similar modules; adopting a delivery model for use in other sectors; and adoption of a game for use in an educational setting.

However, in all four case study projects where there was evidence of broader adoption, some information was missing or incomplete. Reasons for limited or partial information include incomplete information on use of web-based tools (e.g., inability to assess whether, how and by whom web resources and information were used), or absence of follow-up with previously interested stakeholders. Broader adoption seems to be difficult to measure within the stipulated timeframe of a WSI project, as replication activities by external stakeholders are (usually) out of the control of the project proponent and partners. Moreover, adoption of tools/products in many cases was pushed to the end of the project when time and resources were short.



A number of projects analyzed in case studies (5 of 12) indicated that broader adoption of their project was not achieved, primarily because of financial barriers. In some projects, plans were never made for broader dissemination or adoption beyond the immediate project partners. In other cases, dissemination and broader adoption were acknowledged as activities that would take place outside the timeframe of WSI funding.

**Challenges to broader adoption included the need to customize and adapt tools or instruments developed, and the lack of rigorous data to demonstrate evidence of the value of approaches developed through WSI projects.**

One of the objectives of the WSI was to test and evaluate outcomes-focused approaches to workplace skills development and human resources management practices in order to generate best practices models and lessons learned. According to the WSI program design, this was to be achieved by collecting and analyzing project data and evaluating models and instruments for workplace skills development and human resource management.

Expert panel members identified a number of challenges faced in meeting this objective that prevented broader adoption of project tools and instruments. Firstly, experts identified the lack of a rigorous project evaluation plan or absence of quantitative measures of impacts within WSI projects. More evidence of impacts and the value of the tools and instruments would have helped small- and medium-sized enterprises or employers to be more receptive to the implementation of new tools, instruments and practices. Secondly, experts identified the heterogeneity in the needs of SMEs and the need to customize and adapt tools or instruments developed as a second obstacle or challenge to broader adoption. Finally, the cost to adapt and implement tools or instruments in other contexts was identified as a barrier both by experts and case study proponents.

### **3.6 Comparable Approaches**

**Evaluation Question 6: What other approaches existed to achieve similar results as the WSI and to what extent was the WSI approach effective relative to other similar approaches?**

A total of 13 initiatives with similar objectives as WSI were identified through the comparative analysis. However, only limited evidence was available on the effectiveness of the initiatives.

**WSI program was found to be unique in terms of objectives, funding requirements, approaches, clientele targeted and expected results. Some programs are complementary to the WSI, in that they focused on workplace skills development or HR management within specific sectors or with specific populations.**

Evidence of comparable approaches was sought through the comparative analysis, as well as through interviews with staff and managers, the expert panel and case studies.

In the comparative analysis of about 400 programs reviewed, no program was found to duplicate the WSI in terms of objectives, funding requirements, approaches, clientele targeted and expected results. Interviews with HRSDC staff and managers corroborated this fact. They viewed WSI as a strong approach to support workplace skills development and innovation. The arguments provided were that WSI is unique in that it was not specific to a sector or region of the country and was flexible to tailor tools and strategies to specific local needs of SMEs or other targets.

Other HRSDC programs were complementary to the WSI, in that they contributed to the development of effective tools or models (e.g., Aboriginal Skills and Partnership Fund, Foreign Credential Recognition Program) but focused on skills development or HR management within specific sectors or with specific populations (e.g., Aboriginal Canadians with employment barriers, and foreign trained Canadians). Alternatives identified by expert panel members focused on providing training pathways or programs for skills training or innovative approaches in other areas (e.g., labour-management relations). Few case study proponents, partners or program analysts interviewed were aware of alternative approaches or

funding alternatives available to achieve objectives similar to the WSI. There were some isolated mentions of funding programs offered, for example under federal-provincial Labour Market Development Agreements, to address skills shortages or improve essential skills or workplace-based skills. Sector councils and regional economic development organizations also were noted to provide some programming to support labour market integration and skills development. Programs identified in the comparative analysis, or by expert panel members, supported and encouraged different collaborative approaches or stimulated the development of workplace skills development for specific target groups.

### **Example of HRSDC programs that support skills development:**

- Aboriginal Skills and Training Strategic Investment Fund targets Aboriginal Canadians with employment barriers who have challenges with literacy and essential skills, and promotes partnerships between Aboriginal employment service organizations and employers (SMEs) through training-to-employment programs related to concrete job opportunities. It supports greater investments in training for individuals facing barriers to employment such as low literacy and essential skills;
- Foreign Credential Recognition Program targets foreign-trained individuals who are unemployed or underemployed. Partnership is not a requirement, but is encouraged between educational institutions and professional organizations;
- Provincial Labour Market Partnerships Program targets unemployed and low-skilled workers and provides funding to Provinces and Territories for skills and employment programs in order to help Canadians to receive training and develop skills. While partnerships are required, as for the WSI, the program can provide assistance for laid-off employees, retraining and redeployment support, and incentives for returning to work;

### **Provincial programs that support skills development:**

- Nova Scotia Workplace Education Initiative focuses on essential skills and projects funded must be based on a partnership between employers and employees;
- Prince Edward Island Workplace Training: Partnership is a requirement of delivery, but not of funding. The program provides direct training rather than testing or evaluating approaches, tools and instruments.

In addition to the previous Canadian programs that support skills development, there are a number of international programs with a similar focus including:

- Skills Development Fund of the State of Texas, U.S., provides grant funding to pay the training provider and the partnership must include the community college that administers the grant. The fund provides training dollars for Texas businesses and workers. A consortium of businesses or trade union identifies a training need, and then partners with a public Community or Technical college to fill its specific needs;
- Growth and Innovation Fund (GIF) of the United Kingdom, promotes partnerships of a large range of organizations including businesses, training bodies and labour-unions. The Fund helps employers develop their own innovative skills solutions which have the potential to transform growth in their sector, region or supply chain;
- Training investments in Nordic countries (e.g., Denmark, Sweden, Finland and Norway) is to a large extent the product of the collective bargaining process. In terms of specific measures at the enterprise level, national goals and the structure and design of training programs are developed through tripartite processes (state-unions-business management). These countries also provide funding for training. For example, in Denmark, participants in Adult Vocational Training Programs are entitled to a fixed allowance financed by the state; the government of Finland pays up to half the cost of training; and the Swedish government provides training grants to employers in specific circumstances.

Most project proponents viewed WSI as a strong approach to support workplace skills development and innovation. The arguments provided include that the WSI was unique in that it was not specific to a sector or region of the country and was flexible to tailor tools and strategies to the specific local needs of SMEs. The search of comparable initiatives did not find any that focussed on testing and evaluating innovation related to workplace skills development and HR practices.

**Governments use a wide variety of instruments to foster workplace learning. Many countries use a combination of approaches and instruments that focus on both employers and the employees.**

Findings from the comparative analysis revealed that governments nationally and internationally use a wide variety of instruments to foster workplace learning and skills development. These instruments<sup>5</sup> include:

- **Government legislation to facilitate learning and promote investment in human capital.** An example is the Québec *“Loi favorisant le développement et la reconnaissance des compétences de la main-d’œuvre et le fond de développement de la main d’œuvre”*. The objectives of the Act are to improve the qualifications and skills of the workforce through investment in training provided by partnerships between employers, labour-unions and community partners and training institutions. It also promotes the development of training models and the recognition of the skills of the workers in employment. Employers whose payroll is one million or higher per year are required to invest in the development of the skills of the workforce by dedicating an amount representing at least one percent of their payroll. The portion of the amount not invested in the training activities must be paid to the Minister of the Revenue who allocates it to the skills development fund.
- **Fiscal incentives to stimulate firm investment in training or to facilitate/allow workers to attend training, such as tax credits, special deductions or subsidies.** This kind of incentive was found in the review of the Growth and Innovation Fund in the United Kingdom and the Rhode Island New Employment Tax Credit and Tax Incentives. The goal of the Rhode Island Tax Credit and Tax Incentives Act is to promote the hiring of long-term unemployed workers and certain targeted groups of job seekers, as well as to grant a tax credit against the corporate income tax equal to 50 percent of actual training expenses for new and current employees (up to \$5,000 per employee, over three years), or a tax credit of 50 percent of actual wages paid to a qualifying apprentice or \$4,800, whichever is less.
- **Government financial support directed at employers to develop training opportunities for employees.** For example, Prince Edward Island Workplace Training provides financial support to employers in PEI to assist in the development and provision of job-specific training. This program supports training initiatives by funding a portion of the salaries of employees while on training and other related costs. It is based on partnerships between employers, industry groups, training providers and government.
- **Support to arms-length agencies to promote learning, set standards, conduct research and provide information.** The sector council model falls into this category. Sector Councils funded under the Manitoba Sector Councils and Industry Associations Program are dedicated human resource development and training organizations that bring together representatives from key stakeholder groups to address needs. This approach is intended to enable industry to participate in cost-shared training, increase employer involvement in training; introduce industry-determined college and university programs; and provide employees with transferable skills.
- **Measures directed towards individual workers, such as rights to training, financial incentives and supports (e.g., loans, grants, learning accounts, etc.).** In Denmark, participants in Adult Vocational Training Programs are entitled to a fixed allowance financed by the state; the Government of Finland pays up to half the cost of training; and the Swedish government provides training grants to employers in specific circumstances.

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<sup>5</sup> Employer Investment in Workplace Learning in Canada, Canadian Council on Learning, 2006.

### 3.7 Best Practices from Workplace Skills Initiative Project

**Evaluation Question 7: Are there any key best practices and lessons learned generated by WSI with a high potential to inform/influence other workplaces/other HRSDC programs in the area of workplace skills development and human resources management?**

Findings from the evaluation concerning best practices identified from project implementation experience, challenges or obstacles experienced in project implementation, and the potential broader applicability of instruments or tools developed are as follows:

**WSI projects helped to demonstrate a number of best practices based on implementation experience.**

At the project level, many observations were made by case study proponents and partners based on project implementation experience. Expert panel members generally agreed that WSI projects helped to demonstrate a number of best practices. Best practices and lessons learned identified from the implementation of WSI projects include:

***Use of different approaches to engage SMEs:*** A variety of different types of approaches to engage employers and employees (e.g., in-person interventions via an intermediary, on-line delivery, training by peers) were identified as a best practice in case study projects, suggesting that there is value in different approaches. For example, on-line tools, a train-the-trainer approach, were identified as being particularly effective and cost-efficient in reaching employers who are dispersed or isolated geographically, while in-person interventions via an intermediary were identified as particularly effective with small organizations. Several expert panel members noted that WSI projects helped to demonstrate the importance of blended delivery methods and creative delivery solutions.

***The importance of collaborative approaches:*** WSI projects were seen by experts to have provided further demonstration of the already recognized importance of employer and employee collaboration in the development and implementation of workplace skill development models, tools or instruments. For example, within the leadership of the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions, the model of collaborative employer-union partnership from this project has been adopted as the framework for nurses' training projects in nine provinces and one territory.

***Need for balance between standardized tools and flexible approaches when working with SMEs:*** Several projects identified a need to balance developing and offering standardized HR management tools and templates with the possibility to tailor them to specific needs of small- and medium-sized enterprises engaged. While standardized human resources management tools and templates were found to be an efficient approach in many WSI projects, the impacts for users were greatest when there was an opportunity to tailor these to the specific needs of individual employers. Expert panel members highlighted that WSI projects had helped to demonstrate the importance of flexible needs assessments and the customization of interventions to needs.

#### **The Building Resilient Workplaces**

The project aimed to increase awareness of workplace mental health issues among small- and medium-sized enterprises by using technology enabled learning reinforced by participant interaction. The project offered skills development to small- and medium-sized enterprises to build leadership capability in support of organizational resilience.

#### **HR Practices in Smaller SMEs New - Brunswick**

The objective of the project was to develop and test a toolkit with basic human resources tools and procedures for use by small- and medium-sized enterprises in rural areas. It also tested methods to address barriers preventing SME from taking advantage of HR resources and implementing HR practices. The toolkit was accessible electronically and on CDs. The development of the toolkit was ongoing through the project and was shaped by the feedback of the clients and agents.

**Providing information and tools to employers relating to cultural diversity in the workplace:** Helping employers to understand the reality and diversity of new Canadians and to assist their integration into the workplace by the development of tools to facilitate communications and cultural sensitivity in the workplace, were seen as best practices.

**Practicality of tools for SMEs:** Presenting information in concise, easy to use and practical formats when seeking to engage SMEs is important.

The expert panel considered that the value of best practices identified through WSI projects was limited given that some of the instruments or tools developed were already known from the management literature. While the interventions or tools developed by WSI projects may have been new to the organizations engaged in projects, they were not necessarily original, or they had already been applied in other workplaces or with other target audiences.

### 3.8 Project implementation

**Evaluation Question 7: Are there any key best practices and lessons learned generated by WSI with a high potential to inform/influence other workplaces/other HRSDC programs in the area of workplace skills development and human resources management?**

**A number of challenges or obstacles were experienced in the implementation of WSI funded projects.**

**Delays:** There were significant delays during the review of proposals, particularly for the first Call for Proposals (during which time a federal election was called), which resulted in funding decisions being made up to a year after the initial proposal was submitted. As a result, some partners were no longer available, projects had to be revised, and the time available to complete projects and undertake evaluation and dissemination efforts was constricted.

**Complex project administration:** Many proponents funded under the WSI had never been involved in an HRSDC grants and contribution process before. This was described by some interviewees as having made the negotiation of agreements more complex, and as having added complexity to the administration of the agreements. The fact that many funded projects were large<sup>6</sup> also added to the complexity of project administration.

**Project management challenges:** Many proponents were managing an HRSDC contribution agreement for the first time and/or found the administrative and reporting burden to be greater than expected, and had not allocated sufficient resources to this task.

**Continuity in project administration:** A number of case study projects experienced significant turnover in WSI analysts and project officers during and after project implementation, resulting in difficulties for project proponents as they lacked consistent direction and support from HRSDC.

**Securing employer participation:** Difficulties securing employer participation were identified as a challenge by a number of projects for varying reasons. First, some projects were being implemented during a period of economic downturn when the investment in human resources management and workplace skills development practices was viewed as a lower priority; while others noted that employers may not always recognize the need or advantages of a project, resulting in difficulties generating take-up.

**Burden of participation:** In some projects, participants (whether employees or employers) were required to invest a significant amount of time in project activities (e.g., training, workshops) while maintaining or managing their existing business or workload. This was a challenge that occasionally contributed to absenteeism concerns.

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<sup>6</sup> 18 of 29 funded projects involved a total budget or project cost of over \$1,000,000.

**Technological challenges:** A number of projects developing web-based resources or tools reported challenges with resources available in managing technological aspects of their projects.

**Many of the tools, instruments and models developed in projects may be broadly applicable to other Canadian workplaces, but are more likely to be beneficial to workplaces that share similarities to those engaged in projects.**

Based on case study findings and the results of the expert panel, it appears that many of the tools, instruments and models developed in projects may have some applicability to other Canadian workplaces (e.g., other sectors, regions, or target groups). Case study analysis revealed that funding recipients generally felt that their projects had aspects that would be transferable or applicable elsewhere, and expert opinion corroborates this assertion. However, experts emphasized those workplaces that share similarities to those in these projects are likely to benefit most, with broader applicability being much less likely.

A few case study projects were more broadly applicable as a result of initiatives to ensure their broader application or take-up (e.g., New Skills for Nurses is being replicated in nine provinces as a result of Health Canada funding). Other projects would have required adaptation in that they were based on laws, regulations, or resources available in a specific province; or were developed in one language only (e.g., Bilan et développement de compétences en entreprise).

Funding recipients and experts both underscored that success is most likely for projects that can be tailored to similar workplaces, but adapting projects can be costly, and the likelihood of broader applicability being achieved is limited. The requirement for wage subsidies was a further barrier to the broader applicability for some projects. The cost of implementing projects, limited project management resources, and obtaining participation from SMEs were also perceived to be the major challenges to broader applicability for WSI projects.

There were limited examples among WSI projects where there was evidence of broader applicability to Canadian workplaces, but potential obstacles to broader applicability that experts and funding recipients anticipate are:

**The heterogeneous needs of small- and medium-sized enterprises,** and the need to adapt or customize tools, models and instruments developed for further adaptation. In some instances there is a need to adapt tools laws and regulations to other provinces, or a need to adapt tools to the specific needs of each employer;

**Cost** for tailoring or adapting instruments and models to new contexts. Some projects developed through the WSI were regional or locally specific, and would need tailoring to other jurisdictions. Broader dissemination or take-up of models and tools created beyond the scope of the funded project is also difficult where there is a cost involved in take-up (e.g., covering wages of employees participating in training, cost for use of tools or delivery of intervention). Most project proponents felt their project would not have proceeded without WSI funding.

**Ensuring take-up/participation among employers, particularly SMEs,** which can be a challenge to achieve due to the investments required. If the project addressed a need not perceived or shared by potential participants, take-up and broader dissemination may be limited. Furthermore, expert panel members stated that without more evidence of impacts or return on investment from projects, SME managers may be less receptive to the implementing new practices, tools or models.

**Project management resource requirements,** were identified by experts as more significant than anticipated and often under-estimated by case study project proponents.

### 3.9 Lessons Learned from Workplace Skills Initiative Design and Delivery

#### Evaluation Question 9: Were program design, delivery mechanisms and structures appropriate and effective?

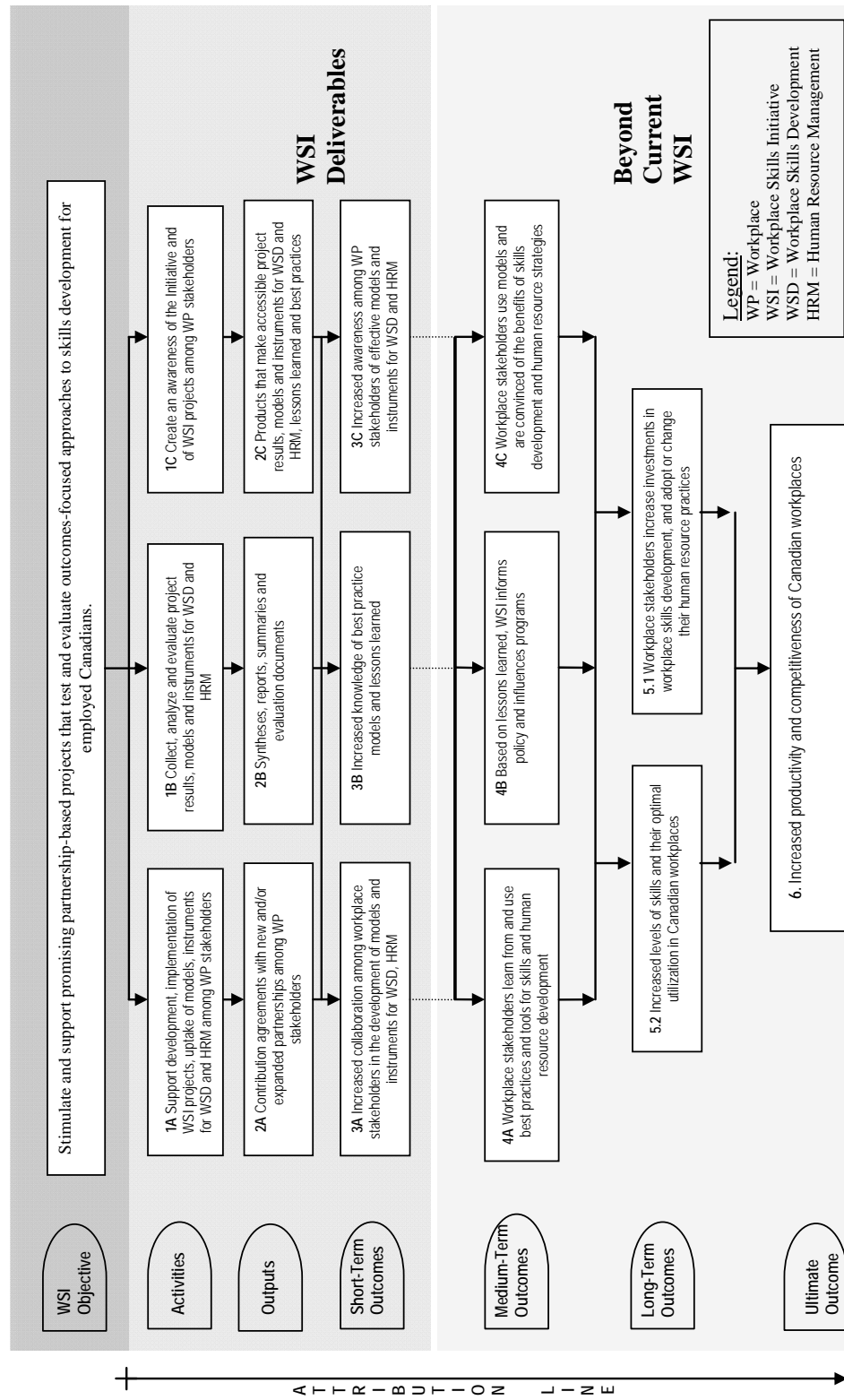
A number of lessons learned are identified from the design and delivery of the WSI that can inform future programming. These are:

- **Clear program objectives and focus:** HRSDC staff and managers interviewed felt that there had been a lack of clarity surrounding the objectives and intended outcomes of the WSI at the outset of its implementation. The lack of clarity in terms of what the WSI was intended to achieve led to a need to refine assessment criteria for the second call for proposals, and to refine program performance measures. Expert panellists also concurred that the efficiency and effectiveness of the WSI was limited by the lack of a clear definition of what was meant by innovation or how WSI projects were expected to be innovative. As well, some expert panel members suggested that projects' proposal development would have benefited from some literature search and review of the information that already existed on the innovation being tested.
- **Sufficient time-line:** The three-year time frame allocated for WSI projects was considered by program staff and managers to be too brief for the type and complexity of some workplace innovation projects funded (which involved new issues and new sponsor communities). At least one expert on the panel concurred with this assessment. Similarly, proponents in a number of case study projects suggested that three years was too brief a time to successfully complete a project and also ensure that the lessons learned were transferred.
- **Mix of internal and external review:** In the second call for proposals, HRSDC instituted a combination of internal review of proposals with external review by an expert committee developed for this purpose. This blend of internal and external review was identified by staff and managers interviewed as a lesson learned or best practice to be retained for future programs. In the expert panel, there was the suggestion that applicants be required to demonstrate how their project is innovative and informed by existing literature. Having external input into review may assist in evaluating these aspects of proposals.
- **Project administration:** HRSDC staff and managers identified the importance of having clear milestones in place to track projects, and clear mechanisms in place for HRSDC to follow projects. This was particularly important in the context of the WSI, where many proponents lacked experience managing contribution projects.
- **Active dissemination strategies:** Even though all WSI projects had dissemination plans as part of their proposals, few undertook active dissemination beyond immediate partners. A best practice may be to ensure that such strategies are developed at the project proposal or agreement stage, and that the strategies are implemented.
- **Pre-established networks and national links can help ensure broader dissemination:** Evidence suggests that proponents and partners with pre-established networks and national links, such as connections to other employer organizations through national sectoral associations or unions, and links to provincial government or other stakeholders, can be more successful in ensuring broader dissemination of project results. Projects with a very narrow or regional focus and no such networks or links, tend to devote limited effort to dissemination activities.
- **The requirement for leveraged funds from partners** (minimum of 25 per cent of the total project cost) is viewed as having been an important criterion for the initiative, leading to stronger partnerships and durable collaboration. Other programs require or encourage a collaborative approach, but it is not always required that partners make a significant investment directly in a project. However, some staff and managers caution that the WSI could have been better served by being more flexible on the minimum amount of contribution from proponents and partners, or by waiting to finalize details at the agreement stage given difficulties demonstrating the 25 per cent commitment at the proposal stage.





# Appendix A: Logic Model – Workplace Skills Initiative





## Appendix B: Funded Projects

Theme	Call for Proposals	Project Title	Project Proponent Organization	Total Project Budget	Project Description
Workforce development for SMEs	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Aboriginal Partnership and Up-skilling Initiative (APUI)	Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technology	\$1,146,619	The project provided job coaching and mentoring for Aboriginal Workers to improve their employability and job retention.
Workforce development for SMEs	1 <sup>st</sup>	HR Practices in Smaller SME's - National Pilot Project	Community Business Development Corporation (CBDC) Restigouche	\$6,566,901	The project addressed workplace issues faced by rural small and medium businesses from across Canada, by: 1) developing and testing a toolkit with basic human resources tools and procedures; and, 2) helping them to overcome barriers.
Workforce development for SMEs	1 <sup>st</sup>	Enhancing Human Resources (HR) Practices for Small- and Medium-sized Enterprises (SME's)	London Economic Development Corporation	\$485,919	The project offered a combination of on-line tools, resources and information with HR Skills Training and one-on-one consulting assistance to SMEs.
Workforce development for SMEs	1 <sup>st</sup>	Steps for Success: Starting from the Ground Up	Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, NF Division	\$3,061,351	The project helped manufacturers and value-added processors increase their competitiveness, enhance employee retention and improve productivity through better human resources management practices.
Workforce development for SMEs	1 <sup>st</sup>	Niagara Workforce Innovations Network	Niagara College of Applied Arts and Technology	\$2,480,162	The project provided one-on-one advice and coaching to employers to improve their capacity to attract the right employees, to improve business performance and to create a great place to work (by building an employment brand that attracts learning-focused talent).
Improved HR skills/tools	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Assessing Management Capabilities in Canada or is it "Assessing Management Practices in Canada"	Institute for Competitiveness and Prosperity	\$146,367	The project focused on assessing the impacts of performance and people management on manufacturing companies' productivity.

Theme	Call for Proposals	Project Title	Project Proponent Organization	Total Project Budget	Project Description
Improved HR skills/tools	1 <sup>st</sup>	Building Resilient Workplaces	Catholic Family Counselling Centre	\$2,346,149	Skills development offered to Small- and Medium-sized Enterprises to build leadership capability in support of organizational resilience and to increase awareness of workplace mental health issues by using technology enabled learning, reinforced by people interaction.
Improved HR skills/tools	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Excellence in Older Worker Retention : A Community Hospital Strategy	Seven Oaks General Hospital	\$691,628	The project focused on the retention of older health care workers by testing flexible working options.
Improved HR skills/tools	1 <sup>st</sup>	Investing in People	Canadian Society for Training and Development	\$1,437,591	The project objective was to assess the value of training programs in the workplaces by applying the Learning Value Chain model.
Improved HR skills/tools	1 <sup>st</sup>	Meeting Workplace Skill Needs: The Career Development Contribution	Canadian Career Development Foundation	\$1,795,812	The project explored impacts of career development on innovation in SMEs through self-directed intervention, external expert support and career conversation between employee and manager.
New sectoral up-skilling models	1 <sup>st</sup>	La valorisation du capital humain en agriculture: Une façon d'accroître son revenu	Union culturelle des franco-Ontariennes	\$811,291	The project supported the development of agriculture and agri-food in rural francophone Ontario, by 1) providing opportunities to gain management and technical skills; 2) disseminating relevant market/industry and consumer information; and, 3) providing tools to contribute to community development.
New sectoral up-skilling models	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Management Practices to Support High Performance Workplaces	Stuart O'Hara Inc.	\$41,713	The project tested new workplace-based approaches and ideas for building the awareness and capabilities of employers and strengthening linkages between SME employers and skilled workers in the Manufacturing sector.

Theme	Call for Proposals	Project Title	Project Proponent Organization	Total Project Budget	Project Description
New sectoral up-skilling models	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Cultiver l'excellence	Actions interculturelles de développement et d'éducation Inc.	\$681,159	The project focused on skills development strategies for new immigrants to increase their workforce participation and performance.
New sectoral up-skilling models	1 <sup>st</sup>	North West BC Small Business Mentoring Project: Enhancing Workplace Skills	Community Futures Development Corporation	\$454,894	The project tested a model of one-on-one, group and peer mentoring and distance mentoring through a delivery approach that involves in-person and electronic tools.
New sectoral up-skilling models	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Parrainage auprès des jeunes propriétaires forestiers du Bas-Saint-Laurent	Syndicat des producteurs forestiers du Bas-Saint-Laurent	\$69,521	The project used a sponsoring and mentorship approach to support young workers to develop skills and confidence in forestry industry.
New sectoral up-skilling models	1 <sup>st</sup>	Building Capacity of SME's	Manitoba Food Processors Association	\$1,868,017	The project assessed employees' skills by using of web-based tools and supported recruitment, training, leadership, communication and other human resource functions.
New sectoral up-skilling models	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Transforming the Tourism Workforce	Saskatchewan Tourism Education Council	\$1,457,090	The project created a seamless set of human resource and skills training practices among tourism operators in Saskatchewan, by 1) standardizing human resource management practices and skills certification processes in the tourism industry; 2) providing frontline employees and supervisors with training; and, 3) developing an "employer of choice" designation.
New sectoral up-skilling models	1 <sup>st</sup>	Market Access Program	Information and Communications Technology Association of Manitoba	\$1,939,856	The project focused on raising the level of readiness information and communications technology firms in Manitoba to enter into trade, technology partnering and export activities through the delivery of multi-faceted skills development initiatives.

Theme	Call for Proposals	Project Title	Project Proponent Organization	Total Project Budget	Project Description
New sectoral up-skilling models	1 <sup>st</sup>	Consolidation des dispositifs de reconnaissance et de développement des compétences en milieu de travail	Commission des partenaires du marché du travail	\$5,646,763	The project focused on developing and testing tools and processes for skills assessment, recognition and upgrading in various economic sectors (retailer, tourism, culture, and manufacture and information technology).
SME workforce integration	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Centre d'évaluation et de perfectionnement professionnel pour les nouveaux arrivants dans le domaine or « Assessment and Development Centre for Newcomers Working in Health and Social Services »	La Cité Collégiale	\$2,031,153	The project aimed to improve skills and employment opportunities of underemployed French-speaking new Canadians by 1) assessing the skills and experiences of underemployed in health care and social services, 2) developing plan for each field of health care and social services, and, 3) providing opportunities to acquire and upgrade specialized skills through internships and mentoring and to contribute to the reduction of workforce shortage for two employers.
SME workforce integration	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Determination + Addressing Workplace Needs (or Determining and Addressing Workplace Needs)	Winkler and District Chamber of Commerce	1,366,509	The project tested the Prior Learning Assessment Recognition (PLAR) practices on new immigrants to Canada and provided expert coaching and four different training vectors for employers and unemployed new Canadian to increase their workforce participation.
SME workforce integration	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Bilan de compétences et le maintien en emploi des travailleurs d'expérience	Centre d'orientation et de recherche d'emploi de l'Estrie	\$635,302	The project tested and refined a model to provide employed workers with a “bilan des compétences”, developed a personal skills assessment balance sheet and identified strengths and opportunities.

Theme	Call for Proposals	Project Title	Project Proponent Organization	Total Project Budget	Project Description
SME workforce integration	1 <sup>st</sup>	Bridging the Gap: Integration of Skilled Immigrants into the Canadian Workplace	Ottawa University	\$3,850,830	The project contributed to the integration of skilled immigrants into Ontario and Québec small- and medium-sized enterprises by 1) identifying barriers and develop strategies; 2) building and providing online access of bilingual learning modules; and 3) disseminating information to employers and immigrants on challenges, solutions, and strategies for integration.
SME workforce integration	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Work in Nova Scotia (WINS) : Workplace Skills Enhancement	Metropolitan Immigrant Settlement Association	\$600,009	The project facilitated the integration of newcomers in the workplace and helped them to reach their employment goals. The project aimed to increase distance workplace support, using electronic tools and services, to improve workplace skills, performance and opportunities of newcomers in Nova Scotia and develop recruitment and training strategies to respond to skills gaps and labour shortages.
SME workforce integration	1 <sup>st</sup>	The Employer Toolkit for Hiring & Retention of Internationally-Trained Professionals & Tradespeople	Settlement and Integration Services Organization	\$771,760	The project developed resources and tools to help integrate internationally trained professionals and tradespeople into the workplace to increase competitiveness.
SME workforce integration	1 <sup>st</sup>	Opération Découverte	Fédération des caisses Desjardins du Québec	\$2,097,009	The project focused on defining the indispensable management skills needed when dealing with diversified workforce with the aim of supporting the administrators.
Income support for up-skilling	1 <sup>st</sup>	Building a Dynamic Representative Workforce in the Health Sector: SAHO's Career Pathing Project	Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations	\$2,951,579	The project developed a career path process through the development of training tools, professional practices and self-assessment tools in the health care sector.

Theme	Call for Proposals	Project Title	Project Proponent Organization	Total Project Budget	Project Description
Income support for up-skilling	1 <sup>st</sup>	New Skills for Nurses: A Partnership Approach to Professional Development	Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions	\$2,004,149	The project provided opportunities for both new and experienced nurses in urban and rural settings to upgrade their professional skills and competencies while still remaining in the workplace. The project is delivered using a model of collaboration between employers, nurses' unions and governments.
Income support for up-skilling	1 <sup>st</sup>	Educator Pathway - Preparing a Nursing Workforce to Advance Health Services	Vancouver Coastal Health	\$4,876,874	The project aimed to create a pathway for nurse educators and interested nurses to achieve various levels of certification, thus contributing to the recruitment and retention of nurse educators.



## Appendix C: Evaluation Matrix – Questions, Indicators and Methods

Evaluation Question	Indicator	Method					
		Comparative Analysis of WSI Approach	Document, File and Administrative Data Review	Project Results Databases Review (Falcon, CSGC)	Program Delivery Staff Interviews	Expert Panel Review	Project Case Studies
<b>Question 1</b> To what extent have the WSI projects led to increased partnerships, networks and information flows among workplace partners and stakeholders in the development of new models, tools and instruments for workplace skills development and HR management?	Number and % of funded projects reporting increased partnerships.			X			X
	Number and % of funding recipients, project partners and stakeholders reporting newly developed workplace initiatives, instruments, models, tools and strategies as part of funded projects.		X	X			X
	Number and % of funding recipients and project partners reporting that collaboration led to the development and the sharing of new models, tools and instruments for workplace skills development and HR management.			X			X
	Average number and range of funded project partners at the beginning of each project. Note: <i>range: different types of organizations and partnerships.</i>		X	X			X
	Average number and range of partners who joined the funded project during its implementation.			X			X
	Evidence of financial and in-kind contributions from project partners (amount and type per partner)		X	X			X
	Number, type of communications and material produced and used to disseminate WSI results beyond direct project partners.			X			X
	Level of involvement (high, moderate, low), participation and sharing of information in the funded project for each funding recipient and project partner.			X	X		X

Evaluation Question	Indicator	Method					
		Comparative Analysis of WSI Approach	Document, File and Administrative Data Review	Project Results Databases Review (Falcon, CSGC)	Program Delivery Staff Interviews	Expert Panel Review	Project Case Studies
<b>Question 2</b> To what extent have the projects implemented increased the recipient, partner, stakeholder and beneficiary organizations' knowledge of best practices for workplace skills development and HR management?	Number and % of funding recipients, project partners, stakeholders and beneficiaries that believe they have increased their knowledge of / access to new best practices, models, tools and instruments in workplace skill development and HR management as a result of WSI funded projects.			X	X		X
	Evidence of new best practices developed as a result of WSI funded projects.			X	X	X	X
	Opinions on the innovative character and value of practices, tools and instruments developed in the course of funded projects.			X	X	X	X
<b>Question 3</b> To what extent have recipient and partner organizations changed or adopted workplace skills development and HR management practices as a result of WSI projects?	Number and % of stakeholders, recipients and partners (in particular employers) reporting having increased or who intend to increase their investments in workplace skills development and in HR management practices and the extent of investment.			X	X		X
	Number and % of stakeholders, recipients and partners reporting that they have changed/ altered HR practices or intend to do so as a result of WSI funded projects and the extent of changes.			X	X		X
	Opinions on challenges faced and benefits expected or achieved from the adoption of new practices.			X	X	X	X

Evaluation Question	Indicator	Method					
		Comparative Analysis of WSI Approach	Document, File and Administrative Data Review	Project Results Databases Review (Falcon, CSGC)	Program Delivery Staff Interviews	Expert Panel Review	Project Case Studies
<b>Question 4</b> To what extent have WSI projects resulted in dissemination of new workplace initiatives, instruments, models, tools and strategies for the development of workplace skills and best practices in human resource management beyond direct project partners?	Number and % of funding recipients and project partners reporting they have shared information about new instruments, models, tools and strategies for the development of workplace skills and best practices in human resource management beyond direct project partners.		X	X	X		X
	Number, type of communications and material produced and used to disseminate WSI results beyond direct project partners.			X			X
<b>Question 5</b> To what extent are workplace stakeholders (other than immediate project partners) aware, and do they share, adopt and use best practices, tools and instruments for workplace skills development and HR management practices?	Documented evidence that workplace stakeholders (other than project partners) received information on results of WSI-funded projects (e.g., conference attendance).			X			X
	Evidence that workplace stakeholders (other than project partners) adopt and use best practices, tools and instruments for workplace skills development and HR management practices developed in the course of the WSI funded projects.			X	X		X
<b>Question 6</b> What other approaches existed to achieve similar results as the WSI and to what extent was the WSI approach effective relative to other similar approaches?	Evidence of alternative approaches to WSI based on objectives, target population, streams, themes, and expected results.	X	X		X	X	X
	Extent to which unfunded applicants obtained funding for activities (amount and sources).						
	Documented evidence of similar and alternative approaches that pursue similar objectives and their effectiveness.	X	X		X		
	Expert opinion on the relative cost-effectiveness of the various approaches documented as comparable to WSI.					X	

Evaluation Question	Indicator	Method					
		Comparative Analysis of WSI Approach	Document, File and Administrative Data Review	Project Results Databases Review (Falcon, CSGC)	Program Delivery Staff Interviews	Expert Panel Review	Project Case Studies
<b>Question 7</b> Are there any key best practices and lessons learned generated by WSI with a high potential to inform/influence other workplaces/ other HRSDC programs in the area of workplace skills development and human resources management?	Documented evidence of best practices, models, tools and instruments from funded projects reported as successful in supporting workplace skills development and human resources management among stakeholders.			X	X		X
	Opinions on the applicability of WSI projects results to other workplaces and public policy in the area of workplaces skills development, including the conditions for success.				X	X	X
<b>Question 8</b> For the WSI projects that went ahead in the absence of WSI funding, what were the key drivers for the projects proceeding, what were their results in comparison to funded WSI projects and did they operate at the same level as proposed in the application?	Opinions and documented evidence of reasons or factors that motivated or made it possible for unfunded projects to proceed.						
	Summary of project results of unfunded projects that went ahead in the absence of WSI funding.						
	Extent to which the project proceeded as presented and, if applicable, nature of changes made to projects in order to proceed.						
	Number and percentage of implemented unfunded project participants who invested in workplace skills development and human resources management.						
	Lessons learned for these projects and evidence of success.						
	Extent to which unfunded projects met internal project objectives, and extent to which project objectives were similar to WSI objectives.						
	Best practices and lessons learned from unfunded projects (i.e. success factors and challenges).						

Evaluation Question	Indicator	Method					
		Comparative Analysis of WSI Approach	Document, File and Administrative Data Review	Project Results Databases Review (Falcon, CSGC)	Program Delivery Staff Interviews	Expert Panel Review	Project Case Studies
<b>Question 9</b> Were program design, delivery mechanisms and structures appropriate and effective?	Perceived appropriateness and effectiveness of WSI design, delivery mechanisms and structures (e.g., WSI objectives, review process, eligibility criteria, delivery structure).		X		X	X	
	Challenges or obstacles experienced in implementing the WSI.		X		X	X	
	Extent to which the design of the Initiative contributed to or hindered the achievement of desired outcomes.		X		X		
	Reasons for low success rate of proposals submitted.				X		