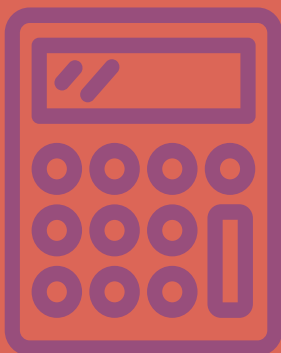




# Essential Skills Playbook



— Showcasing innovative approaches at work

LOOKING BACK, LOOKING FORWARD

This report is funded by the Government of Canada's Office of Literacy and Essential Skills.



The opinions and interpretations in this publication are those of various contributors and funding recipients and may not necessarily reflect those of the Government of Canada.

**Essential Skills Playbook – Showcasing innovative approaches at work**

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**PDF**

Cat. No.: Em16-18/2019E-PDF

ISBN: 978-0-660-31902-5

**ESDC**

Cat. No.: WP-206-11-19E

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# Message from the Senior Assistant Deputy Minister



At Employment and Social Development Canada we take great satisfaction in positively impacting the lives of all Canadians in very tangible ways. In my role as Senior Assistant Deputy Minister of the Skills and Employment Branch, I work with colleagues to achieve an ambitious labour market and skills agenda. This includes ensuring that Canadians can access training and lifelong learning supports to obtain the skills they need to fully participate in the labour market and society.

Given today's challenges and changing trends in work environments, essential skills initiatives are more relevant than ever as they are the foundation for learning all other skills. The Office of Literacy and Essential Skills (OLES) contributes to our department's mandate by helping adult Canadians improve their essential skills to get and keep a job, adapt and succeed at work, and live healthy, engaged lives. OLES works with provincial and territorial governments, employers and community organizations to support the integration of essential skills into employment and training programs and to implement projects that reach Canadians with low skills.

Through my experience with OLES, I have developed an appreciation for our partner organizations and their efforts to try new ideas, replicate and scale up proven approaches to skills upgrading, and work directly with Canadians to advance essential skills. I am very excited about this publication, the first of its kind to showcase the efforts of our stakeholders over the last decade.

I would like to thank all those who contributed to this project.

**Rachel Wernick**

Senior Assistant Deputy Minister  
Skills and Employment Branch  
Employment and Social Development Canada





- the purpose of the Playbook
- how essential skills build the foundation for lifelong learning
- how the Office of Literacy and Essential Skills (OLES) supports its partners and stakeholders to test, replicate and scale up ideas for essential skills training



# Part One

Context

# 1 What is the purpose of the Essential Skills Playbook?

This Playbook was developed to help organizations take an informed approach to testing, replicating, and scaling up essential skills supports to help prepare Canadians to get and keep a job, and to adapt and succeed at work.

As new projects are developed and lessons are learned, the Playbook will be updated to reflect and integrate the experiences of stakeholders and partners across Canada.

Suggestions for improvement can be forwarded to [es-ce.res@hrsdc-rhdcc.gc.ca](mailto:es-ce.res@hrsdc-rhdcc.gc.ca).



# 2 Why support essential skills development in adults?

“...to be adaptable employees, workers need to communicate with others, be aware of safety precautions and learn new technology on the job.”

Essential Skills Ontario



## WHAT ARE ESSENTIAL SKILLS?

Essential skills provide the foundation for learning all other skills. In the mid-1990s, Employment and Social Development Canada (then called Human Resources Development Canada) identified and validated an Essential Skills Framework of nine skills, including literacy skills (reading, writing, document use and numeracy), thinking skills, oral communication, computer use/digital skills, working with others and the skills associated with continuous learning. Detailed definitions can be found on [OLES' webpage](#). Extensive research and interviews with over 3,000 service providers, employers and other stakeholders informed the development of the Framework and are the foundation for over 350 Essential Skills Profiles.

Each profile describes how essential skills are used by workers, and is classified according to the National Occupational Classification codes.<sup>1</sup> The Essential Skills Profiles are available on Job Bank<sup>2</sup> and include: a brief description of the occupation; examples of tasks that illustrate how each essential skill is applied; and complexity ratings that indicate the level of difficulty of the example tasks. The Essential Skills Profiles for main occupations were updated in 2012, and Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) will consider how and when to update the remainder.

### The Nine Essential Skills



#### Reading

Understanding materials written in sentences or paragraph (e.g. letters, manuals).



#### Writing

Communicating by arranging words, numbers and symbols on paper or a computer screen.



#### Thinking

Finding and evaluating information to make rational decisions or to organize work.



#### Digital Skills/Computer Use

Computer use – Using computers and other forms of technology.



#### Working with Others

Interacting with others to complete tasks.



#### Oral Communication

Using speech to exchange thoughts and information.



#### Numeracy

Using numbers and thinking in quantitative terms to complete tasks.



#### Continuous Learning

Participating in an ongoing process of improving skills and knowledge.



#### Document Use

Finding, understanding or entering information (e.g. text, symbols, numbers) in various types of documents, such as tables or forms.

Workers with strong essential skills are more resilient to labour market changes and have better employment outcomes. Research indicates a correlation between higher essential skill levels and:

- **labour market outcomes**, including better jobs, income, job security, adaptability, and mobility;
- **social outcomes**, including lower costs for social programs such as social assistance and Employment Insurance;
- **returns on investment** for employers investing in essential skills training, including better worker health and safety, and higher productivity.

## WHY DO ADULTS NEED TO DEVELOP THEIR ESSENTIAL SKILLS?

In a rapidly changing labour market, Canadians are worried about their ability to get and keep a job. Technologies in the workplace, such as automation and robotics, are reducing demand for workers to perform repetitive tasks and increasing demand for higher skills. Literacy is one of the foundational skills that enables job seekers and workers to learn new skills.

The skills of over 27,000 adult Canadians aged 16 to 65 were assessed by the 2012 Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC). An initiative of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the PIAAC surveys skills in more than 40 countries. Proficiency levels are from 1 to 5, with 5 being the most proficient. People with skills below level 3 may face greater barriers for learning new skills and succeeding in the labour market, particularly as occupational skills demands are increasing over time.

Approximately 49% of Canadians tested scored at or below level 2 on the literacy scale. Approximately 55% scored at or below Level 2 on the numeracy scale. Given that skills requirements are expected to rise, it is important that adults have access to quality training to boost their essential skills.



“ Essential skills are seen as fundamental to ensuring that workers can adjust to workplace change.”

Council of Canadian Academics, 2014

**“ An innovation economy needs a workforce with up-to-date skills. But as new technologies are introduced and the innovation economy grows, the skills sought by employers are continually shifting. It can be challenging for Canadians to know which skills they need to remain relevant throughout their careers. Employers themselves struggle to anticipate what their future needs might be.”<sup>3</sup>**

Brookfield Institute



## WHAT ABOUT OTHER SKILLS NOT INCLUDED IN THE ESSENTIAL SKILLS FRAMEWORK?

Foundational essential skills (reading, writing, numeracy and document use) are expected to continue to be needed in the future. However, there is an economic and social imperative to address all transferable workplace skills, support innovation and economic growth, reduce skills mismatches, support social cohesion, and help individuals find good-quality jobs that match their skill sets.

Skills beyond the essential skills, often referred to as soft skills or transferable skills, are particularly important to employers. Although there is no agreed-upon definition for soft skills, there is general agreement that some of them overlap with the recognized nine essential skills. Soft skills are key to success in school and throughout adult life. Employers increasingly voice concerns that they are unable to find workers with the right combination of technical and soft skills such as teamwork, interpersonal skills, and critical thinking.

The OECD also recognizes the importance of transferable or soft skills for the emerging workforce.<sup>4</sup> The next PIAAC survey in 2021 will include measures of some of these skills, using the framework of the “big 5” personality traits: openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism.

OLES recognizes that with the evolving labour market, increase in technology and automation, globalization, and shifting demographics shaping the nature of work, soft skills or transferable skills are more critical than ever to remain competitive in the current and future workforce. Taking this into consideration, OLES is in the process of modernizing the Essential Skills Framework, to ensure it is reflective of the skills needed in today’s economy and moving forward. The renewal process is expected to be completed by summer 2020.

**“ Machines are already better than humans at performing some routine tasks. But people are still better at open-ended tasks. High-skilled, hard-to-automate jobs will increasingly require strong social skills, which are more difficult to automate.”**

David Deming, Harvard University



# 3 The Office of Literacy and Essential Skills



The Government of Canada, through the Office of Literacy and Essential Skills (OLES), works with service providers, partners and other stakeholders to provide Canadians with access to essential skills tools, resources and quality training. OLES receives annual funding of about \$25 million to test, replicate and scale up effective and innovative essential skills training approaches. Funded projects complement provincial and territorial programming, and support the development and testing of new models that address gaps and contribute to training and service delivery that responds better to worker and employer needs. Particular attention is paid to groups at greater risk of facing barriers to employment, such as Indigenous people, newcomers, youth, and Official Language Minority Communities (OLMCs), to ensure that they increasingly participate in Canada’s economic prosperity.

The Government also works closely with provincial and territorial governments to encourage the integration of essential skills into employment and training programs, including through the funding provided by federal labour market transfers such as the Labour Market Development agreements and the Workforce Development agreements.

The objective is to help Canadians get the essential skills they need for good quality jobs. OLES’ business objectives and day-to-day activities are summarized on the next page ([Integrating Essential Skills into Labour Market Programming](#)).

*Over the past three decades, ESDC’s essential skills programming has evolved to better meet the needs of Canadians. (See timeline [Over 30 years of evolution of Federal Literacy and Essential Skills Programming](#) on page 12.) This has been achieved through evidence-based decision-making, closer collaboration with provinces and territories, and focusing efforts for greatest impact.*

# Integrating Essential Skills into Labour Market Programming

## Building a stronger and more competitive Canada and helping Canadians live productive and rewarding lives

### OUR VISION

Improve the essential skills of adult Canadians so they can participate in and adapt to a knowledge-based economy and society.

### WHAT RESULTS CAN CANADIANS EXPECT

Improved essential skills of adult Canadians for better labour market outcomes.

### WHO WE ARE

OLES is part of the Skills and Employment Branch at ESDC.

### WHAT WE DO

OLES is working to broaden access to essential skills training and supports to integrate essential skills into labour market programming delivered by partners and stakeholders. The goal is to help adult Canadians improve their essential skills to get and keep a job, and adapt and succeed at work. OLES focuses on groups at greater risk of facing barriers to employment, such as Indigenous people, youth, newcomers, unemployed individuals, workers with low skills, people with disabilities and OLMC.

### PARTNERS AND STAKEHOLDERS

#### Partners:

- provincial/territorial governments
- federal government

#### Stakeholders:

- service delivery organizations
- employers
- unions
- post-secondary education system

### HOW WE DELIVER RESULTS

1. We develop **strategic partnerships** to encourage partners and stakeholders to integrate essential skills into their programming, by providing information, advice and resources and facilitating connections.
2. We share **knowledge** about how to effectively integrate essential skills into labour market policy and programs. We collect and analyze data on employment and training supports, document effective practices and conditions for success, and analyze labour market trends.
3. We provide **catalytic grants and contributions funding** to projects that improve access to quality job training. This means developing innovative approaches to employment and training supports that respond better to employer and worker needs, and replicating and scaling up proven approaches to skills upgrading.



### GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES

Federal budget 2019 focuses on skills for tomorrow's economy.

Integrating essential skills into labour market programming is based on the Minister's mandate to:

- help Canadians develop the skills they need for good-quality jobs;
- improve workers' access to quality job training that provides them with pathways to good careers.

# Over 30 years of evolution of federal literacy and essential skills programming

## 1990s–2009

ESDC developed the Essential Skills Framework through extensive research to understand requirements for occupations, including interviews with workers. Essential skills profiles were developed for NOC occupations based on this research. ESDC, in cooperation with provinces and territories, developed the Essential Skills website, including tools and resources. OLES funded organizations to develop tools, resources and training models e.g. Test of Workplace Essential Skills, Measure Up etc.

## 2009–2014

ESDC allocated funding to better understand effective practices and models. Essential skills summaries were added to the National Occupation Analysis for trades. ESDC developed essential skills tools for the trades.

## 2012–2015

OLES funded development of large-scale demonstration projects to build the business case for employers investing in essential skills.

## 2015–present

Essential skills integrated into more labour market programs—for example:

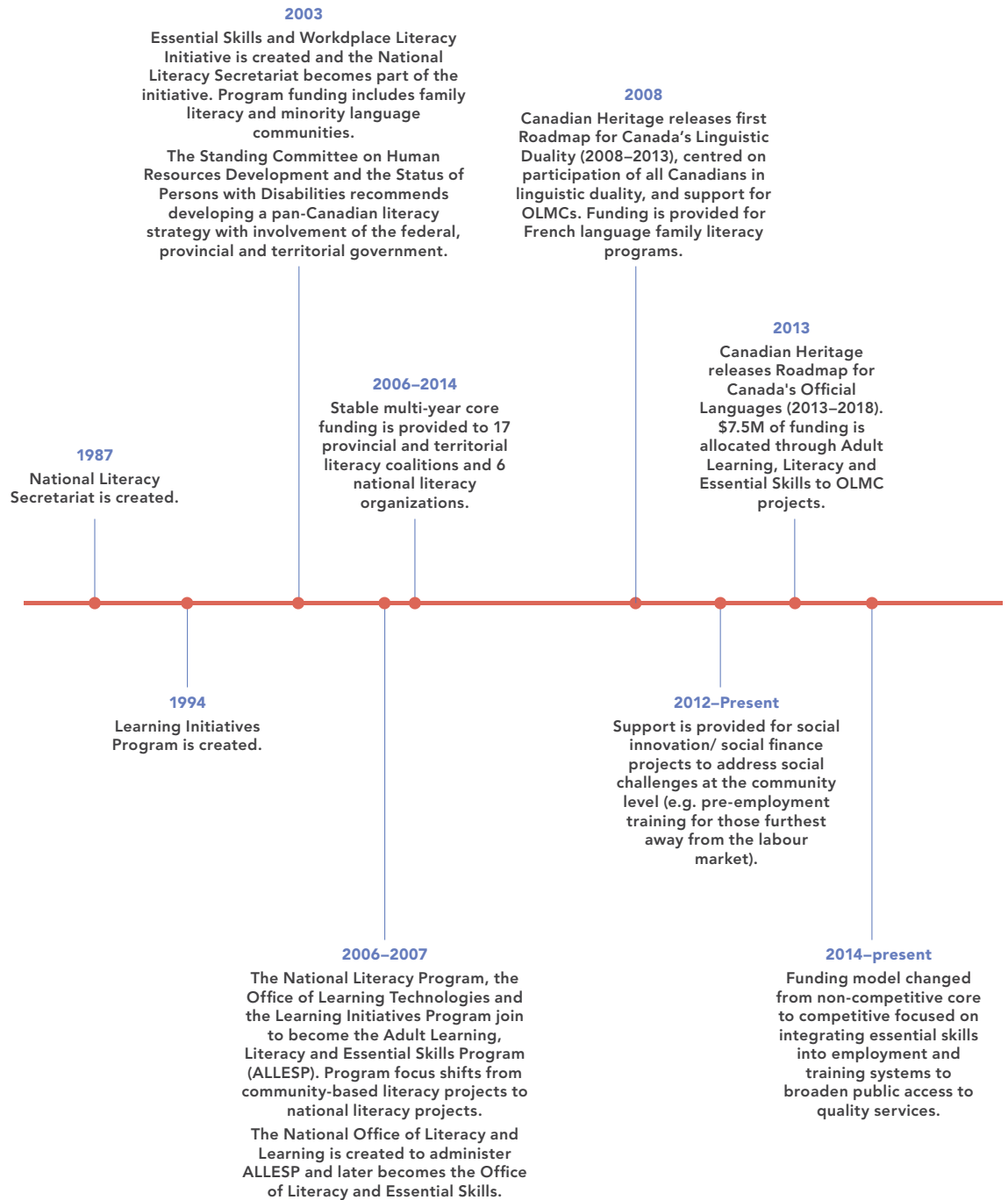
- federal/provincial/territorial transfer agreements
- Indigenous and youth programs
- Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada's Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada program.

Essential skills integrated into Red Seal Occupational Standards.

First Canadian test of milestone-based incentive payments for essential skills training delivery is conducted.

The use of social impact bonds in social finance projects is tested.

More rigorous outcomes reporting required from funding recipients (e.g. before and after training skills assessments).







Projects focusing on essential skills in the workplace:

- promising practices and lessons learned
- social innovation and social finance pilot projects
- tools for essential skills assessments and supports research projects



# Part Two

Promising Practices  
and Lessons Learned

# 4 Promising practices and lessons learned

The following section highlights some promising practices and lessons learned in workplace essential skills training and research. It is organized by projects that resulted in promising practices through partnerships and collaboration, by partnering with different types of stakeholders, and by focusing on innovative training interventions.

## 4.1 Partnership and collaboration

### 4.1.1 WORKING WITH JOB SEEKERS

**Customize training:** Training and assessment should be customized to participants.

- As do all Workplace Education Manitoba (WEM) projects, the Pay for Success project focused on workplace need for services and for essential skills assessment and training.
- The Saint John Learning Exchange (SJLE) WorkLinks project responded to training and work-related skill demands faced by participants. Key outcomes included: maintaining employment for at least six months, increased earning, increased confidence, marked improvement in essential skills and soft skills, and addressing long-term barriers to education or employment.

**Service responses should progressively adapt to learners' needs:** Clients have complex needs that must be assessed on intake to allow accurate triage.

- The WEM Pay for Success project focused on participants taking small steps on the training/employment continuum. It measured success through a variety of assessments as part of an individualized learning and career plan.
- The SJLE WorkLinks project developed a new process for assessing soft skill goals and areas of deficit reported by job seekers so coaches could begin working earlier on these gaps.
- The YWCA Toronto's YWCA Building Sustainable Futures project met the job seekers "where they were" and took thoughtful, holistic steps to help them progress.

**Use an asset-based approach:** Many participants live in highly precarious socio-economic circumstances and struggle to engage in and sustain their participation in foundational skills-building programs. Rather than starting with deficits—a perception of what participants lack in terms of employment-related and other life skills—a holistic approach should be taken to identify and build their assets.

For example, the YWCA Toronto's [Building Sustainable Futures](#) model focused on job seekers' strengths—to build hope, self-confidence, self-direction and resilience. Participants from all demographic groups responded positively to this approach and felt encouraged to explore new possibilities.

#### 4.1.2 PARTNERING WITH EMPLOYERS

**Use a dual customer model (employer-learner):** To better understand their business requirements, service providers should first discuss with employers and then tailor services to address workplace needs. For example, in their [Pay for Success](#) project, WEM ensured service providers and employers built a dual customer model, aligning training with the needs of both job seekers and employers in specific sectors. This model offers potential job placements for participants and employers through new hiring channels.

**Adapt to learners' needs and realities:** Job placements may require employers to work with participants who are less technically prepared. For example, the YWCA Toronto's [Building Sustainable Futures](#), SJLE's [WorkLinks](#), and WEM's [Pay for Success](#) projects, provided post-job placement retention supports to participants who were struggling after finding employment. This practice was discussed with employers and their support was secured, despite concerns about productivity.



#### 4.1.3 PARTNERING WITH SERVICE PROVIDERS

**Capitalize on the knowledge of service providers:**

Funding recipients must work with service providers to identify and develop milestones for participants along the pathway to employment.

For example, by working directly with service providers, WEM's [Pay for Success](#) project ensured that milestones were directly connected to service providers' day-to-day practices. This collaboration encouraged service providers to develop more efficient ways of delivering programs to help participants succeed.

**Innovations require a learning period:** Before undertaking innovation, understand that developing creative solutions requires intelligent risk-taking and learning from mistakes.

- WEM's [Pay for Success](#) project demonstrated that investing in service providers' ability to track outcomes significantly reduced the expenses associated with data collection by third parties, and allowed service providers to more closely track participant progress.
- The YWCA Toronto's [Building Sustainable Futures](#) project's collaborators faced challenges in designing and delivering their adapted program models, and found that it was as important to document these challenges as to document the project's positive outcomes. The challenges reflected two themes: the complex needs of under-served populations and the uncertain funding that can hinder the capacity of even the larger non-profit organizations to keep pace with changing labour market needs across Canada.
- SJLE's [WorkLinks](#) project found that developing social enterprises challenged SJLE's capacity. However, the WorkLinks team learned that social enterprises provided authentic job sites for training, skill development and coaching. Working in social enterprises helped participants build technical, essential and soft skills that were transferable to other jobs, and offered them meaningful paid work rooted in supporting the growth of their community.

## 4.2 Leveraging employers



### 4.2.1 DEMONSTRATING A RETURN ON INVESTMENT

Studies have demonstrated that even modest investments in workplace essential skills training can lead to substantial gains in workers' skills, job performance, earnings and productivity. The following OLES-funded projects have measured the return on investment of essential skills training.

- The Social Research and Demonstration Corporation's (SRDC) UPSKILL project demonstrated an average return on training investment of 23% in the first year, as measured by reduced error rates, increased retention, and improved productivity and customer service.
- The Trucking Human Resource Sector Council's Essential Skills and Safety for the Trucking Industry project demonstrated that for every dollar an employer invested in essential skills upgrading, there was a potential net return of \$4.59 to \$4.79. Essential skills upgrading helped professional drivers become more confident in their abilities, helping them to handle on-the-job training, complete logbooks and forms, and read and understand complex charts and tables (e.g., scorecards and weigh charts), while reducing error rates.
- In the Canadian Apprenticeship Forum's (CAF) Business Case for Essential Skills Training in the Skilled Trades project demonstrated that for every dollar invested, employers received a median return of \$3.08. Savings were tied to increased productivity through tradespeople learning new skills and new work processes, improving their soft skills and thinking skills, and increasing their use of digital technology. Even larger investments (\$1,500 or more per employee) in essential skills training saw a return on investment of \$1.50 for every dollar invested.

### 4.2.2 ENGAGING EMPLOYERS

Engaging employers in essential skills training can be challenging due to other priorities, so service providers need to find creative ways to incentivize their participation.

- For their project Integrating the Key Essential Skills in Newcomer Career Transition in IT Industry, Ottawa's Chinese Community Service Centre (OCCSC) has used a combination of approaches to increase employer awareness, engagement and buy-in:
  - **Encouraging referrals:** When new project participants register for training, they are encouraged to introduce their employer to OCCSC for more productive and continuous engagement. Ongoing follow-up with participants also leads to strengthened relationships. As participants are promoted to positions of increased responsibility, they refer more junior colleagues to the training. The cycle of support builds as new hires see role models who have achieved success through the OCCSC program.



- **Incorporating focus group activities:** Employers attend focus groups to inform OCCSC of their hiring needs for talented immigrant IT professionals. This provides an opportunity for OCCSC to share relevant industry information and encourage participation in upcoming project events and activities.
- **Holding employer panels:** An employers' panel discussion allows employers to share their experiences and industry expectations with project participants and leaders in the tech sector. The entire event is organized by project participants, testing their essential skills and abilities in a real-life setting.
- **Setting up a talent den:** Inspired by the television show *Dragons' Den*, the Talent Den gave participants 60 seconds to pitch their knowledge and skills to a group of employers, with the hope of landing a job within their company. Participants often surprised themselves with their public speaking performance and responses to questions. This unique experience allows employers to hire participants on the spot.

### 4.2.3 BUILDING EMPLOYER CAPACITY TO INTEGRATE ESSENTIAL SKILLS INTO THEIR HUMAN RESOURCES PRACTICES

For training to be effective, employers need to invest in a coordinated approach that ensures their involvement at every stage of the process: planning, design, implementation and retention. The following practices can lead to better outcomes for employers:

- In the SRDC UPSKILL project, employers worked with service providers to design and plan the training. Participating employers also committed to invest the required resources (time and human capital) to ensure that supervisors and managers had the capacity to support workers to improve their job performance—for example, through mentoring relationships. These factors were instrumental in ensuring that employers saw strong return on investment.
- In the Aboriginal Community Career Employment Services Society's (ACCESS) Essential Skills for Aboriginal Futures project, employers committed resources for the design, planning and implementation phases of the program and provided job-shadowing opportunities. If a participant was hired, the employer, with the support of a job coach, also provided retention supports, which increased employee retention and mobility.



## 4.3 Training interventions

OLES funds many projects that test, replicate or scale up essential skills training interventions. These projects typically focus on one or more groups of learners (employed and unemployed) seeking to upskill or change their careers, and on employers and service providers focused on increasing essential skills levels (see Figure 2 below).

● Figure 2: Common groups and scenarios for essential skills training interventions



The [Partnership and Collaboration](#) and [Leveraging Employers](#) sections already highlighted some promising training practices, such as customization. Many of these practices are effective because the training is asset-based and client-centred. This means knowing learners' needs, including their cultural differences. It also means knowing the context in which the training will be delivered. Customizing training for the specific needs of learners, or contextualizing the content of training, tends to yield the greatest returns on investment.

## PROMISING PRACTICES

### Providing Wrap-around Supports

Providing learners with wrap-around assistance has been shown to improve the results of training. Supports include services like childcare and assistance with transportation and housing.

- The [Change It Up \(CIU\) Employment Essentials](#) project is an initiative of [Classroom Connections Consulting Services](#) to increase the employability of on-reserve First Nations members of the Maskwacis region in Alberta. It is achieving results by providing wrap-around services tailored to the needs of each participant. The primary focus of this project is individuals facing multiple employment barriers—for example, trauma, precarious housing, child-care and transportation issues.
- The YWCA Toronto project, [Building Sustainable Futures](#), demonstrated the importance of providing wrap-around supports at all stages of employment, including mentoring, on-the-job training, and coaching support. Participants must not only find a job, but also keep it and advance toward socio-economic stability. Engaging employers in this process is integral to the Building Sustainable Futures model. YWCA Toronto also encourages lifelong learning, an essential skill in today's economy.

### Adapting a training curriculum to accommodate cultural differences

Cultural adaptation can be important in developing a training program

- The [Essential Skills for Trade](#) project, undertaken by the Métis Nation British Columbia (MNBC) in partnership with Douglas College, adapted an essential skills curriculum to make it culturally appropriate and relevant for Métis learners entering carpentry and culinary arts trades training. The adaptation was important to the measured gains in the essential skills levels of Métis learners after completing the training.
- The [Mining New Possibilities – Essential Skills for Aboriginal Peoples](#) project with the Mining Industry Human Resource Council customized the Mining Essentials program by integrating Inuit and Métis cultural components into the training material. This project developed a sustainable and nationally standardized program that prepares Indigenous learners for employment, in addition to addressing the labour shortages of the mining sector and meeting mining industry requirements.

### Selecting the appropriate delivery method for a training intervention

The method of training delivery should meet the client's needs and take into consideration any barriers to participants' success. The ongoing [Virtual Learning Strategist Model](#) project led by the Government of New Brunswick demonstrates the importance of selecting the appropriate method to reach learners. This project created an online Virtual Learning Strategist to address the needs of apprentices with learning disabilities or other essential skills barriers.

## Aligning training to business needs

When delivering training, it is important to ensure that participants (employees or job seekers) are aiming for the skills they need to perform on the job. In a work context, needs assessment is used at all levels and in a training context it is used to set learning goals.

- Food Processing Skills Canada (FPSC) project Succeeding at Work! Employability and Essential Skills Model for jobs in the Food Manufacturing Sector will create a hiring channel for employers and support job seekers in getting and keeping employment in the food manufacturing industry. This project will help employers address skills and labour gaps by providing access to a bank of candidates with improved language skills and essential skills.
- The Digital Essential Skills in Rural Small Businesses project with Community Business Development Corporation Restigouche created a tool that helped employees with few or no digital skills and/or lower literacy levels develop basic digital skills. This enabled them to use technologies to do their jobs more efficiently and effectively. The project evaluation showed that the tool was very effective in improving users' digital skills.
- In the RESDAC (Réseau pour le développement de l'alphabétisme et des compétences) project Innovative and Documented Approaches to Essential Skills ; To better understand and act effectively training was designed to fit the needs, schedules, objectives and interests of the learners. This model was tested and validated by trainers working with adults with low literacy and essential skills.



## Ensuring pre- and post-training assessments are in place

In the past, OLES relied heavily on output measures such as “number of Canadians who complete training,” or “number of stakeholders offering essential skills training.” Pre- and post-training skills assessments improve on this reporting by providing objective participant outcome information and an indication of the quality of the training in pilot projects (see the Assessment section for more details).

- The ongoing project Manufacturing Essentials, led by the Excellence in Manufacturing Consortium of Canada (EMC), is establishing best practices, tools and curricula for employers interested in boosting productivity, health and safety and employee satisfaction. The pre- and post-training assessments and participant interviews allow trainers to gauge increased awareness and skill levels among participants.
- The Bow Valley College project Learning to Read Assessment Battery developed a comprehensive suite of literacy assessment tools to help address the gaps in assessment tools for low literacy adults. TOWES Prime, the assessment tool created through the project, has been shared widely among essential skills stakeholders to support pre- and post-training essential skills measurement.



# 5 Social innovation/ social finance

**What is it?** According to the Government of Canada (GoC) report [Inclusive innovation: New ideas and new partnerships for stronger communities](#) (official title: [Recommendations of the Social Innovation and Social Finance Strategy Co-Creation Steering Group](#)), **social innovation** refers to new ideas that improve a community's well-being. Examples from the past include universal health care and curbside recycling. More recent examples are microfinance, fair trade and safe injection sites. Social finance refers to the practice of making investments that, in addition to generating financial returns, are intended to have social or environmental impacts that make our communities, country and world more inclusive and sustainable. Social finance is a key source of financial support for developing and scaling social innovation.

**Why does OLES fund it?** OLES provides funding to social innovations—new programs, services, or intervention models—related to adult upskilling.

With our government partners, OLES has been a leader within ESDC in using grants and contributions funding for social innovation pilot projects that focus on outcomes.

In collaboration with provinces and territories, non-profit organizations and other stakeholders, OLES has tested several social innovation or social finance projects. In each case, OLES carefully documented and maximized learning opportunities. Projects have included:

- pay-for-performance models that focus on milestones
- agreements similar to social impact bonds to leverage taxpayer dollars with non-government funds to help not-for-profit organizations serve more learners
- implementing private sector approaches in social purpose organizations.

## PAY FOR PERFORMANCE: 2013–2017

**Social innovation highlights of project:** Workplace Education Manitoba's Pay for Success project partnered with the Province of Manitoba and the Province of Nova Scotia to make incentive payments to service providers when learners achieved milestones along a pathway to employment. This was the first Canadian test of a pay-for-performance model for essential skills training delivery.

**Overview of project:** Three service providers—Opportunities for Employment in Manitoba (OFE), PATH Employability Centre (PATH) in Manitoba, and the Nova Scotia Community College—implemented the project with a range of backgrounds and expertise, and with different clientele. All three service providers developed a pathway of services to achieve participant milestone outcomes linked with preparation for employment, further education or apprenticeship.

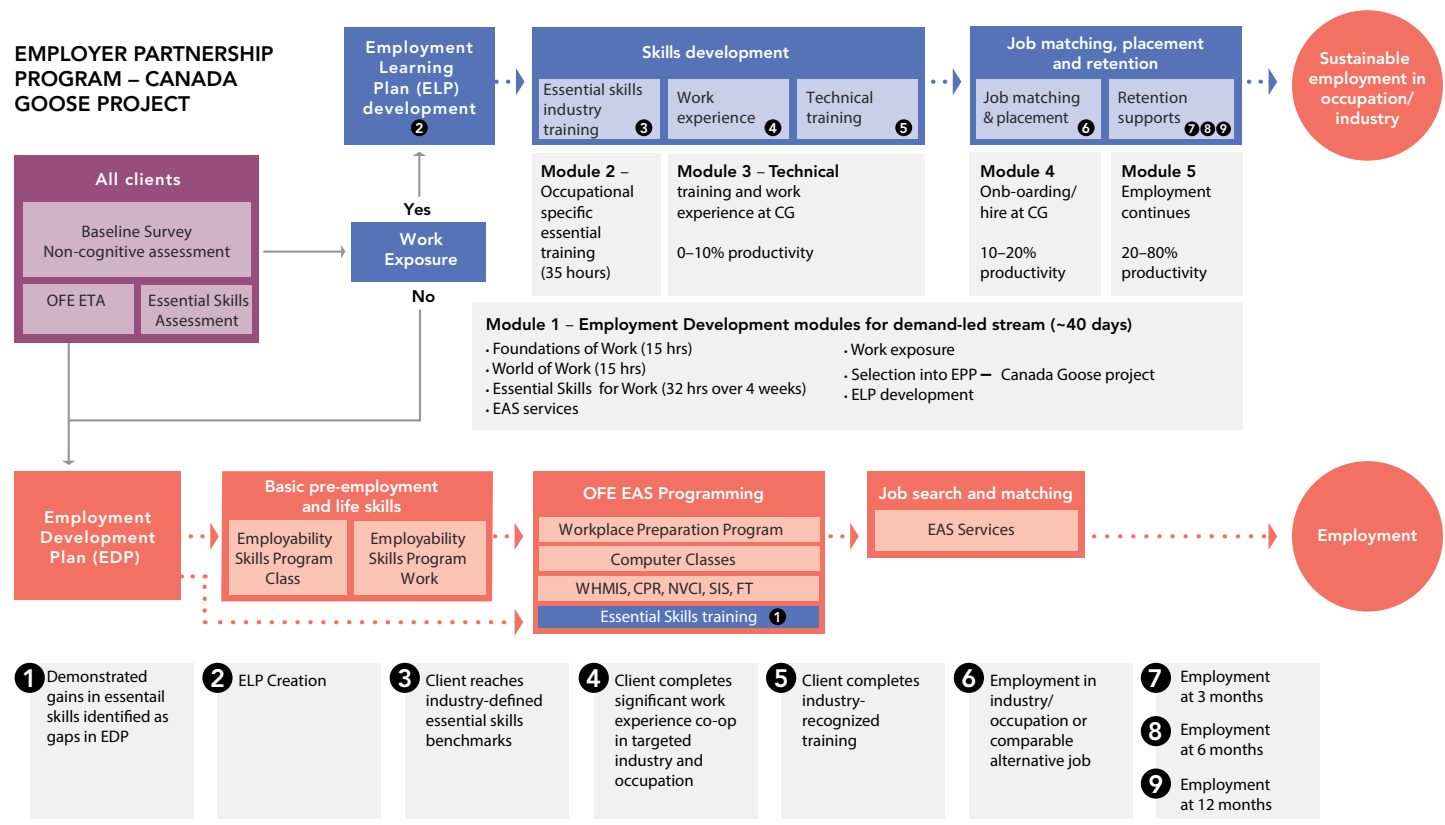
Participating training service providers were paid both for service delivery (typical funding) and outcomes achieved (performance/incentive payments). They received an incentive payment each time a learner reached a milestone as she/he progressed toward employment.

All service providers were successful in translating the model into a set of concrete services aimed at diverse groups of learners. The overall recruitment target of 500 learners was exceeded (572 learners). OFE served 380 learners with impressive outcomes: 340 graduated from classroom training and 188 were hired as garment sewers at Canada Goose, a main project partner. Workplace Education Manitoba conducted thorough organizational needs assessments with participating employers to determine milestones (performance metrics) and to permit service providers to identify and map business needs onto a task-based job competency framework.

**Findings/lessons learned:** (1) the adapted model (see Figure 3 below) is feasible and adds value, although it was complex to design and implement. Service providers customized their assessment and training to the needs of employers, learners and workplaces. (2) Before implementing, there should be a learning period to understand and build service providers' capacity to develop new services and participate in measuring outcomes. Service providers can use the employment pathway framework to customize training so that it targets underlying essential skills gaps. The model can incentivize service providers to design and implement a curriculum that prepares job seekers for success in the workplace.

The Social Research Demonstration Corporation evaluated the project and posted results on its [website](#).

● Figure 3: Pay for Success Opportunities for Employment Adapted Model



## PAY FOR PERFORMANCE: NEXT STEPS

OLES is funding a second project with Blueprint Analytics, Design and Evaluation (Blueprint), to further explore the replicability and application of pay-for-performance model in the province of British Columbia. Blueprint will develop a milestone framework that is easy to measure and identifies pertinent milestones that are “tipping points” leading to employment success. The customized training and curriculum will target underlying essential skills gaps to help service providers prepare jobseekers for success in the workplace. It is envisioned that three paths will be tested: (1) milestones without incentives, (2) milestones with incentives, and (3) no milestones and no incentives. This will test which approach leads to better results and could inform other training projects.

## HIGHLIGHTS OF CANADA’S FIRST NATIONAL SOCIAL IMPACT BOND 2013–2018

The Essential Skills Social Finance (ESSF) pilot project was Canada’s first national social impact bond (SIB). SIBs are innovative financial instruments that foster collaboration between the private, public and non-profit sectors to address complex and systemic social challenges. Governments enter into agreements with an intermediary, investors, social service providers and an independent evaluator to fund projects with measurable social outcomes. Typically, an intermediary raises capital from private investors and uses the capital to fund social service provider organizations to deliver an intervention. If predetermined outcomes are reached, the government returns investors’ capital, plus an agreed-upon return on investment. However, if predetermined outcomes are not reached, investors can lose all or a portion of their investment.

Colleges and Institutes Canada (CICan) led the design, development and implementation of the ESSF proof of concept in its role as an intermediary.

**Project overview:** The objective of the ESSF pilot project was to test whether using a SIB model is effective in increasing the essential skills levels of unemployed or displaced Canadians seeking work or additional education or training.



**A missing element in the ESSF SIB Pilot: random control trial.** One of the most important elements of SIBs is a rigorous evaluation of social outcomes. Usually this takes the form of a random control trial. The ESSF pilot did include a rigorous evaluation in the form of pre- and post-study design. However, due to a small sample size, a random control trial was not included.

**ESSF SIB structure:** The private investors were Conexus Credit Union, the Catherine Donnelly Foundation, and Dave and Pamela Richardson and Family. They provided approximately \$250,000 of investment capital to fund an essential skills training intervention. Based on a sliding reimbursement scale aligned with results achieved, ESSF investors could receive their entire capital and up to a 15% return on their investment or they could lose all their capital, depending on skill gain outcomes. The pilot project tested the SIB model and its potential to allow social service providers to innovate in delivering the intervention. It also aimed to understand the success factors for the SIB model, the existing Canadian regulatory context for social finance, investor perceptions of social finance instruments like SIBs, and appropriate payment triggers and rates of return for SIB projects. At the conclusion of the ESSF project, a majority of participants achieved some level of skill gains and investors were returned 97% of their initial investment capital.

**Findings/lessons learned:** The intervention was successful in that the SIB model was successfully tested, valuable lessons were learned, participants gained skills, and the Government of Canada paid investors only for successful results.

Much more difficult to measure was the impact the pilot had on participants. Many expressed to delivery staff that the ESSF pilot was a life-changing experience that helped them to integrate meaningfully into the labour market and provided support in their daily lives. Participants responding to surveys reported increased confidence in their career planning and decision-making, their job search clarity, and increased use of their literacy skills.

An ESSF project pilot participant, stated: “The training I received with the ESSF pilot has changed my life. I’m now excited for the next stages in my life and to reach the new goals I’m setting with the skills I’ve learned and will continue to learn throughout life.”

The innovative nature of Canada’s first national SIB made it a challenge to secure investment from traditional financial institutions and impact investors. At the time, due to the novel nature of social finance in Canada and internationally, investor understanding of SIBs was very limited. Investors needed further education. The project’s investors largely viewed SIBs as novel and high-risk. Specialist expertise was provided—tax specialists, lawyers, and independent evaluators of skills gain.

The independent evaluator for the pilot project was the Social Research Demonstration Corporation, which has submitted an [interim report](#).

Of note, the project required the creation of a Special Purpose Vehicle for a non-profit organization with charitable status to participate in this innovative financial arrangement. This required the creation of a general partnership with limited partnership agreements. Further details on the ESSF Pilot Project, including its governance structure, can be found [here](#).



# 6 Assessment and support tools

## 1. KEY ASSESSMENT TOOLS FUNDED BY OLES

Below is a list of OLES projects targeting assessment tools and resources. The variability of the projects shows a clear need for a consolidation of knowledge on all of the available assessment tools, and guidance for choosing the most appropriate ones, depending on the context.

### PIAAC Online – Canadian Adaptations (Community Adult Learning Services Branch [CASLB], Government of New Brunswick, 2012–2014):

New Brunswick’s Community Adult Learning Services Branch, in partnership with the Council of Ministers of Education Canada, developed and validated a Canadian adaptation of the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) online assessment tool.

#### Essential skills assessed:



### Enhancing Essential Skills Sector Capacity Through Improved Access to Digital Resources (Copian, 2011–2013):

This project aimed to improve the management of the National Adult Literacy Database. It did so by combining two websites, enhancing knowledge of promising practices through a case study approach, developing a database of essential skills assessment tools, and reducing the need for website maintenance by literacy organizations to enhance sustainability and cost effectiveness.

#### Essential skills assessed:



### The Canadian Adult Reading Assessment and Instructional Guide for Emergent and Non-Readers Centre for Education and Work (Centre for Education and Work, 2008–2010):

This project developed and piloted an assessment tool to help adult basic education instructors identify pre-literacy skills, and provided them with the instructional strategies needed to teach adult learners.

#### Essential skills assessed:



### Assessment Resources for Literacy and Essential Skills Programs (Bow Valley College, 2008–2011):

This project aimed to increase the effectiveness of reading and document use instruction in essential skills and foundational skills programs by developing a tool that assessed proficiency and progress of students.

#### Essential skills assessed:



**Unlocking the potential of youth and adults to acquire and deploy digital skills (Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM), 2013–2015):** UQAM project examined the skills that are important in acquiring and using digital skills. It also developed, tested and implemented training materials and supports to assess and increase the skills needed to succeed in the digital economy.

**Essential skills assessed:**



**Traduction et adaptation du système d'évaluation CAMERA pour le réseau francophone de développement des compétences (Réseau pour le développement de l'alphabétisme et des compétences (RESDAC), 2012–2014):** The CAMERA skills assessment system was adapted and translated into French for trainers working with Francophone adults with low literacy skills (essential skills levels 1 and 2) to better prepare them to find and keep a job.

**Essential skills assessed:**



**Learning to Read Assessment Battery (Bow Valley College, 2010–2013):** This project developed and validated a comprehensive suite of literacy assessment tools to help address the inadequacy of current assessment instruments for adults with low literacy. It enabled the design and delivery of more targeted and responsive literacy interventions. This tool (TOWES Prime) enabled instructors to work more efficiently by tailoring literacy interventions to learner needs and delivering the training to relatively homogeneous groups of learners.

**Essential skills assessed:**



**Write Forward (Bow Valley College, 2012–2016):** The objective of this project was to improve the writing skills of adults so that they could participate fully in the labour market, their communities and everyday life. A writing assessment resource for practitioners in literacy, basic education and workplace essential skills programs was produced and distributed.

**Essential skills assessed:**







## 2. SRDC RESEARCH ON ESSENTIAL SKILLS ASSESSMENT TOOLS AND APPROACHES TO MEASURING THE SUCCESS OF ESSENTIAL SKILLS INITIATIVES

OLES is taking a developmental evaluation approach with funding recipients—learning to more effectively evaluate the success of their initiatives. Better outcomes reporting places additional demands on service providers in terms of cost, time, and expertise. To assist essential skills practitioners and other skills service providers, SRDC has been conducting research on assessment tools and approaches. This will assist stakeholders in meeting the following objectives:

- 1. Providing better information on project results.** Improved ability to identify project results and public reporting, including pre- and post-training skills assessments.
- 2. Serving as a management tool.** Improved ability to identify bottlenecks for ongoing course corrections.
- 3. Targeting innovation in project design.** Greater potential for innovation through better understanding of what works and does not work.
- 4. Better data to inform sustainability, replicability, and scalability.** Stronger evidence base to support decisions on replicability and scalability of promising practices.

SRDC conducted research in four phases:

**Phase 1:** An inventory and guidance on choosing psychometrically valid assessment tools for each of the nine essential skills in various contexts—for example, “core” literacy skills vs. the “softer” essential skills; generic assessments vs. industry or occupation-based assessments. SRDC recommends that service providers contextualize objective assessments within broader “employment pathways” or “milestone measurement frameworks” (MMFs) for maximal usefulness. The phase 1 report is available [here](#).

**Phase 2:** Guidance for developing MMFs to support the measurement of a range of essential skills initiatives in various contexts—for example, for different populations and skills profiles. The phase 2 report is available [here](#).

**Phase 3:** A practical guide for evaluating the success of essential skills initiatives. This research offers a menu of options for choosing essential skills assessment tools, employment milestones, and performance indicators. The phase 3 report is available [here](#).

**Phase 4:** The final report to serve as a practical guide for literacy and essential skills practitioners and policy-makers in selecting suitable indicators for evaluating success of their initiatives. This also supports OLES in creating alignment and synergies across projects, as part of a broader performance measurement strategy and monitoring of the achievements of Adult Learning, Literacy and Essential Skills (ALLESP). The final report is available [here](#).

# 7 Research

## INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH

### Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC), Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2012

PIAAC is the only major international survey of adults' information processing skills—literacy, numeracy and problem-solving in technology-rich environments (PS-TRE). Approximately 27,000 Canadians were surveyed in 2012, with oversampling of newcomers, Indigenous people and people living in Official Language Minority Communities, to collect more robust data on these population groups. At the international level, Canada scores at the OECD average on literacy, below the OECD average on numeracy and above the OECD average on PS-TRE. The results vary among provinces and territories, age groups, population groups, education levels and occupations, among other factors.

In addition to the pan-Canadian report describing the overall results for Canada, detailed thematic reports have been released: Health and Social Dimensions of Adult Skills; Skills Proficiency of Immigrants; and Post-secondary Education and Skills.

PIAAC data allows OLES and its partners and stakeholders to understand skills proficiency and needs in Canada, and to target policies and programming. In Canada, PIAAC is funded by the Government of Canada and the provincial and territorial governments, through the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada.

## RESEARCH FUNDED BY OLES

To better understand emerging issues and priorities in the field of essential skills, OLES has funded organizations to conduct research projects. Testing of the results of these studies could be undertaken to further build and support the evidence. Some of this research will help to inform the renewal of the essential skills framework that is being undertaken in 2019–2020. Some of the key research projects are highlighted below.

## Funded through Procurement Contracts

### Improving the Numeracy Component of the Essential Skills Research Project Methodology, Directions Evidence and Policy Research Group, 2011

The research focused on determining whether the numeracy component of the essential skills framework reflected recent developments in numeracy research and whether it was compatible with established international assessments. The research was intended to validate the credibility, clarity and usability of numeracy instruments for decision makers, employers and employees, and to inform the development of related training tools. The research proposed that:

- a new definition for adult numeracy be incorporated: “Adult numeracy is the ability to identify, understand, critically interpret and apply mathematical concepts, processes, and representations in order to engage in and answer the mathematical demands of a variety of situations in adult life”.
- numeracy be reorganized into two domains: declarative mathematical knowledge (content) and procedural mathematical knowledge (responses/actions performed).
- components be added such as context, cognitive enabling processes, non-cognitive enabling processes, and meta-cognitive processes.
- three new complexity rating scales be developed for numeracy: declarative knowledge, procedural knowledge, and mathematical representation.



Digital skills are new, evolving essential skills for the 21st century. They include operating digital systems and tools, but also involve more complex cognitive and metacognitive skills for processing different types of information effectively and efficiently. Policies that target access and equity in digital technology must not be limited to physical access, but must also focus on intellectual access. All Canadians need cognitive literacy skills to contribute to and benefit from the digital economy.

### **Defining Essential Digital Skills in the Canadian Workplace, WDM-Consultants (now called Compétences R&D Inc.), 2011**

This research focused on developing and validating a digital skills framework for digital technology in the Canadian workplace aimed at generic users (i.e. not information communication technology specialists). It re-examined the concept of computer use as one of the nine essential skills to determine whether it was still relevant. The proposed framework was based on the most comprehensive frameworks in other countries with modern economies, and proposed four clusters of digital skills: **(1)** digital information-processing skills (e.g. creating, communicating and assessing information); **(2)** digital technical skills (e.g. using software applications); **(3)** foundational skills (e.g. reading, numeracy); and **(4)** transversal skills (e.g. problem-solving, working with others). The study recommended that new complexity rating scales be developed and validated for each digital skills cluster. Key informants found the proposed framework to be relevant and that Canadian workers frequently used most of the skills embedded within the framework.

### **Towards a better understanding of the link between oral fluency, literacy and Essential Skills, DataAngel, 2011**

This report analyzed the link between official language oral proficiency, literacy and essential skills proficiency in adult Canadians. Here are some of the key findings of this report:

- Most children manage to acquire language with little effort. Acquisition does not appear to depend upon phonetic mastery.
- Oral fluency is not highly correlated with prose literacy, document literacy or numeracy at the overall level.
- Adults who have weak oral fluency skills are concentrated in population subgroups that also have, on average, lower literacy skills, which can impair their labour market success. Non-official language immigrants and Indigenous adults with mother tongues other than English and French appear to face the highest levels of combined risk in oral fluency and reading.
- Low levels of education also translate into higher risk of weak oral fluency scores.
- The observed alignment of levels in the Canadian Language Benchmarks and the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey (the previous version of PIAAC) differs from the notional alignment proposed on the Canadian Language Benchmarks website.

### **An Evaluation of On-Line Tools for Essential Skills Web Resources, Centre for e-Learning, University of Ottawa, (2017)**

ESDC contracted the University of Ottawa to conduct an environmental scan of available e-learning and assessment tools to inform a federal/ provincial/territorial committee on e-learning. The environmental scan identified four approaches currently used by training service providers to deliver essential skills assessment and learning services: (1) single skill, single purpose; (2) special interest group; (3) comprehensive training organizations; and (4) consulting organizations.

### **Post-secondary and Workplace Skills, University of Ottawa, 2018**

This project was co-funded by OLES and the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO). The objective was to measure the critical thinking skills of students at one college and one university in Ontario, and to identify the relationship between skill levels and a range of student and program characteristics. The project assessed the skills of two cohorts—first-year students and graduating students—using the HEIghten Critical Thinking test.

For college students, sex, language, visible minority status, age, reading, writing and math assessment scores, program of study, and time spent on the test were related to critical thinking for both cohorts of students. For university students, high school GPA, visible minority status, and effort were all related to critical thinking scores for both cohorts. Other factors that were related to critical thinking for the entering class are sex, language and program of study.

The project did not compare the skill levels of students over time. Results cannot be compared between the college and the university due to the different characteristics of the students. The project could help inform future studies of critical thinking levels of students and their progression over their years in post-secondary education. The next phase of the project is expected to follow students a year or two after graduation to analyze the relationship between their critical thinking skills and their labour market outcomes. This would be done by linking their post-secondary records, along with their HEIghten scores, to tax records held at Statistics Canada.



### **Literacy and Essential Skills Development in Official Language Minority Communities: Needs Analysis, University of Ottawa, 2018**

OLES contracted the Research Chair in Canadian Francophonie and Public Policies at the University of Ottawa to conduct an assessment of essential skills needs and an inventory of policies, programs and services related to essential skills development in Official Language Minority Communities (OLMCs). The assessment focused particularly on adults with low levels of essential skills. The study relied on secondary data, including the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC), and consultations with people involved in essential skills development. Key findings included:

- confirmation that Anglophones and Francophones living in OLMCs are facing similar issues, barriers and gaps related to essential skills for daily life and employability.
- identification of the limited availability of services to help individuals living in OLMCs address those barriers in their first official language.

The research contributed to a better understanding of essential skills needs and availability of services in OLMCs, and contributed to the development of ESDC's OLMC multi-year strategy for essential skills. The [report](#) is only available in French.

## Funded through grant and contribution agreements

### Building a Pan-Canadian Soft Skills Framework, Futureworx, 2018

This project explored the need for, and how best to create, a pan-Canadian soft skills framework to support the development of a productive and competitive workforce capable of adapting to constant changes in workplaces. The project found that there is no agreed-upon term for these skills, no common definition of soft skills, nor consensus as to which skills qualify as “soft”. Soft skills deficits are often seen as being most prevalent in people in low paying, service-oriented work. However, they exist in all workplaces, at all levels. The report argued that the education system has failed to help students understand the relevance of their learning to employment and to develop the skills that employers require, including soft skills. The importance of soft skills to workers’ success is significant enough to warrant the promotion of these soft skills despite the shortage of validated assessment methods. The project recommended a new framework for essential and soft skills, comprising three groups of skills:

- **Functional skills:** skills and associated knowledge that indirectly support the completion of other work-specific activities, such as reading, writing, numeracy and digital skills.
- **Behavioural skills:** skills and associated knowledge needed to demonstrate behaviours that support the completion of other work-specific activities, such as motivation, accountability and resilience.
- **Social skills:** a descriptor to recognize those behavioural or functional skills that have significant elements of the other set, and which involve capacity to interact with others, such as teamwork, empathy, and oral communication.



### Engaging Underrepresented Groups in Pre-Apprenticeship Programs, Canadian Apprenticeship Forum, 2019

Essential skills upgrading is a key component of pre-apprenticeship programs because understanding principles and concepts, especially in math, facilitates further learning of advanced technical concepts. Earning the required safety certifications and developing employability skills, including essential skills, means candidates are ready to work when they get a job. Almost a quarter of survey respondents suggested that pre-apprenticeship programs should include more essential skills training. The report identifies many organizations across Canada that incorporate essential skills as part of their pre-apprenticeship programs. Essential skills training is identified as a “program success factor” for pre-apprenticeship, along with engaging local employers, assessing candidates, safety and hands-on training, and meaningful work placements. Pre-apprenticeship programs can lead to employment, apprenticeship and/or further skills development. (Final report is not yet available online.)

### **Essential Skills in Workers Displaced from the Oil and Gas Sector, Canada West Foundation (2019)**

- 1. Impact of literacy on GDP (gross domestic product):** The research focuses on Canada's need to both increase economic growth rates and reduce the growth in inequality. The authors argue that increasing literacy skills represents a promising avenue for responding to both needs. The study used data from PIAAC and the two previous skills surveys. Results suggest that countries that manage to raise their average literacy skill levels by improving the literacy skills of low-skilled workers will realize high levels of downstream growth. The research suggests that higher proportions of adults at Levels 1 and 2 in literacy—the two lowest proficiency levels—significantly reduce national GDP per capita and labour productivity growth rates. Thus, investments in skills upgrading that focus on increasing the literacy skill levels of the least skilled workers in order to increase the average skill level would yield both significant economic growth and significant reductions in skill-based inequalities in employment, wage rates and incomes. At a macro level, the research finds that a one-percent increase in average literacy skills translates into a three-percent increase in national GDP per capita and a five-percent increase in labour productivity.
- 2. Soft skills:** This component of the project will develop an understanding of how critical adequate essential and "soft" skills are to the economy and to the individual, and examine whether there is a hierarchy of skill development in adult learners. It will build on the recent work by FutureWorx (above) in this area to recommend definitions for identified "soft skills," identify foundational skills that are needed to develop other skills, examine demand for these skills, and identify policy implications of the findings.

### **Literacy and Essential Skills for Poverty Reduction, Frontier College (2019)**

Building on its 2017 National Forum on Literacy and Poverty, Frontier College oversaw comprehensive national essential skills research, conducted by Social Research and Demonstration Corporation, and developed a communication plan on literacy as a poverty reduction strategy. The research studied the effects of literacy skills on economic well-being and elements of broader social inclusion such as social and civic engagement. It also explored how literacy can empower individuals to make better decisions in health, finances, technology and navigating institutions that govern their lives.

A summary of the key findings:

- There is a clear and well-established relationship between literacy skills and poverty.
- Strong partnerships between local service providers in literacy and essential skills and in poverty reduction can improve access to needed services, and single access points can reduce challenges for learners who are navigating poverty reduction programs.
- Service delivery that combines learner-centred, contextualized (for example, culturally tailored) programs with wrap-around supports such as child care are highly effective for transitioning individuals to employment.
- For literacy programs, some key objectives and important indicators of success are improved self-esteem, resilience, and self-confidence.

Key recommendations:

- Governments should recognize literacy as a basic human right.
- Literacy should be recognized as a policy priority requiring cross-departmental and cross-jurisdictional cooperation.
- Governments should facilitate collaboration and partnerships, and support knowledge translation and exchange, among providers of literacy and poverty reduction services.



Summaries of funded projects related to essential skills in the workplace targeting the following groups:

- Indigenous people
- newcomers
- youth
- Official Languages Minority Communities
- job seekers
- employers
- apprentices

Contact information for each organization is at the end of the Playbook. Feel free to contact them to learn more about their projects.



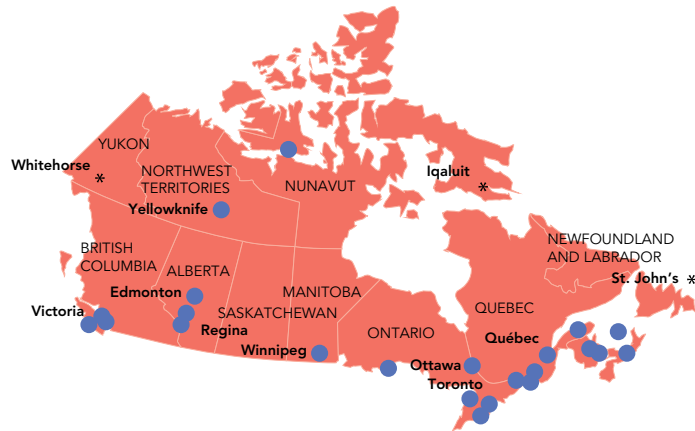
# Part Three

## Project Showcase

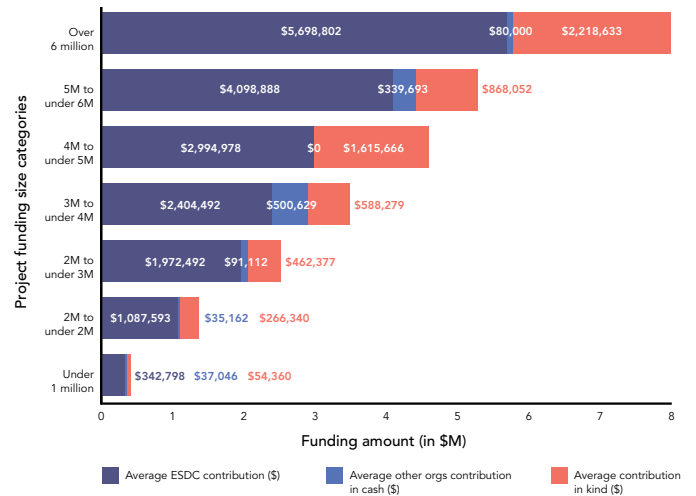
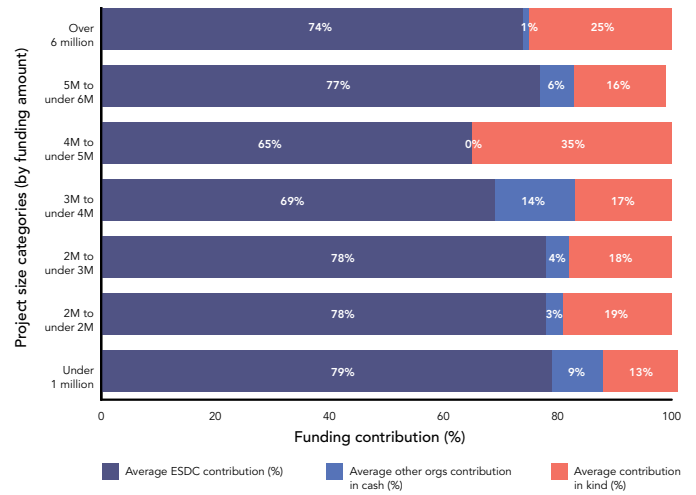
# 8 Showcasing Your Projects

Click [here](#) for a searchable/interactive map of most OLES funded projects over the past decade.

OLES has funded a wide range of projects over the years. Generally speaking, project valued between \$3 to \$4 million contribute the most in cash contribution. Projects that receive between \$4 to \$5 million in funding seem to provide the highest in-kind contribution by partner organizations. The following tables give a breakdown of the average project funding sources by project size.



● Figure 4: Average Project Funding Sources by Size



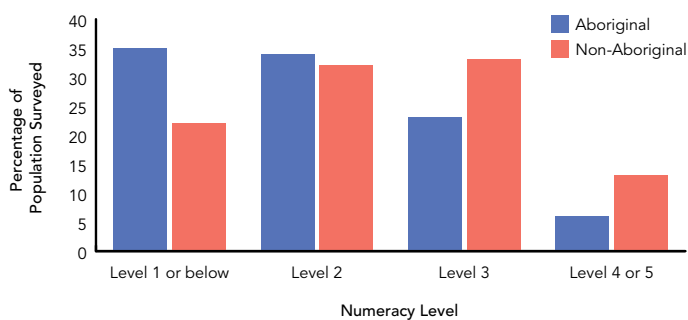
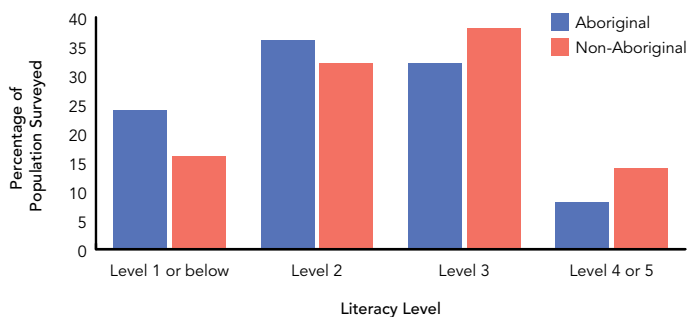
# 8.1 Indigenous people

Indigenous people in Canada—First Nations, Inuit and Métis—are an important and growing demographic group. Since 2006, the Indigenous population has grown by 42.5%—more than four times the growth rate of the non-Indigenous population over the same period. The Indigenous population is also young, with an average age of 32.1 years in 2016—almost a decade younger than the non-Indigenous population (40.9 years).<sup>5</sup>

In addition to the overall growth, there has been a significant increase of Indigenous people in urban places in Canada due to multiple factors, including demographic growth, mobility and changing patterns of self-reported identity. From 2006 to 2016, the number of Indigenous people living in a metropolitan area of at least 30,000 increased by 59.7%, accounting for over half (51.8%) of the total Indigenous population living in a metropolitan area of this size.

Indigenous people often experience worse outcomes than the non-Indigenous population on a number of key economic and social indicators, and therefore face a greater risk of marginalization. Indigenous people across Canada are still facing significant barriers in attaining adequate essential skills levels. For example, 59.7% of Indigenous people who participated in PIAAC scored at or below level 2 on the 5-level literacy scale, compared to 48.1% of the non-Indigenous participants.<sup>6</sup>

● Figure 5: Literacy and Numeracy Proficiency Levels



In 2016, the unemployment rate for Indigenous people was 15.3%, compared to 7.4% for non-Indigenous people. Within Indigenous groups, unemployment was higher for Inuit (22.4%) and First Nations (18%) relative to Métis (11.2%). Indigenous people also have lower educational attainment rates. Among Indigenous people aged 15 and over, the Inuit population had the lowest educational attainment (no certificate, diploma or degree) at 51.9%, followed by First Nations at 38.2% (51.3% on-reserve and 31.8% off-reserve) and Métis at 25%. In 2016, 40% of the Indigenous population aged 15 and over had completed a post-secondary program, including 46% of Métis, 36% of First Nations, and 29% of Inuit. This compares with 56% of the non-Indigenous population.<sup>7</sup>





The 2017 Aboriginal Peoples Survey is clear: skills training—for example, digital skills, language and writing skills—relevant to the distinct needs of communities is key to improving the socio-economic conditions of Indigenous people. Surveys also indicate that First Nations, Inuit and Métis people identified skills training as a crucial support for employment, second only to education.

With programs such as the Indigenous Skills and Employment Training (ISET) Program, the Government of Canada is making essential skills training easier to access for those most in need. Many current OLES projects supporting Indigenous people are either delivered by, or in close partnership with, the Indigenous service delivery organizations funded through the ISET Program.

Complementary to the ISET Program, the Skills and Partnership Fund is a demand-driven, partnership-based program that supports innovative projects that prepare and train Indigenous people for the demands of the Canadian labour market. Funding recipients deliver employment supports and training services to help First Nations, Inuit and Métis people acquire the necessary skills to get jobs in high-demand careers. The Fund encourages partnerships and leveraging of private sector and federal/provincial/territorial funding to maximize investments. The Fund also encourages testing of new service delivery models.

OLES funding allows recipients to test new ways of delivering essential skills training for Indigenous people. Half of the projects resulting from the 2015 call for proposal focussed on Indigenous people, including women and youth, as did several other solicited proposals in 2017–2018 and 2018–2019. To provide supports for individuals who are further from employment readiness, several projects have emphasized promising practices for training prior to literacy and essential skills training and for measuring skills gain to determine readiness for further training or employment.

Projects are taking place across Canada in rural, northern, or remote communities, including First Nations communities. Targeted sectors include the tourism and hospitality industry, and the mining, security, transportation, forestry, construction and energy sectors.



## Indigenous People

Canadian Career Development  
Foundation (CCDF)

ONTARIO / PROJECT 1: 2012–2014  
PROJECT 2: 2018–2019  
(24 MONTHS, 12 MONTHS)

SECTOR: VARIOUS

### Project Description

CCDF developed an online knowledge-sharing platform, [the First Nations, Inuit and Métis Essential Skills \(FIMES\) Inventory](#), for individuals and organizations providing essential skills training to Indigenous people across Canada. In the initial project, CCDF developed the online platform and identified the [12 Markers of Promising Practice](#)— factors that contribute to successful Indigenous essential skills programming. In the second project, the CCDF updated the FIMES Inventory and developed a [Promising Practice Self-Assessment tool](#) based on the 12 markers.

#### Essential skills targeted:



## Project 1 / The State of Practice: Essential Skills Applications with First Nations, Métis and Inuit in Canada

## Project 2 / Extending Promising Practice: Updating the FIMES Inventory

### KEY STEPS:

Both projects created a Community of Practice of stakeholders involved in developing essential skills initiatives for Indigenous people. Building on the first project, the second project formed a National Advisory Group of representatives from Indigenous and/or essential skills-focused organizations to advise on updates to the FIMES Inventory.

### RESULTS:

More than 100 FIMES projects were featured in the initial inventory, exceeding the target of 75 projects. The updated inventory measured pre- and post-training data for over 75 projects.

### 12 Markers of Promising Practice

1. First Nations, Inuit and Métis control and ownership of their own education and training initiatives
2. Partnerships
3. Working with and in the Community
4. Learner-centred approach
5. Holistic approach to essential skills program delivery
6. Experienced and knowledgeable staff
7. Principles of adult and Indigenous learning
8. Culture, language and traditions
9. Employer involvement and direct workplace experience
10. On-going communication
11. Established evaluation criteria and methods
12. Promotes the business case

### WHAT'S NEXT?

The CCDF is working to share the updated inventory and the self-assessment tool to Indigenous essential skills stakeholders and practitioner groups across Canada.

### PILOT LOCATIONS:

Across Canada



### OTHER RESOURCES:

- [Case Studies](#)
- [Online Project Survey Form](#)
- [Project 1: Final Project Report \(2014\)](#)
- **Contact information:**

Canadian Career Development  
Foundation (CCDF) | Tel.: 613-729-6164  
Email: [information@ccdf.ca](mailto:information@ccdf.ca) | [ccdf.ca/ccdf](http://ccdf.ca/ccdf)  
202-119 Ross Ave  
Ottawa, ON K1Y 0N6

# Indigenous People

Aboriginal Community Career Employment Services Society (ACCESS)

BRITISH COLUMBIA / 2007-2009 (24 MONTHS)

SECTORS: TRANSPORTATION, CUSTOMER SERVICE AND CONSTRUCTION

## Project Description

ACCESS developed a four-phase service delivery model with an Indigenous' perspective, to demonstrate that job-tailored essential skills upgrading eased the transition of Indigenous learners into employment. Participants also received 12 weeks of job coaching to support employment success and retention.

To increase awareness of essential skills in a creative and humorous manner, ACCESS also developed an ESI (Essential Skills Investigation) DVD in French and English. The DVD follows the format of a crime scene investigation, with ESI agents using the nine essential skills to solve a crime.

### Essential skills targeted:



# Essential Skills for Aboriginal Futures (ESAF)

## KEY STEPS:

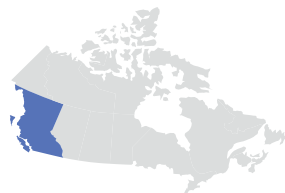
Employers played a role in designing the curriculum content to ensure the project aligned with the essential skills requirements of employment opportunities.

## RESULTS:

Participants demonstrated an overall increase in essential skills, improved life and employability skills. Employers reported new hires are better prepared for employment. Of the 105 graduates, 75% found employment.

## PILOT SITE:

British Columbia



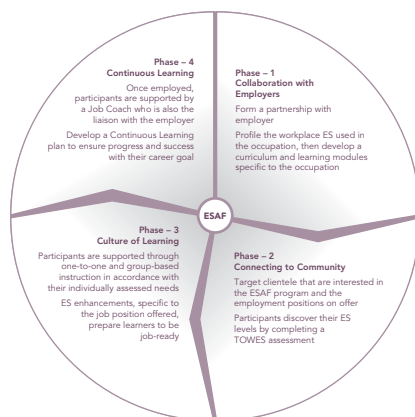
## WHAT'S HAPPENED SINCE 2009?

Since the ESAF project, ACCESS has delivered essential skills programs in pre-technical training for the trades and health care, transportation, customer service and construction to over 1,357 participants, with 86% of graduates either obtaining employment or returning to training/education. Two other ESI DVDs and learning kits complete the series and are available on the BC Aboriginal Essential Skills Guiding Team website.

The ESAF "Passing it On" project will test and expand the ESAF model to other ISET Program agreement holders.

### Contact information:

Aboriginal Community Career Employment Services Society (ACCESS) | Tel.: 604-521-5929  
201-681 Columbia St.  
New Westminster, BC V3M 1A8 [esaf.accessfutures.com](http://esaf.accessfutures.com)



“ Jade was particularly interested in upgrading her digital skills. Something that she found challenging was making oral presentations, a skill which she was able to build on during the program. Jade was also the one who provided moral support and encouragement to her classmates as they all worked through the program material. Jade's composure and communication skills during the interview impressed the TD Canada Trust hiring committee and she was one of the first graduates to be offered employment. Jade is now officially employed with TD Bank.”

Jade Peers, Intake 16, TD Bank

## Indigenous People

Mining Industry Human Resources Council (MiHR)

ONTARIO / 2011–2015  
(41 MONTHS)

SECTOR: MINING

### Project Description

MiHR adapted teaching resources and enrichment activities from their program [Mining Essentials: Training for Indigenous People](#) to be culturally relevant and to reflect the traditional teachings of the Inuit and Métis peoples. Mining Essentials teaches the essential and work readiness skills required and validated by the mining industry, using hands-on learning and workplace experiences brought to life through traditional teachings.

MiHR also created an e-learning platform to allow learners access to additional online training materials. They conducted a study to explore the need for audience-specific essential and work readiness skills training for youth, women and immigrants.

#### Essential skills targeted:



## Mining New Possibilities

### Essential Skills for Aboriginal Peoples

#### KEY STEPS:

MiHR developed a self-sustainable business plan to support delivery of the training. The plan included developing a strong network of contacts, including Indigenous service delivery organizations and Indigenous governments. The Standing Committee on Mining Essentials was established to oversee the program and ensure that it remained relevant and credible. MiHR developed a quality control process to ensure national consistency in training delivery.

#### RESULTS:

MiHR piloted the training with both Inuit and Métis learners, achieving a learner graduation rate of 83%.

“ I didn’t even know that an environmental technician position existed. I thought that companies just come in, extract the resources and leave. That’s one of the things that Mining Essentials showed me. Now I’m pursuing my education to become an environmental technician.”

Ada, Mining Essentials graduate

#### WHAT’S NEXT?

MiHR has an active project with ESDC that will enhance and expand their Mining Essentials training program and pilot essential and work readiness skills training for youth, women and immigrants.

#### ● Contact information:

Mining Industry Human Resources Council (MiHR) | Tel.: 613-270-9696  
Email: [info@mihr.ca](mailto:info@mihr.ca) | Suite 401, 260 Heart Way Ottawa, ON K2L 3H1 | [mihr.ca](http://mihr.ca)

## Indigenous People

### Classroom Connections

ALBERTA / 2017–2020  
(40 MONTHS)

SECTORS: INDUSTRIAL CLEANING,  
MOLD REMEDIATION, LABOUR  
AND SERVICE

### Project Description

Change It Up Employment Essentials is an innovative on-reserve literacy and essential skills training model to improve the employability of First Nations members of the Maskwacis region in Alberta. The training aims to support 90 Indigenous community members from the four local First Nations to obtain and retain productive employment in various sectors.

The model is designed to address shifting needs within the labour market by responding fluidly to employer-identified shortages. The program is delivered directly in the community to participants facing multiple employment barriers, such as trauma, precarious housing, and child-care and transportation issues. Change it Up provides wrap-around services, local work placement training opportunities and hands-on experience. The program also included an all-female cohort which has been extremely successful, with a retention rate of over 90%.

#### Essential skills targeted:



## Change It Up (CIU) Employment Essentials

### Building Sustainable and Expandable Literacy and Essential Skills Targeted Training for First Nations

#### KEY STEPS:

It has been crucial to work with local employers to ensure we are preparing participants for real jobs that are available in the community.

#### RESULTS:

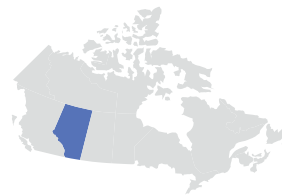
In the first 2 sessions (of 6 sessions), 23 students completed the program, with 21 finding employment with 13 local employers.

#### WHAT'S NEXT?

*Classroom Connections is continuing to improve the CIU model over the next four sessions, and will be refining the Change it Up! curriculum and implementation guide for expansion to other communities.*

#### PILOT SITE:

Alberta



#### Contact information:

Classroom Connections | Tel.: 416-466-4201 | Email: [info@classroomconnections.ca](mailto:info@classroomconnections.ca)  
Unit 18-123, 3555 Don Mills Road, Toronto, ON M2H 3N3 | [classroomconnections.ca/en](http://classroomconnections.ca/en)

“What helped me succeed in the program was all the positive feedback and continued support from staff and peers.”  
“I started from nothing. It really changed my life”

## Snapshots of Indigenous-focused projects

Project Complete

### Nunavut Literacy Council

*SUPPORTING EXCELLENCE AND INNOVATION IN LITERACY AND ESSENTIAL SKILLS ACROSS NORTHERN CANADA, 2014–2018*

To improve the literacy and essential skills of out-of-school, unemployed or underemployed Indigenous adults and youth and better prepare them for employment opportunities, the Nunavut Literacy Council, in partnership with the Literacy Councils of the Northwest and Yukon territories, embedded literacy and essential skills into programs in the northern natural resources, tourism, and services industry sectors.

Project Complete

### Outside Looking In (OLI)

*OUTSIDE LOOKING IN, 2018*

OLI supported 24 Indigenous youth through their Future Leaders mentorship program to develop and apply personal management and pre-employment skills in real-life situations through meaningful paid work placements, co-op placements and learning opportunities. The Future Leaders program is a career education, leadership development and mentorship high school credit program for Indigenous youth in grades 10 and up. 24 adult mentors from various job sectors provided supports to empower Indigenous youth to become positive role models in their communities, and improve their personal management, employability and foundational skills, to be better prepared for further education and careers. Some program participants have since gone on to post-secondary education, some continue to work towards secondary school completion and others found meaningful employment.

Project Complete

### Actua

*CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK FOR EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES AMONG INDIGENOUS YOUTH, 2018–2019*

Actua developed a curriculum framework for a for-credit course, Indigenous studies and STEM and Digital Skills, which built employability skills and competencies among Indigenous youth. The course provided digital skills programming that incorporated computer use as well as computational thinking, logic and analytical skills within a framework based on science, technology and engineering.

Project Complete

### Shareholder Association for Research and Education (SHARE)

*ENHANCING DEMAND FOR INDIGENOUS EMPLOYMENT, TRAINING AND CONTRACTING OPPORTUNITIES, 2018–2019*

SHARE worked with the Canadian Council on Aboriginal Business (CCAB) to conduct research on opportunities for Canadian institutional investors to increase the demand for Indigenous employment, training, contracting and advancement opportunities, as well as direct investment in Indigenous business. They did a comprehensive literature review, engaged in over a dozen interviews with key stakeholders, conducted three focus groups and consulted with Indigenous organizations and businesses. A final report by SHARE and CCAB included key findings and recommendations for creating demand for Indigenous employment, contracting and direct investment opportunities.

# Snapshots of Indigenous- focused projects

Project Complete

## Nunavut Literacy Council

### *IDENTIFYING AND ADDRESSING THE LITERACY AND ESSENTIAL SKILLS NEEDS IN HIGH DEMAND SECTORS OF EMPLOYMENT IN NUNAVUT, 2016–2019*

The Nunavut Literacy Council is developing curricula to support employed and unemployed Nunavut Inuit to improve their literacy and essential skills, to be better prepared for employment in high-demand occupations and sectors.

Project Active

## Kiikenomaga Kikenjigewen Employment & Training Services (KKETS)

### *KKETS LES IS MORE FOR JOBS, 2017–2020*

KKETS is piloting a culturally appropriate pre-literacy and essential skills learning program to help hard-to-reach and hard-to-serve Indigenous learners overcome personal barriers to participating in regular literacy and essential skills programs. The program will be delivered online for communities/individuals with Internet access or as a stand-alone for those without. KKETS plans to engage with 180 Indigenous learners from nine Matawa communities, of which 135 are expected to complete the training (including 45 women).

Project Active

## Further Education Society of Alberta (FESA)

### *GOING THE DISTANCE (GD): ENGAGING THE HOSPITALITY SECTOR IN ABORIGINAL LITERACY AND ESSENTIAL SKILLS TRAINING DEVELOPMENT, 2017–2020*

FESA, in collaboration with Indigenous people and communities, is creating a replicable Indigenous Workplace Learning Framework for the tourism and hospitality industry. The project helps employers identify their workplace literacy and essential skills needs, make it easier for Indigenous people to find meaningful employment, and make it easier for employers to recruit, retain, and advance Indigenous employees. An important component of the project is building community capacity to deliver the programming and training after the project has ended.

Project Active

## Temiskaming Native Women's Support Group (TNWSG)

### *LITERACY AND ESSENTIAL SKILLS CULTURE, CONFIDENCE AND COMPETENCE, 2017–2020*

The TNWSG is in the process of articulating and scaling up a culturally rooted essential skills curriculum designed for Indigenous women and youth. TNWSG based the curriculum on the premise that building cultural connections inspires confidence and leads to increased competence in developing essential skills. The TNWSG is modeling the curriculum on the success of the Aboriginal Women in Mining program, which secured jobs with industry partners for over half of their participants over five years.



# Snapshots of Indigenous-focused projects

Project Active

## Louis Riel Institute Adult Learning Centre

*MOBILE LITERACY AND ESSENTIAL SKILLS CLASSROOM, 2018–2021*

The Louis Riel Institute is addressing employment gaps for Métis participants in Manitoba through customized mobile literacy and essential skills training that can be delivered at rural and remote work sites. The Institute expects to pilot the training with 120 participants (including 12 women), who will be offered full-time employment upon completion of the training. The training will enable participants to gain the skills they need for good jobs in the construction sector.

Project Active

## Yellowhead Tribal College (YTC)

*ESSENTIAL SKILLS IN A DIGITAL WORLD, 2017–2021*

YTC is delivering a community-driven program to develop all nine essential skills for Indigenous people with a focus on digital skills training, as well as undertaking an environmental scan of literacy and essential skills programs and resources in Edmonton. Of 150 participants, 90 are expected to gain employment, including 64 women. Focusing on the business, finance, administration, natural and applied sciences sectors, the project will enable participants to improve their essential skills, including digital skills, to be better prepared to find and retain employment or pursue higher education.

Project Active

## Environmental Careers Organization of Canada (ECO Canada)

*UPGRADING ENVIRONMENTAL ESSENTIAL SKILLS, 2017–2021*

ECO Canada is developing and testing a model for science, technology, engineering and mathematics jobs in the environmental sector to help address employer-identified skills gaps among employed, underemployed and unemployed environmental professionals. Essential skills training will be delivered to employees working in all areas of the environmental sector, and will include targeted programming for Indigenous communities with a focus on environmental fieldwork. ECO expects to engage 75 employers and 225 participants (30% women and 6% Indigenous people). The objective is to ensure a skilled workforce in the environmental industry, including in Indigenous communities.

Project Active

## Mining Industry Human Resources Council (MiHR)

*NATIONAL WORK READINESS AND ESSENTIAL SKILL TRAINING FOR THE MINING INDUSTRY, 2017–2021*

MiHR is updating Mining Essentials—its essential skills and work readiness training program for Indigenous learners—by adding customized cultural content for Innu learners. The project is also developing and piloting a new National Essential and Work Readiness Skills Training Program for youth, women, immigrants and Official Language Minority Communities. It plans to pilot at least 10 training programs across Canada targeting 100 participants, with 4 programs expected to take place in Official Language Minority Communities. The project aims to improve wellness and wellbeing of participants—including their health, psychosocial capital, self-efficacy, self-confidence and resilience—so that they can successfully pursue further training/education and become skilled workers in the mining industry.

# Snapshots of Indigenous-focused projects

Project Active

## Pathway to Possibilities (PTP)

*PATHWAY TO WORK: INCREASING COMMUNITY CAPACITY THROUGH TRAINING INNOVATIONS, 2017–2021*

PTP is increasing the employability of Indigenous workers in construction-related careers by developing a training model that can be used to enhance or develop initiatives for Indigenous adults seeking construction-related employment on large-scale infrastructure projects. Application of the model will result in community initiatives that enable job seekers to build their skills and move into employment through a supportive, seamless process. PTP expects to pilot the training with 100 learners in Manitoba and British Columbia. Trainers will be certified in CAMERA (Communications and Math Employment Readiness Assessment) and ESAT (Employability Skills Assessment Tool).

Project Active

## Native Education College

*ESSENTIAL SKILLS FOR INDIGENOUS BUSINESS, 2017–2021*

Native Education College is delivering a program for Indigenous people that combines employability skills, cultural resiliency and essential skills training with workplace simulation activities. The model is providing participants with industry certifications such as FoodSafe, First Aid and First Host, and work placements in the retail, tourism, entertainment, hospitality and financial sectors. The college expects to train 196 Indigenous learners, including 120 women, and expects 80% of participants to complete the training.

Project Active

## Niagara Peninsula Aboriginal Area Management Board (NPAAMB)

*JOURNEY TO SUCCESS – ESSENTIAL SKILLS IN THE WORKPLACE FOR INDIGENOUS YOUTH, 2017–2021*

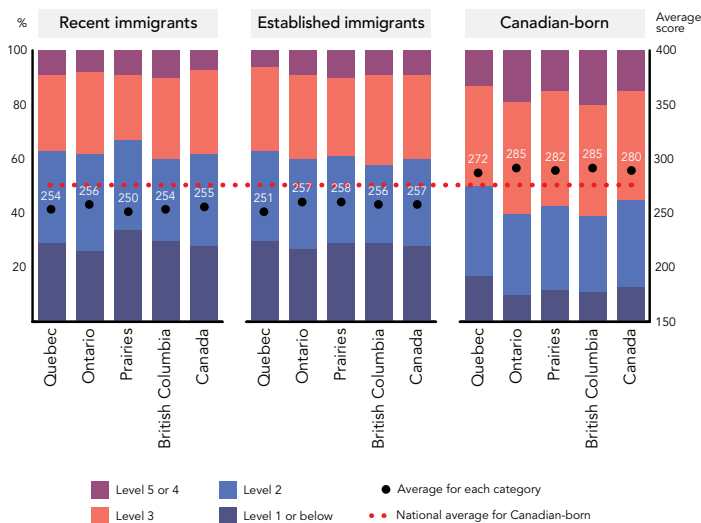
NPAAMB is developing a customized in-classroom and work-placement training model to prepare at-risk urban Indigenous youth in southern Ontario for the labour market and support them in developing the essential skills necessary for continued technical training, post-secondary education and/or apprenticeship. NPAAMB expects to serve 112 urban Indigenous youth aged 18 to 30 years through the pilot, including 28 women. NPAAMB expects 80% of participants to complete the training with coaching/mentoring support provided by the pilot. The project will build the capacity of Indigenous service providers and NPAAMB to deliver validated healthcare, hospitality and tourism curricula in a culturally safe training environment.

## 8.2 Newcomers

According to the 2016 census, 7.5 million foreign-born people came to Canada through immigration. This represents more than 1 in 5 people in Canada.<sup>8</sup>

In the near future, labour force growth will be increasingly linked to immigration, due to low fertility and an aging population. Newcomers are essential to meet the expected skills shortages in the Canadian labour market. However, due to differences in educational experiences, linguistic profiles and skill sets, newcomers often find it difficult to find jobs in fields for which they are trained and qualified.

● Figure 6: Literacy Levels of Immigrants



Source: Skills Proficiency of Immigrants in Canada: Findings from the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC)

In 2012, the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) results indicated that both recent and established immigrants have lower proficiency scores than Canadian-born individuals in three skill domains: literacy, numeracy and problem-solving in technology-rich environments. Immigrants and Canadian-born individuals with higher educational levels perform better than those with lower educational levels in the three skill domains.<sup>9</sup> But at all educational levels, the Canadian-born perform better than immigrants, as Figure 6 shows. The PIAAC results indicate that some newcomers to Canada need essential skills training, especially in reading, writing, numeracy and oral communication in Canada's official languages. Furthermore, immigrants in Canada come from diverse ethno-cultural backgrounds and often require additional training in document use, digital skills, working with others and problem-solving.

OLES is examining integration of essential skills into the Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) program funded by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. One such project funded by OLES is Norquest College's [Improving Newcomer Workplace Readiness](#). In addition to essential skills training, this project also facilitates work placement that will provide newcomers with Canadian experience, help them better prepare for workplace success and make them more employable.

## Newcomers

### Bow Valley College

ALBERTA / 2008–2010  
(23 MONTHS)

SECTOR: N/A

#### Project Description

Bow Valley College has been offering the Corporate Readiness Training Program since 1995. This program provides training with practical workplace experience to internationally trained professionals. It has proven effective in helping immigrants find jobs and facilitating their transition to the Canadian workplace. Building on the success of this program, Bow Valley College developed online and classroom training to improve the workplace essential skills of immigrant professionals.

#### Essential skills targeted:



## Success in the Workplace

### Essential Skills Training for Immigrant Professionals

#### KEY STEPS:

Partnerships with service providers were key to delivering this program successfully in British Columbia, Alberta, and Ontario.

#### RESULTS:

After the training, learners scored higher in TOWES assessments—an average gain of 1.5 levels in reading and document use and 2 levels in numeracy. Their job performance also improved, especially in areas like team participation and presentation delivery. Employment rates have ranged from 75% to 100%, with an average of over 80% of graduates finding meaningful employment within 6 months of graduation. This is higher than the average highly skilled immigrant job seeker in Calgary.

“As I often have to make verbal or visual presentations and write different kinds of reports, I feel much better and confident after understanding ways in which these presentations could be made more engaging. My communication skills also improved which also helped me deliver and justify my point of view in a meeting.”

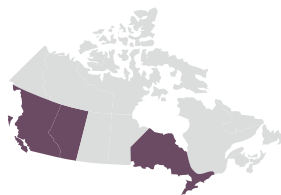
Dmitriy, Document Control Coordinator, Visa – IMV JV Corporation

#### WHAT'S HAPPENED SINCE 2010?

Bow Valley College is interested in replicating and scaling up the project at the national level.

#### PILOT SITE:

Alberta,  
Ontario,  
British Columbia



#### Contact information:

Bow Valley College | Tel.: 403-410-1558 | Email: [appliedresearch@bowvalleycollege.ca](mailto:appliedresearch@bowvalleycollege.ca)  
Suite 364, 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE, Calgary, AB T2G 4V1 | [crtp.bowvalleycollege.ca](http://crtp.bowvalleycollege.ca)

## Newcomers

Colleges and Institutes Canada  
(CICan)

ONTARIO / 2012–2013  
(20 MONTHS)

SECTORS: VARIOUS

### Project Description

The objective was to increase employment opportunities of immigrants under the Federal Skilled Worker immigration program by improving their essential skills before they arrive in Canada. The project added resources for immigrants to the existing essential skills resource bank, including intervention strategies, assessment tools, and a curriculum. The project also led to the development of a centralized database of Canadian essential skills learning resources. A facilitator guide is available, as well as a PowerPoint presentation on essential skills needed to succeed in Canada's job market.

#### Essential skills targeted:



## Essential Skills

### Engaging with Newcomers Overseas

#### KEY STEPS:

Colleges and Institutes Canada (CiCan) recruited partners and project officers in field offices in India, China, and the Philippines to work on this project. The organization also created a network of colleges and immigrant-serving agencies across Canada that can continue to provide information, planning and support to immigrants when they arrive in Canada.

#### RESULTS:

86% of participants understood how to use essential skills to find and plan employment related to their field. After 3 to 6 months in Canada, 61% found employment and 45% had full-time permanent positions. Essential skills training was valuable even for those with degrees. Half of participants were between the ages of 31 and 40 and 80% were university-educated.

#### WHAT'S HAPPENED SINCE 2013?

CiCan was recently selected among 16 service providers to offer services to future Canadians as part of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada's renewed pre-arrival program.

#### OTHER RESOURCES:

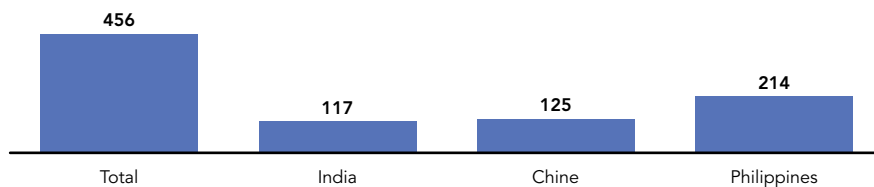
- [Facilitator Program Guide](#)
- [Workshop PowerPoint Presentation](#)

#### ● Contact information:

Colleges and Institutes Canada (CICan) | Tel.: 613-746-2222

Email: [info@collegesinstitutes.ca](mailto:info@collegesinstitutes.ca) | Suite 701, 1 Rideau Street, Ottawa, ON K1N 8S7  
[collegesinstitutes.ca](http://collegesinstitutes.ca)

#### Number of clients who participated in the workshop



## Newcomers

### NorQuest College

ALBERTA / 2016–2021  
(41 MONTHS)

SECTORS: CUSTOMER SERVICE,  
SALES SUPPORT, SERVICE SUPPORT,  
LABOUR, WAREHOUSE OCCUPATIONS

#### Project Description

NorQuest is testing ways to improve the Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) program to support immigrants and refugees in making smoother transitions into the labour market. The project is improving language training to focus more on employment outcomes by integrating essential skills, facilitated work placements and entry-level certifications such as Workplace Hazardous Materials Information Systems.

The project is also updating the Essential Skills/Canadian Language Benchmarks Comparative Framework by conducting a comprehensive comparison that brings together the communicative abilities described in the essential skills and in the Canadian Language Benchmarks.

#### Essential skills targeted:



# Improving Newcomer Workplace Readiness

## Essential Skills Embedded in the National Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) Program

#### KEY STEPS:

NorQuest established an advisory committee of employers, LINC providers, representatives of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada and provincial government representatives. The committee developed a framework to measure outcomes and shared it with project stakeholders. NorQuest gathered input from service provider organizations, LINC providers, employers, students, instructors and training programs. The organization also developed an online, adaptive essential skills assessment suitable for newcomers with lower language proficiency.

#### EXPECTED RESULTS:

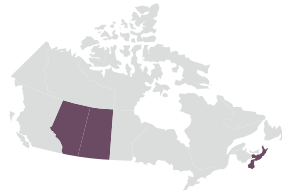
525 participants (equal numbers of men and women) over 4 years; 75% of the students are expected to be better prepared for the Canadian workplace and demonstrate increased essential skills.

#### WHAT'S NEXT?

The project is integrating feedback and learnings from its pilot and expanding to other locations.

#### PILOT SITES:

Alberta,  
Saskatchewan,  
Nova Scotia



#### Contact information:

NorQuest College  
Tel.: 780-644-0000  
Email: [info@norquest.ca](mailto:info@norquest.ca)  
10215-108 Street NW  
Room 324,  
Edmonton, AB T5J 1L6  
[norquest.ca/LINCWorks](http://norquest.ca/LINCWorks)



## Newcomers

Ottawa Chinese Community  
Service Centre (OCCSC)

ONTARIO / 2017–2020  
(42 MONTHS)

SECTOR: INFORMATION  
TECHNOLOGY

### Project Description

OCCSC is testing the effectiveness of embedding essential skills into existing employment programming for newcomers by adapting and piloting in three provinces its current [Canadian IT \(NaviCanIT\) program](#). This bridge-to-work program for internationally educated information and communications technologies professionals incorporates writing, oral communication and thinking skills, which employers often cite as lacking among newcomers. OCCSC is also engaging with 90 employers to determine occupation-specific essential skills requirements and integrate these into programming.

#### Essential skills targeted:



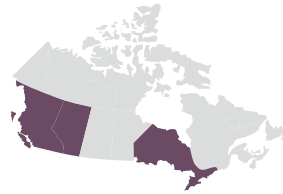
# Integrating the Key Essential Skills in Newcomer Career Transition in IT Industry (ALESWORK)

### KEY STEPS:

Employers helped to validate the ALESWORK curriculum and assess employer needs. They developed curricula for each workshop based on a series of workplace simulations, then integrated the curricula into a skills training program combining classroom and online components. Employers also participated in networking events, and hosted onsite training and visits at their facilities.

### PILOT SITES:

Ontario, Alberta,  
British Columbia



### WHAT'S NEXT?

After completion of the project, the training will be delivered online on a fee-for-service basis.

After a few months of ALESWORK

“ training, one participant received a promotion for the position of Team Leader in his company. He says “the oral communication part provided very simple to use and practical suggestions on how to speak with others, how to talk at a meeting and during presentations... I developed the habit of always reviewing my writing out loud and this improved the quality of both my emails and ticket comments.”

Security Operations  
Centre Analyst

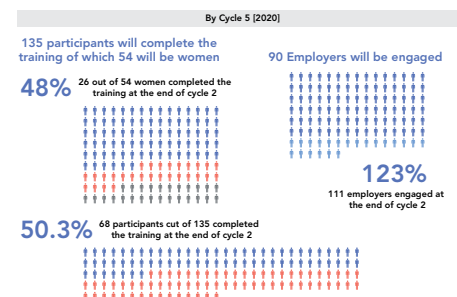
### Best Practices: Employer Engagement

- Referral of agency partners from other programs
- Targeted engagement with employers using relevant National Occupational Classification (NOC) codes
- Participant employer referral
- Focus group discussions
- Engaging employers in program activities
- Talent Den: 60 seconds pitch to employers
- Employer panel

### Contact information:

Ottawa Chinese Community Service  
Centre (OCCSC) | Tel.: 613-235-4875  
Email: [occsc@occsc.org](mailto:occsc@occsc.org) | Suite 2000–  
400 Cooper St, Ottawa, ON K2P 2H8  
[occsc.org](http://occsc.org)

### Outcomes to date – Cycle 2



## Snapshots of newcomers-focused projects

Project Complete

### Douglas College

#### *NATIONAL LITERACY AND ESSENTIAL SKILLS INTEGRATION APPROACH, 2012*

Douglas College developed a National literacy and essential skills Integration Approach that addressed gaps in essential skills training of immigrants entering the workforce and trying to retain a job or advance in their workplaces. The pilot engaged 454 participants in three colleges. The participants who were at a mid-level 2 on the 5-level IALS scale, demonstrated an increase in numeracy (18+ points) that moved them to a level 3.

Project Complete

### Actions interculturelles de développement et d'éducation (AIDE)

#### *DÉVELOPPER L'ALPHABÉTISATION ET LES COMPÉTENCES ESSENTIELLES DES IMMIGRANTS FRANCOPHONES, 2013–2018*

Over a period of five years, AIDE conducted a study to demonstrate the effects of improved literacy and essential skills on the socio-economic integration of Francophone immigrants in six provinces: Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba and British Columbia. The study showed that a number of essential skills training programs shortened the duration of unemployment and increased salaries. It found that the tangible benefit of an immigrant with a graduate or postgraduate degree pursuing a 12-week essential skills program in Manitoba or British Columbia is \$62,831 over five years.

Project Complete

### Construction Foundation of British Columbia (BC)

#### *A CONSTRUCTION WORKPLACE INTEGRATION PLAN. 2018–2019*

Construction Foundation of British Columbia (BC) conducted a study into workplace essential skills training specific to new refugees hired by the construction industry in BC. Refugees and employers in BC were engaged in this study, which used existing research and other resources across Canada. This study helped to increase awareness about job opportunities for refugees and develop workplace interventions focussing on essential skills. It also led to the development of an implementation template for a pilot program in BC.

Project Active

### Calgary Catholic Immigration Society (CCIS)

#### *EMPLOYMENT FIRST: WORKPLACE SKILLS FOR REFUGEES, 2018–2022*

CCIS is developing and implementing an employment-first training model for high-needs refugees. It aims to engage around 150 employers in hiring refugees and providing customized, on-the-job essential skills and employability skills training. The project also aims to provide training to about 800 refugees (60% women), with 80% completing their work placements and 70% securing permanent employment.

## 8.3 Youth

### Did you know?

Canadians students have the right credentials but lack the essential skills employers require. Essential skills are seen as fundamental to ensuring that workers can adjust to workforce change. Employers continue to report a mismatch between the skills they need in their workplaces and those possessed by job seekers, and to voice concern that the postsecondary system is not graduating students with the skills they need.

*Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario,  
The Great Skills Divide, 2014*

Young people are an important human resource and an asset to the Canadian economy. According to 2016 census, there were 6.5 million people between the ages of 15 and 29 in Canada, representing about a fifth of the country's population.<sup>10</sup>

Young people are diverse, connected, engaged and educated; therefore, ensuring their successful transition into the labour market is key. To encourage economic growth, youth must be prepared to meet the demands of Canada's evolving labour market and equipped to face emerging skills gaps.

The Government of Canada's Youth Employment Strategy is being modernized to ensure that young Canadians have access to the supports they need to overcome employment barriers and to secure a stable job and a rewarding career. It is particularly important that they have essential skills and key soft skills such as adaptability to navigate an uncertain world of work.

Some young people experience significant literacy and essential skills challenges. According to the 2012 Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC), Canadians aged 16 to 24 years were proficient in Problem Solving in Technology-Rich Environments (PS-TRE); however, they performed below the OECD average in literacy and numeracy. The lowest-skilled youth were recent immigrants and Indigenous youth, and those with a high school education or less.

### Did you know?

More than 20% of our young adults do not have the skills they need to do their jobs well. This is particularly significant as they are in the early stages of their careers and likely to be in what are considered entry level jobs.

*Smarten Up It's time to build essential skills,  
Canada West Foundation, 2015*



### Did you know?

Only 34% of employers think that youth are adequately prepared for the workplace, but 83% of education providers think they are.

*McKinsey & Company, Youth in transition Bridging Canada's path from education to employment, 2015*

Many young people have strong technical skills, but lack the foundational essential skills to get a job. Literacy and numeracy are the basis for learning social and collaboration skills—soft skills— which will be in high demand in the coming years. Recent surveys indicate that employers perceive that youth lack some essential skills, including oral communication, working with others and thinking/analytical/problem-solving skills. These comments are most prevalent even with respect to youth who have completed secondary or post-secondary education.

### Did you know?

Employers' expectations for skills such as interpersonal and customer service skills, and familiarity with various forms of technology, have risen and productivity demands have grown.

Competition for these jobs has also increased. A significant proportion of our labour force holds a post-secondary certificate yet cannot find work appropriate to their education. These individuals end up applying for entry-level jobs and, having more credentials, displace less-credentialed individuals otherwise suited for these jobs.

*Metcalfe Foundation, Better Work, 2014*



## Youth

### Joint Economic Development Initiative (JEDI)

NEW BRUNSWICK / 2010–2012  
(26 MONTHS)

SECTORS: VARIOUS

#### Project Description

JEDI adapted the Government of New Brunswick's Workplace Essential Skills Program to make it culturally relevant to First Nations adult learners in New Brunswick. The NBAWES program worked with Maliseet First Nations and Mi'Kmaq First Nations adult learners, both off and on reserve, to improve their literacy skills and essential skills. The program also included a work placement. The essential skills curriculum and trainer kit developed for First Nations adult learners with a regional (Atlantic) focus is applicable nationally. The curriculum is available online. The project included pre- and post-TOWES assessments.

#### Essential skills targeted:



# New Brunswick Aboriginal Workplace Essential Skills Project

#### KEY STEPS:

Elders of the Maliseet First Nations and Mi'Kmaq First Nations worked with the program to ensure it met the distinct needs of First Nations adults. First Nations activities were included in the curriculum to connect essential skills to learners' daily lives and culture.

#### RESULTS:

The pre- and post-TOWES assessments showed an increase in reading, document use, numeracy, and communication skills. Two-thirds of learners graduated from the program. Half the graduates were either employed (full- or part-time) or pursuing post-secondary education after completion of training.

#### WHAT'S NEW?

*JEDI adapted their curriculum for another ESDC-funded project that provides training in information and communications technology and digital literacy. The Province of New Brunswick expressed interest in expanding JEDI's program across the province.*

#### PILOT SITE:

New Brunswick



#### Contact information:

Joint Economic Development Initiative (JEDI) | Tel.: 516-444-5650  
150 Cliffe St PO Box 11, Fredericton, NB E3A 0A1 | [jedib.ca](http://jedib.ca)

## Snapshots of youth-focused projects

Project Complete

### Centre for Skills Development

#### *ESSENTIAL SKILLS LEARNING FOR YOUNG ADULTS: ORAL COMMUNICATION, WORKING WITH OTHERS & THINKING SKILLS, 2010–2012*

The Centre for Skills Development developed and tested a free game-based learning tool, “Summer in Smaillywood”, focusing on three Essential Skills—oral communication, working with others and thinking skills—to help young adults find and keep employment. As part of a group-based employability program focusing on the trades, the learning tool was piloted with youth at risk of not making a successful transition to the workplace. The program included a 10-week in-class portion followed by an 8-week work placement. Of 25 participants, 24 completed the program. At the end of their work placement, 16 remained employed or enrolled in further education/training. “Summer in Smaillywood” was extensively promoted at skills competitions, career training conferences, and with employment training service providers, as well as with employers. 80% of employers indicated that they would consider using the tool as part of their company’s training plan for young employees. Thousands of service providers, employers and youth from around the world visited the Summer in Smaillywood website while it was active (2010–2014).

Project Complete

### NWT Literacy Council

#### *RE-ENGAGING DISENGAGED NORTHERN YOUTH IN LITERACY AND ESSENTIAL SKILLS ENHANCEMENT, 2012–2015*

NWT Literacy Council tested a model to increase community organizations’ capacity to help disengaged Northern youth gain essential skills in the three territories and Newfoundland and Labrador. The project embedded literacy and essential skills in youth programs such as fishing/summer camp, pre-trades, and traditional sealskin-making. The participants strengthened their essential skills, technical and social skills, confidence and community engagement. The project strengthened partnerships among community organizations to better support disengaged Northern youth.

Project Complete

### Université du Québec à Montréal (UQÀM)

#### *UNLOCKING THE POTENTIAL OF YOUTH AND ADULTS TO ACQUIRE AND DEPLOY DIGITAL SKILLS, 2013–2015*

In today’s society, people need to process large amounts of complex information. Those with field-independent (FI) cognitive control are highly analytical and process information more effectively than others with field-dependent (FD) cognitive control. UQÀM piloted the NeuroLudus brain-training game to help youth and adults improve their level of field independence. Pre- and post-test results indicated that with an average playtime of 12 hours, every single NeuroLudus player was able to change their cognitive control from FD to FI. NeuroLudus can be used by Canadians to improve their information processing, learning and problem-solving skills.



## Snapshots of youth-focused projects

Project Complete

### Dalhousie University

#### *SUPPORTING STUDENT SUCCESS: IDENTIFYING AND SUPPORTING AT-RISK UNIVERSITY STUDENTS, 2013–2018*

Dalhousie University developed evidence-based interventions for post-secondary students facing literacy and essential skills challenges to support their academic achievement, program retention and graduation, and successful transition into the workforce. Students who self-report a history of reading difficulties who received an early targeted intervention (for example, email and phone calls) were more likely to use academic advising and supports in their second year, leading to increased number of credits earned. Those who received a customized intervention—study skills training using a peer coaching model—also experienced positive outcomes, such as academic self-efficacy and self-belief, greater use of additional academic supports and increased use of effective memory and comprehension strategies. Guides for targeted interventions and for customized ones to build the capacity of post-secondary education institutions to adapt and replicate the interventions and build on their success were developed.

Project Complete

### Raising the Roof

#### *ALTITUDE YOUTH EMPLOYMENT AND ENTREPRENEURIAL PROGRAM, 2018–2019*

Through Raising the Roof's Toque Campaign, a social enterprise, this small project successfully helped a handful of youth facing multiple barriers to employment gain pre-employment, entrepreneurial, social enterprise and essential skills training, as well as benefit from ongoing peer mentorship.

Project Active

### Social Research and Demonstration Corporation

#### *ENHANCING EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMMING FOR VULNERABLE YOUTH: STRENGTHENING LITERACY AND ESSENTIAL SKILLS, 2018–2022*

SRDC is designing, testing and rigorously evaluating the effectiveness of a pay for performance training model for at-risk youth participating in the Youth Employment Strategy's Skills Link (SL) program. The project will consolidate proven practices in the delivery of youth employment programming, with a focus on models that effectively integrate essential skills. Based on these proven practices, SRDC will lead the design and implementation of a demonstration project in partnership with employment service providers to test the pay for performance model with up to 600 youth, including women, newcomers, and Indigenous youth. The research aims to measure the impacts of pay for performance on participants' progression through key milestones towards employment, such as gains in essential skills, improvements in career adaptability, increased self-confidence and perseverance, and ultimately successful transition to and retention of work. The project will provide a deeper understanding of proven practices in delivering employment programming for vulnerable youth, including literacy and essential skills interventions, which could be adopted. It will also provide evidence on the effectiveness of a pay for performance strategy and funding model for incentivizing innovation, and of proven practices in the delivery of employment programming for vulnerable youth.

## 8.4 Official Language Minority Communities

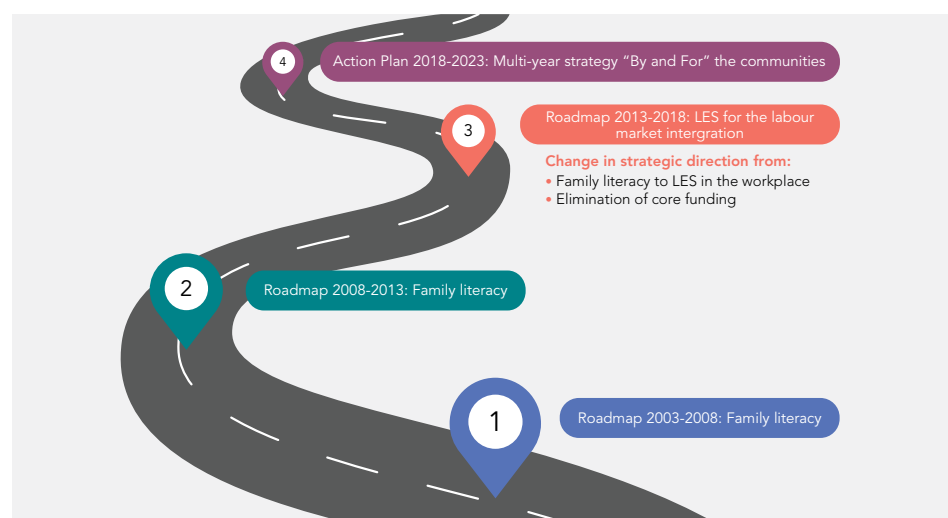
According to the 2016 census, even though Canada's Official Language Minority Communities (OLMCs) are dynamic, some of their trends are worrying: geographic dispersion of communities, aging population, exodus of young people, economic devitalization of Francophone communities, and challenges facing English-speaking rural communities in Quebec.

In addition, the literacy and essential skills needs of adults living in OLMCs are among the most critical in Canada (with the exception of English-speaking minority communities living in Quebec). In fact, the 2012 Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) survey revealed that 51.8% of Francophones living outside Quebec are at level 2 or lower in literacy, compared to 42.7% of Anglophones outside Quebec. Factors such as age, gender, and education level widen the gaps between the two linguistic groups.

The Government of Canada is committed to strengthening the vitality of OLMCs through the [Action Plan for Official Languages 2018–2023](#), coordinated by Canadian Heritage under the *Official Languages Act*. The vitality of OLMCs is closely linked to their economic development and their ability to attract employers. But employers need a skilled workforce with a good level of essential skills to ensure the survival, prosperity and growth of their businesses.

The Office of Literacy and Essential Skills supports the Government of Canada's efforts with the OLMC Literacy and Essential Skills Initiative, which aims to help adults in OLMCs acquire the essential skills that will help them get and keep a job. The projects funded under this initiative strengthen training systems and help to build strong and resilient communities.

### ● OLES OLMC Literacy and Essential Skills Initiative Support in the ROADMAP for Canada's Official Languages



## Official Language Minority Communities

### Decoda Literacy Solutions

BRITISH COLUMBIA / 2015–2016  
(18 MONTHS)

SECTOR: N/A

#### Project Description

Rural communities are critical to Canada's growth, yet many of them are struggling to survive, facing issues such as skills shortages and declining populations. Decoda's project developed and implemented place-based strategic plans for literacy and essential skills by bringing together community partners and testing how these plans can be used to improve literacy and essential skills levels of individuals facing barriers to employment. Decoda published the [research report](#), the [guidebook](#) for place-based approaches and the community plans for literacy and essential skills on the [Strengthening Rural Canada website](#), to share best practices and support the work of other rural communities.

#### Essential skills targeted:



# Strengthening Rural Growth through Place-Based Literacy and Essential Skills Strategic Plans

#### KEY STEPS:

Actively engaging with key stakeholders in each community by attending meetings and community forums was essential in ensuring the tool addressed the unique needs and capacity of each community.

#### PILOT SITES:

British Columbia,  
Ontario, Saskatchewan



#### RESULTS:

Two communities integrated the literacy and essential skills plan into their respective economic development plans.

#### WHAT'S HAPPENED SINCE 2016?

The municipality of Hearst, Ontario used the literacy and essential skills strategic plan to inform their community plan. Since then, Hearst established a welcoming committee for new residents to help newcomer integration. The Centre for Adult Education, in partnership with the Literacy Centre for Anglophones, is now helping individuals with language barriers to employment, training, or education (in French or in English) achieve their training, education or employment goals. The Université de Hearst and the Coalition ontarienne de formation des adultes (COFA) formalized a partnership to help students improve their literacy skills through COFA's online training program.

“Gold River’s plan included a tourism component—trying to keep tourists in the town for more days. They decided to increase signage and create a map for local trails. They engaged youth in this project to develop their skills in cartology, GPS reading, working with others, computer use, brochure design and woodworking. The map and signage were completed in April 2018. “It’s done! SARA (Scout-Antler Recreation Area) map is done! Strengthening Rural Canada grant is hard at work in Gold River!”

Lynne Unger

#### Guiding Principles for Making a Community Plan

1. Build on what you've got.
2. Focus on what you need.
3. Integrate and embed literacy and essential skills and other skill development into other community issues.
4. Think about everybody in the community; all ages, all socio-economic groups.
5. Consider that we learn much of what we know and gain many skills outside of formal learning contexts.

#### OTHER RESOURCE:

- [Final Report](#)

#### Contact information:

Decoda Literacy Solutions  
980 – 1125 Howe Street, Vancouver, BC  
V6Z 2K8 | [decoda.ca](http://decoda.ca) | Tel.: 604-681-4199  
Email: [info@decoda.ca](mailto:info@decoda.ca)

# Official Language Minority Communities

Réseau pour le développement  
de l’alphabétisme et des  
compétences (RESDAC)

OTTAWA / 2013–2015  
(25 MONTHS)

SECTORS: GRADUATE STUDIES,  
EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT, ECONOMY,  
HEALTH, SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

## Project Description

This project aimed to test integrated approaches that contribute to the development of skills (essential, generic and technical), to help adults with low skills find work quickly.

# Innovative Essential Skills Approaches Documented

## To better understand and act effectively

### RESULTS:

Futureworx and l’Équipe d’alphabétisation de Nouvelle- Écosse worked together to develop and deliver a new integrated boatbuilding and guide program, funded by the Nova Scotia Department of Labour and Advanced Education. A guide on Futureworx’s integrated approach was developed and is part of Nova Scotia Boatbuilders Association’s 2016-2019 Strategic Plan.

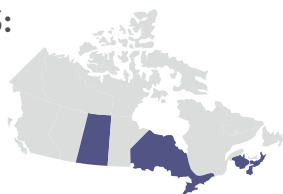
### WHAT’S HAPPENED SINCE 2015?

*The Association franco-yukonaise (AFY), in collaboration with Yukon College, has developed an integrated bilingual customer service program in the tourism sector. At the end of the program, participants will receive a participation certificate from Yukon College, and they will have the opportunity to pursue their studies at the College.*

*“Tourism and Francophone Human Resources in OLMCs: An Integrated Approach” is based on RESDAC’s integrated approach. The Coalition ontarienne de formation des adultes (COFA), in partnership with HT hospitality training, has created a program that integrates the development of essential skills and technical, generic and language skills. “To date, we are very pleased with the results: two cohorts, 40 learning plans created, and more than half of the participants are in employment.”. Michel Robillard, Director General, COFA.*

### PILOT SITES:

New Brunswick,  
Nova Scotia,  
Ontario,  
Saskatchewan



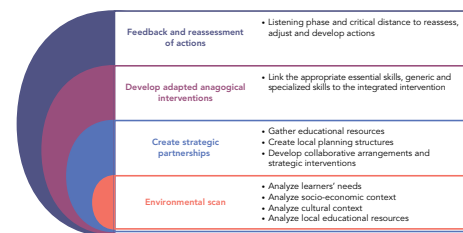
### OTHER RESOURCES:

- Analytical report  
(available in French only)

### Contact information:

Réseau pour le développement de  
l’alphabétisme et des compétences  
(RESDAC) | Tel. :613-749-5333  
Email: [info@resdac.net](mailto:info@resdac.net)  
2nd floor – 235 Montréal Rd,  
Ottawa, ON K1L 6C7 | [resdac.net](http://resdac.net)

### an integrated four-component approach



### Essential skills targeted:



## Snapshots of projects focused on Official Language Minority Communities

Project Complete

### Réseau pour le développement de l'alphabétisme et des compétences (RESDAC)

#### TRANSLATION AND ADAPTATION OF THE CAMERA EVALUATION SYSTEM FOR THE FRANCOPHONE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT NETWORK, 2012–2014

RESDAC translated the Communication and Math Employment Readiness Assessment (CAMERA) skills assessment system and adapted it to the Francophone minority cultural context for use by professionals who work with adults with low literacy skills (Levels 1 and 2). CAMERA assesses and develops a learner's abilities to manage workplace communications and numeracy tasks. It was initially developed in English by Pathways to Possibilities Adult Learning and Employment Programs. CAMERA publications and resources can be purchased through the Pathways to Possibilities store.

Project Active

### Community Economic Development and Employability Corporation (CEDEC)

#### WORKPLACE ESSENTIAL SKILLS CO-OP VOCATIONAL TRAINING PROGRAM TO FILL SKILLED POSITIONS IN HIGH DEMAND SECTORS, 2015–2019

CEDEC designed and implemented an employability training program for the youth of Kebaowek First Nation, a community of 800 Algonquin people in Kipawa, Quebec, to prepare them for tourism job opportunities at the new Opémican National Park, which officially opened in 2019. The participants' lack of French language skills was identified as the first hurdle to full employment. CEDEC designed a training experience that integrated job-ready French language skills along with the technical and soft skills that would ensure employment success at the park. CEDEC partnered with la Société des établissements de plein air du Québec (Sépaq), to help the youth successfully apply for jobs at the park and prepare for other opportunities in the tourism and culture sector. CEDEC is used this model in Gesgapegiag, an English-speaking Mi'gmaq community, where a customized training program increased the community's capacity to deliver culturally-derived tourism products and services. This project helped address the need for bilingual employees in the Gaspésie tourism industry.

Project Complete

### Association des collèges et universités de la francophonie canadienne (ACUFC)

#### COLLABORATIONS AND KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER: BEST PRACTICES IN ESSENTIAL SKILLS, 2018–2019

ACUFC identified Francophone colleges' and universities' best practices in training and employability programs incorporating the essential skills, and disseminated these practices. Through this project, a good practice was transferred to another training institution while new essential skills modules were developed for dissemination.

## Snapshots of projects focused on Official Language Minority Communities

Project Active

### Coalition ontarienne de formation des adultes (COFA)

#### TOURISM AND FRANCOPHONE HUMAN RESOURCES IN OLMCS: AN INTEGRATED APPROACH, 2016–2020

The goal of the project is to integrate essential skills into a tourism training program in order to provide Francophone participants with low essential skills, including newcomers, with the competencies needed in the hotel business in Ontario. Successful participants gain practical experience through job shadowing and employment opportunities. Through the project, COFA will engage with 6 employers and 60 participants (48 women and 12 men). It is expected that 80% of the participants will obtain employment after graduation.

Project Active

### Coalition ontarienne de formation des adultes (COFA)

#### PAN-CANADIAN PLATFORM FOR DISTANCE LEARNING IN LITERACY AND ESSENTIAL SKILLS, 2019–2023

COFA will expand its successful e-learning platform, funded by the Government of Ontario to Francophone OLMCs in Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta with limited literacy and essential skills training capacity in French. This project targets Francophone adults with low literacy, numeracy, computer and communication skills. The project will focus on improving participants' employability skills, taking into consideration local labour market demand.





## 8.5 Job Seekers

Canadians attempting to enter the labour force are facing changing skills requirements associated with the changing nature of work. The Government of Canada is investing in adult upskilling to help Canadians adapt to new workplace realities as those with the necessary skills will be most resilient to change.

Higher essential skills are associated with better labour market outcomes, including higher earnings and better jobs. Workers with low essential skills are at greater risk of not finding a job, of experiencing job loss and enduring long-term unemployment. This is especially true as labour market demands shift.

Overall, both in Canada and internationally, low levels of literacy and numeracy persist in the general population, as the table below shows. Programs and resources are put in place so that vulnerable and disadvantaged populations in Canada are supported to avoid greater risk of unemployment due to low skill levels.

Proficiency Level	Employed	Unemployed	Unemployed in (%)	Out of Labour Force	Total
Level 1 or below	3,087,670	248,685	8.1%	1,354,274	<b>4,690,629</b>
Level 2	5,229,965	242,625	4.6%	1,092,720	<b>6,565,311</b>
Level 3	5,626,101	182,504	3.2%	716,064	<b>6,524,669</b>
Level 4 or 5	2,319,814	39,202	1.7%	144,089	<b>2,503,106</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>16,263,550</b>	<b>713,016</b>	<b>4.4%</b>	<b>3,307,147</b>	<b>20,283,714</b>

OLES, in collaboration with partners and stakeholders, provides funding to support the testing, replicating and scaling up of pilot projects that support various groups of Canadians, including the unemployed, to prepare for, get, and keep a job. This is especially true in regions facing higher unemployment rates than the Canadian average, including Alberta and the Atlantic region, where projects are underway to address the needs of unemployed Canadians.

In addition, OLES works with other federal, provincial, and territorial skills programs to promote the integration of literacy and essential skills into their program, including those that target the unemployed Canadian population.



## Job Seekers

YWCA Toronto

ONTARIO / 2014–2019  
(60 MONTHS)

SECTORS: VARIOUS

### Project Description

In 2010, ESDC funded YWCA Toronto to pilot a model to improve the essential skills of low-skilled women seeking employment. The pilot had positive outcomes, with 85% of learners finding jobs. YWCA Toronto scaled up the model for testing at nine sites, including YWCA Toronto. In March 2019, YWCA Toronto announced two new publications, documenting promising practices and lessons learned from the tested model, now branded as the YWCA Building Sustainable Futures program. YWCA Toronto's Skills Development Centre incubated and refined this model to contribute to building a skilled and inclusive workforce.

#### Essential skills targeted:



# Essential Skills for Employment Project

### KEY STEPS:

YWCA provided wrap-around assistance tailored to the needs of each learner and provided ongoing support once individuals completed training.

They used a strength-based framework that integrates essential skills so individuals can create plans for success.

They built relationships with employers to ensure that training meets their needs. YWCA Toronto's LinksToJobs Employers Network connects with over 100 employers.

### RESULTS:

YWCA Toronto facilitated a learning community with eight YWCA Associations across Canada to explore how their approach to essential skills training could be adapted for underserved populations, focusing on Indigenous peoples, immigrants, mature individuals and youth.

They developed a Compendium of learnings from the five-year national participatory research initiative. They also developed a Toolkit that contains lesson plans, practitioners' tips, and resources developed and tested by collaborators.

The YWCA shared this model with 50 organizations across Canada and shared learnings about its LinksToJobs employer engagement model. Nova Scotia, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Ontario have expressed interest in replicating this project.

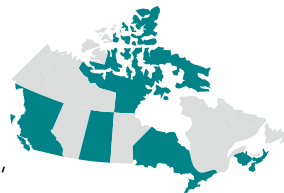
**Winette recently immigrated to Canada with her family. With the program, Winette completed a three-week work practicum at a local hotel. In December 2016, Winette proudly graduated from the Personal Care Aide program and secured full-time employment with her practicum employer.**

### WHAT'S NEXT

YWCA Toronto is building the capacity of other organizations by facilitating effective employer engagement and creating a platform for knowledge sharing.

### PILOT SITES:

Nova Scotia,  
New Brunswick,  
Ontario,  
Saskatchewan,  
British Columbia,  
Nunavut



#### Contact information:

YWCA Toronto | Tel.: 416-961-8100  
Email: [info@ywcatoronto.org](mailto:info@ywcatoronto.org)  
3090 Kingston Road, 3<sup>rd</sup> floor  
Scarborough, ON M1M 1P2  
[ywcatoronto.org](http://ywcatoronto.org)

# Snapshots of projects focused on job seekers

Project Complete

## Douglas College

*FOUNDATIONS PILOT PROJECT: DEFINING PROCESSES FOR LITERACY AND ESSENTIAL SKILLS ENHANCEMENT, 2013–2016*

Douglas College developed a delivery model (Foundations Program model) that can be effectively replicated on a national scale to assess and raise occupationally relevant essential skills levels among low-skilled job seekers. The project applied a randomized control trial (RCT), which required that half of the learners be assigned to a control group and not receive training, while the program group did. RCT is considered the gold standard of evidence-based research and the project clearly demonstrated the impacts of the intervention. The lesson learned from the project is that explaining the benefits of RCT to service providers and referring agents can be challenging, but worth the effort.

Project Active

## Canada West Foundation (CWF)

*ESSENTIAL SKILLS IN WORKERS DISPLACED FROM THE OIL AND GAS SECTOR, 2018–2019*

CWF worked with 250 professionals displaced from the oil and gas sector to help them build on-line competency profiles, assess and validate their essential skills. CWF matched the profiles to available jobs in the Calgary region by identifying transferable essential and technical skills. CWF will also provide two reports on the value of literacy and essential skills and soft skills to individuals and the economy.

Project Complete

## Government of New Brunswick

*NEW BRUNSWICK WORKPLACE ESSENTIAL SKILLS PROGRAM, 2014–2019*

The Government of New Brunswick (NB) successfully implemented a province-wide model of highly customized essential skills training for work driven by local labour market needs. The training is based on the skills and tasks required for specific occupations and the associated skills gaps identified for each participant pre-training. Strong partnerships with employers and the focus on job-specific skills has resulted in improved employment outcomes.

Project Active

## Saint John Learning Exchange

*WORKLINKS, 2014–2019*

Saint John Learning Exchange piloted the use of social enterprises to provide job seekers facing multiple barriers with structured, supportive, work-integrated learning to make the transition to formal employment. The project also measured the social return on investment. For every dollar invested into training (including essential skills training), at least \$7.50 of social and economic value was created by WorkLinks.

Project Active

## BioTalent Canada

*BRINGING ESSENTIAL SKILLS TO THE BIO-ECONOMY TALENT POOL, 2017–2021*

BioTalent Canada is developing blended online and in-class learning for the essential skills needed in the bio-economy workforce. The curriculum is targeting reading, writing, numeracy, document use, oral communication, critical thinking and working with others. The project expects to launch an internal pilot of the learning tools in 2019.

# Snapshots of Job Seekers Focused Projects

Project Active

## **Decoda Literacy Solutions**

*ENHANCING DISPLACED WORKERS LITERACY AND ESSENTIAL SKILLS, 2019–2022*

Decoda is conducting research to identify promising literacy and essential skills interventions to increase employability of displaced workers in Canada. The project will identify interventions that have the potential to be adapted and expanded nationally, by conducting beta tests in British Columbia and Alberta to evaluate their effectiveness and scalability. Decoda expects to engage with 2000 displaced workers across Canada through online surveys, 80 employers, service providers or displaced workers through interviews and 150 displaced workers.

Project Active

## **Department of Workforce and Advanced Learning (SkillsPEI Division) Prince Edward Island**

*SEASONAL WORKER SKILLS INITIATIVE, 2018–2019*

The Department of Workforce and Advanced Learning provided training and paid work experience to seasonal workers in PEI to help them improve their essential skills and return to work. Of the learners who completed training and responded to follow-up surveys:

- 91.3% were either satisfied or very satisfied with the quality and relevance of their training;
- 77.4% indicated that they have improved essential skills as a result of the training; and,
- 81.2% feel the training better prepared them for the workforce.

Project Active

## **Ministère du Travail, de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale**

*IN SUPPORT OF SEASONAL WORKERS IN QUEBEC, 2018–2020*

To meet a federal commitment to support workers in seasonal industries, the Ministère du Travail, de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale is developing, promoting and delivering literacy and essential skills training interventions for seasonal workers in Quebec. To date, more than 1,500 seasonal workers have re-entered the workforce in 10 administrative regions in Quebec. In the case of 1,250 of the workers, the re-entry was due to 29 companies extending their employment period.

## 8.6 Employers

As the Government of Canada looks for innovative ways to support skills development, there is an important discussion to be held with employers about their role in building a skilled, adaptive and productive labour force.

Despite projected heavy job displacement in many sectors and occupations, the Canadian economy is expected to add 2.4 million jobs over the next four years, which will require a new mix of skills. An assessment of 20,000 skills rankings across 300 occupations and the 2.4 million expected job openings shows an increasing demand for soft skills such as critical thinking, coordination, social perceptiveness, active listening and, complex problem solving.<sup>11</sup>

However, studies also show that in Canada, 41% of employers are struggling to fill open positions, and 24% of employers gave the main reason as skills gaps—whether technical, cognitive, social, emotional, or all of the above.<sup>12</sup> In addition, 58% of larger firms (250+ employees) reported talent shortages in 2018 alone.<sup>13</sup>

This is exacerbated by the fact that more than 45% of those who are employed and 56% of those who are unemployed, but in the labour force, have literacy skills at Level 2 or below. These individuals may have challenges with learning new skills and may experience difficulty when trying to enter, succeed or advance in the labour force.<sup>14</sup>

Research by the Conference Board of Canada shows that “higher spending on employee training and efforts to create strong corporate learning cultures reduce turnover, increase employee engagement, and improve productivity and customer satisfaction. Typically, employees recognize and appreciate the investment and reward employers with greater loyalty and productivity which, in turn, makes customers happy”<sup>15</sup>. However, stakeholders such as the Canadian Chamber of Commerce and the Advisory Council on Economic Growth argue that costs, time, capacity limitations and concerns about the return on investment often affect employers’ abilities to deliver training. These barriers are more pronounced for small and medium-sized enterprises, which employ over 70% of all private sector workers in Canada.



To build the business case for essential skills training, OLES supports several projects that examine approaches that demonstrate benefits to employers. For example, under the [UPSKILL](#) and “[Business Case for Employers in the Trades](#)” projects, firms saw a noteworthy return on training investment, and in the [Manufacturing Essentials](#) project, the training model being tested is expected to help manufacturing firms increase productivity and competitiveness.

OLES is continuing to explore new ways of engaging with employers to demonstrate the benefits of embedding essential skills training into their human resource practices, and addressing barriers employers face in providing this kind of training to their employees.

## Employers

Social Research and Demonstration Corporation (SRDC)

ONTARIO / 2010–2014  
(48 MONTHS)

SECTORS: ACCOMMODATION AND FOOD SERVICE, PRIMARILY HOTELS

### Project Description

The UPSKILL project delivered by SRDC provided a clear and compelling business case for workplace essential skills training. UPSKILL used a randomized control trial design to provide reliable measures of impacts of essential skills training on workers' skills and job performance in the accommodations sector of the tourism industry. The project engaged 110 firms and reached 1,435 workers, across eight provinces: Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba, Newfoundland, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Ontario and Saskatchewan.

#### Essential skills targeted:



# Demonstration Project to Test Literacy and Essential Skills Intervention in the Workplace – UPSKILL

### KEY STEPS:

Developing high quality curricula that embedded essential skills training into the performance requirements of occupations maximized the relevance of the training to both employers and workers and increased their engagement.

### RESULTS:

The project provided a cost-benefit analysis and determined that firms earn an estimated average return of 23% on their investment in the first year after providing training to employees. Firms experienced increased customer satisfaction, cost savings, productivity gains and increased revenues. Employees experienced increased literacy scores, improved job performance, increased job retention and improved health and well-being.

### WHAT'S HAPPENED SINCE 2014?

The tourism sector councils across Canada are currently using UPSKILL curricula.

### OTHER RESOURCES:

- [Highlights](#)
- [Final Results](#)
- [Technical Report](#)

British Columbia, Manitoba, Newfoundland, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Ontario, Saskatchewan

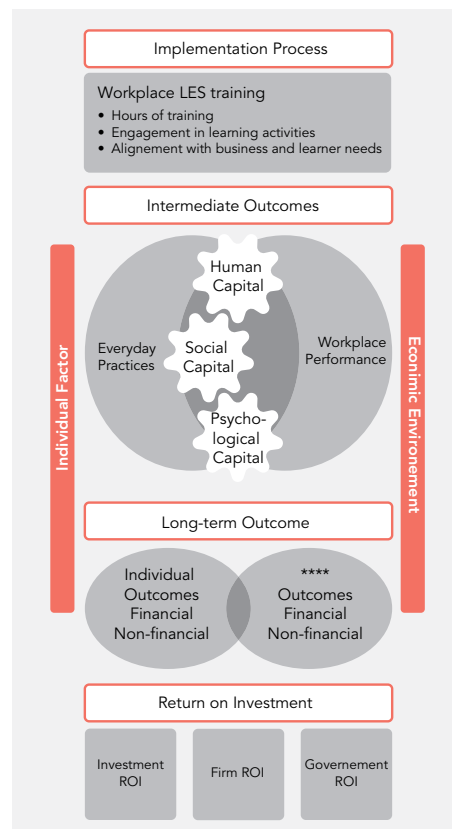


### Contact information:

Social Research and Demonstration Corporation (SRDC)  
Tel.: 613-237-4311  
Suite 400, 55 Murray Street,  
Ottawa, Ontario K1N 5M3  
[srdc.org](http://srdc.org)

### PILOT SITES:

#### UPSKILL Research Framework





## Employers

### Frontier College

ONTARIO / 2012–2014  
(36 MONTHS)

SECTORS: HOSPITALITY, RETAIL,  
MINING, CONSTRUCTION

### Project Description

Frontier College created a flexible workplace literacy and essential skills model for various sectors. Ten tutors (labourer-teachers) from various fields trained and deployed to work with employers to develop customized workplace programming, using adapted scheduling and a skills development curriculum with learning goals and tools. In addition, Frontier College works with over 500 community-based agencies to provide innovative literacy and numeracy support.

## Labourer Teachers

### A Second Century of Workplace Learning

#### KEY STEPS:

Frontier College developed partnership guidance, including needs assessment and program customization, and promotion of the benefits of literacy and essential skills upgrading in the workplace. Their selection of Labourer Teachers was based on a range of criteria, not necessarily teaching credentials—for example, teaching skills in time management and effective workplace communication, resourcefulness, and adaptability. Program participation was voluntary, confidential, and offered during paid work hours.

#### RESULTS:

Between 75% and 80% of learners and 80% of supervisors surveyed reported significant skill improvements. The most notable improvements included communications (speaking, listening/comprehension), using workplace documents and terminology, teamwork and problem solving.

“The program has become a critical component of our company’s success. There is no question that it contributes not only to skills development for our employees that make them more productive members of our workforce, but it also contributes to their job satisfaction and positions NVD as a great place to work.”

Rich Thompson,  
CEO of Northern  
Vision Development

#### WHAT’S HAPPENED SINCE 2014?

Recognizing the value and impact of the model, the Yukon Government’s Department of Education has financially supported the Workplace Literacy & Essential Skills project as part of their Labour Market Framework initiative. This is in addition to the significant in-kind contributions of the participating employers, including Northern Vision Development and Canadian Tire.

#### OTHER RESOURCE:

- [Frontier College Second Century project blog](#)

#### PILOT SITES:

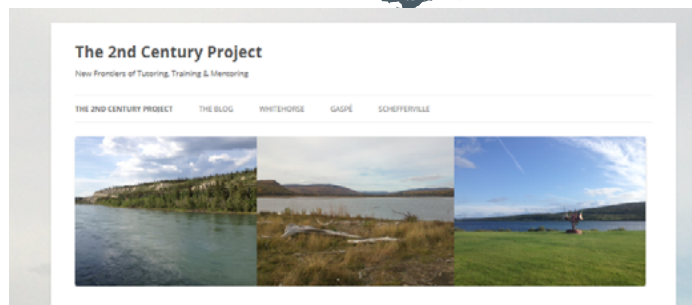
Quebec, Ontario,  
Yukon,  
Newfoundland  
and Labrador



#### Contact information:

Frontier College | Tel.: 416-923-3591  
Email: [information@frontiercollege.ca](mailto:information@frontiercollege.ca)  
35 Jackes Avenue, Toronto, ON M4T 1E2  
[frontiercollege.ca](http://frontiercollege.ca)

#### Essential skills targeted:



## Employers

Community Business Development Corporation Restigouche (CBDC Restigouche)

NEW BRUNSWICK / 2012–2016 (50 MONTHS)

SECTORS: MANUFACTURING AND ADMINISTRATIVE/SERVICE

### Project Description

CBDC Restigouche developed an online and flexible digital skills training model for workers with no or low-level digital skills and/or low literacy levels, to enable them to use information and communications technologies. The model helped businesses manage training on site, since workers complete training on their own. Ten small- and medium-sized enterprises piloted the training model across Canada. Digital skills and ability to use information and communications technology improved, particularly among workers with lower levels of literacy.

# Digital Essential Skills in Rural Small Businesses

### KEY STEPS:

Trans-Canada partnerships supported both participating businesses and workers in piloting the training across Canada. The CBDC Restigouche recruited five local instructors from five provinces, each with expertise in essential skills, and partnered with provincial essential skills programs/departments.

### RESULTS:

Learners significantly improved their digital skills by completing the training. In the first workshop, learners with lower levels of literacy had greater improvements than those with higher literacy. About a quarter of participants said that they used the platform outside their normal work location and time, double the expected rate from traditional literacy and essential skills training models.

### WHAT'S NEXT?

The Government of Canada is undertaking a contract with CBDC Restigouche to provide access to digital essential skills training through the Job Bank platform.

“Participation in this project not only enhanced digital essential skills of the employees, but also led to one SME submitting a request for funding to integrate new technologies in their workplace. The SME was able to then integrate the new technologies into the workplace, and which participating employees now use in their everyday work tasks.”

According to a CBDC Restigouche supervisor

### OTHER RESOURCES:

- [Highlights](#)
- [Final Report](#)

### PILOT SITES:

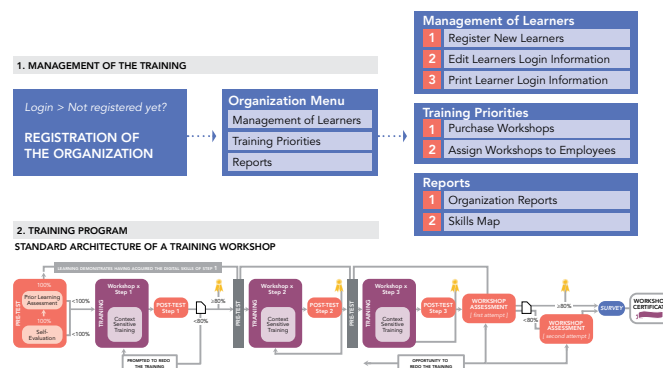
New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Quebec, Manitoba, Alberta



### Contact information:

Community Business Development Corporation Restigouche (CBDC Restigouche)  
Tel.: 506-753-3344 | 41 Water Street, Campbellton, NB E3N 1A6 | [restigouchecbdc.ca](http://restigouchecbdc.ca)

## Online Training Platform



### Essential skills targeted:



## Employers

Excellence in Manufacturing Consortium of Canada (EMC)

ONTARIO / 2017–2021  
(41 MONTHS)

SECTOR: MANUFACTURING

### Project Description

EMC is expanding a training model nationally to increase the literacy, essential skills and soft skills (i.e., oral communication, working with others, thinking) of employees in the manufacturing sector and to help manufacturing firms increase productivity and competitiveness.

The model targets supervisory and production occupation streams. The supervisory training uses effective practices and resources from Harvard Business Publishing. The project is assessing the skills gained by employees by testing before and after training.

# Manufacturing Essentials

## KEY STEPS:

To effectively deliver its two training streams—a supervisory stream and a production occupations stream—multiple employers release a few employees for training instead of one employer releasing multiple employees. This ensures greater results while minimizing loss of productivity. The project is also developing and validating a pay-for-performance model to increase manufacturing employers' engagement in literacy and essential skills training.

“ I enhanced my problem solving skills and how to maintain a proper work culture.”

Preeti Ramakumaraswamy,  
Therapure Biopharma Inc.

## RESULTS:

Learners showed digital essential skills gains of between 34 and 37 points (on the 100-point platform scale) across three workshops organized to date. In the first workshop, learners with lower levels of literacy showed a skills gain of 15% more (47.2%) than those with higher literacy (32.5%), a statistically significant difference. Social Research and Demonstration Corporation analysts also found that about 23% of participants used the program's online training platform outside their normal work location and time—double the expected rate from traditional literacy and essential skills training models.

## OTHER RESOURCE:

- [MEC Skills and Learning Portal](#)

## PILOT SITES:

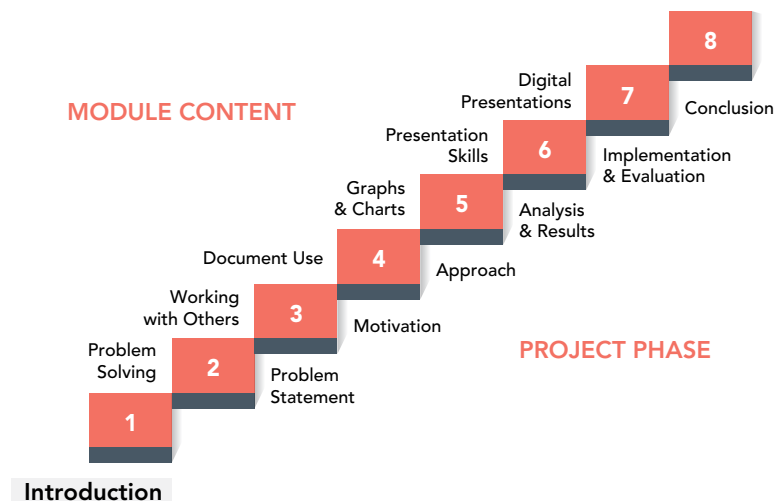
Prince Edward Island,  
New Brunswick,  
Ontario, Alberta,  
Saskatchewan,  
British Columbia



## Contact information:

Excellence in Manufacturing Consortium of Canada (EMC) | Tel.: 519-376-0470  
Email: [info@emccanada.org](mailto:info@emccanada.org)  
625, 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue East, Owen Sound,  
ON N4K 2G7 | [emccanada.org](http://emccanada.org)

## The Essential Skills Modules for the Production Worker Training



### Essential skills targeted:



# Snapshots of employer-focused projects

Project Complete

## **Workplace Education Manitoba Steering Committee (WEMSC)** *CONNECTING EMPLOYERS TO TRANSITIONING ADULTS, 2012*

WEMSC worked with over 35 experts in 7 jurisdictions across Canada to develop an intervention model and orientation guide to improve the workplace essential skills of First Nations individuals, immigrants and older workers that are transitioning into the workplace for the first time or advancing within their organization. As a result of the project, employers had a better understanding of how to access a pool of eligible candidates that met their needs.

Project Complete

## **The Canadian Chamber of Commerce** *CLOSING THE SKILLS GAP: MAPPING A PATH FOR SMALL BUSINESS, 2012–2013*

The Canadian Chamber of Commerce organized a one-day symposium. Representatives of 40 small and medium-sized enterprises and 35 stakeholders from across Canada participated in discussions on actions and best practices to encourage employees' literacy and essential skills development, and skills training/upgrading. A report of the findings of the symposium can be found [here](#).

Project Complete

## **Canadian Apprenticeship Forum (CAF)** *THE COSTS AND BENEFITS OF LITERACY AND ESSENTIAL SKILLS: IS THERE A BUSINESS CASE FOR EMPLOYERS IN THE TRADES?, 2013–2014*

The Canadian Apprenticeship Forum (CAF) conducted national employer surveys to investigate employer participation in essential skills training and the return on training investment. Employers who offered and did not offer essential skills training to their tradespeople participated. The employers represented a variety of regions, business sizes and trades. Overall, the findings support a business case for training. For every \$1 invested, employers received a median of \$3.08 in return. Even companies that made a larger investment (\$1,500 or more) still saw a return of \$1.50 for every \$1 invested.

Project Complete

## **Excellence in Manufacturing Consortium (EMC)** *WORKPLACE LITERACY AND ESSENTIAL SKILLS RESEARCH (WLESR), 2013–2015*

The Consortium investigated the business results and return on investment of literacy and essential skills training in the manufacturing sector, and the factors that contribute to effective training and positive return on investment. Findings suggest that essential skills programs can significantly improve participants' confidence, motivation and capability, particularly when they apply their learning at work and follow up with action plans.

# Snapshots of employer-focused projects

Project Complete

## Trucking Human Resource Sector Council – Atlantic

### *ESSENTIAL SKILLS AND SAFETY FOR THE TRUCKING INDUSTRY, 2013–2015*

Trucking Human Resource Sector Council – Atlantic conducted research to understand the impact of essential skills on safety, performance, and attitude towards work, and to build a case for businesses to invest in essential skills for professional truck drivers. The project examined reading, document use and numeracy, and found that a number of professional truck drivers had low essential skills. In total, 91 professional drivers representing 15 employers from 6 provinces participated in the project. Key findings from the study:

1. Drivers with lower essential skills felt more insecure in their ability to retain their jobs, had lower confidence in doing tasks associated with their jobs, and were less aware of safety issues;
2. Employers reported reduced productivity and higher safety costs for drivers who did not meet essential skills proficiency levels;
3. Most employers reported not offering essential skills training prior to this initiative but were prepared to provide training based on this research.

The study demonstrated that returns on training investment and improved driver performance were directly linked to essential skills upgrading. Improved essential skills also positively affected the drivers' attitude toward work. A toolkit was created for addressing essential skills needs in the trucking industry.

Project Complete

## Community Business Development Corporation (CBDC) Restigouche

### *LITERACY AND ESSENTIAL SKILLS AND BUSINESS PERFORMANCE OF ENTERPRISES, 2013–2018*

CBDC Restigouche conducted research examining the impact of investments in literacy and essential skills training and the success of small businesses in the manufacturing sector. They developed literacy and essential skills profiles of 560 employees in 22 businesses from across Canada, including in Official Language Minority Communities. The CBDC used the new international assessment tool, Education and Skills Online, linked to the OECD Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC). The organization also created a monitoring tool for use by small businesses in making decisions about investments in literacy and essential skills to improve their performance.

Project Complete

## Alberta Workforce Essential Skills Society (AWES)

### *SKILLING UP IN ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES: A SOCIAL FINANCE APPROACH, 2013–2018*

AWES developed an incentive-based social finance approach through which employers invested in literacy and essential skills training for workers. They partnered with three employers - Chapman's, THK Rhythm Automotive and Cosmetica Laboratories, engaged with 290 workers and examined the return on investment to both. Although there were challenges in recruiting employers due to investment risks, the Skilling Up model was able to successfully demonstrate skills gain measurably to employers for reimbursement purposes and one of those companies continues to provide ongoing training using this model even without the reimbursement.

## Snapshots of employer-focused projects

Project Active

### **ABC Life Literacy Canada**

*UP SKILLS FOR WORK: WORKPLACE ACTIVATION (2018–2019)*

ABC Life Literacy Canada's UP Skills for Work program prepared learners with soft skills for work through free, interactive workshops. The Workplace Activation project enhanced the program by embedding essential skills into the curriculum and expanding delivery to workplace settings. ABC Life Literacy Canada partnered with 15 employers in 5 provinces to pilot the new training to over 200 learners at work.

Project Active

### **LearnSphere Canada Inc.**

*BUILDING SKILLS AND SCOPE: EMPOWERING SMALL- AND MEDIUM-SIZED ENTERPRISES TO PARTICIPATE IN SUPPLY CHAIN OPPORTUNITIES, 2017–2020*

LearnSphere is developing a bilingual skills development program to improve the business management and competitive procurement practices of small and medium-sized enterprises in Atlantic Canada and British Columbia. LearnSphere is piloting the program, Supply Chain 1-2-3, with 195 small and medium-sized enterprises in the food and beverage and ocean technology and defence sectors. The program, along with bilingual materials related to its interactive learning modules, is fully customizable and ready for application in other sectors and regions.

Project Active

### **Community Business Development Corporation (CBDC) Restigouche**

*ONLINE JOB RELATED CUSTOMIZED (LITERACY AND ESSENTIAL SKILLS) TRAINING MODEL FOR THE MANUFACTURING SECTOR, 2017–2021*

CBDC Restigouche is developing an online Workplace Essential Skills Portal to support Canadian manufacturers. CBDC Restigouche designed the suite of customizable essential skills training components and tools to upskill the supply chain workforce and allow businesses to innovate and remain competitive. They expect to pilot the portal and training with 360 employees and 18 employers from New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, Quebec and Ontario.

Project Active

### **Literacy Coalition of New Brunswick**

*LITERACY AND ESSENTIAL SKILLS AT WORK IN RURAL COASTAL COMMUNITIES, 2018–2021*

The Literacy Coalition of New Brunswick is developing blended (online, classroom, and on-site) essential skills training to support employers in the fishing industry. Strengthening the attachment of low-income individuals to the labour market by improving their literacy and essential skills and providing job-related training will help to address workforce challenges in the industry, including vacancies, skill gaps, and an aging workforce. The Coalition will work with 12 employers to train a total of 48 managers/supervisors. The training will be piloted with 96 low-income, unemployed or underemployed job-seekers and provide paid placements to those who complete it.



## Snapshots of employer-focused projects

Project Active

### Food Processing Skills Canada (FPSC)

*SUCCEEDING AT WORK! EMPLOYABILITY AND ESSENTIAL SKILLS MODEL FOR JOBS IN THE FOOD MANUFACTURING SECTOR, 2017–2021*

FPSC is expanding on a successful literacy and essential skills training model to develop industry-wide training to increase and retain a pool of skilled candidates available to employers in the food manufacturing sector. FPSC is piloting the model with 540 learners in British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia.

Project Active

### Digital Nova Scotia (DNS) and Bluedrop

*SKILLS FOR HIRE: TESTING LEARNING INNOVATIONS TO ADDRESS SKILLS GAPS IN THE ICT SECTOR, 2019–2022*

DNS and Bluedrop are developing self-paced online training for Indigenous people, women, youth, immigrants, Official Language Minority Communities and other groups that are under-represented in the information and communications technology sector. The project will engage employers in Nova Scotia and in Newfoundland and Labrador to determine which essential skills their job vacancies demand and then offer training to employees and/or potential employees. DNS and Bluedrop will also develop a skills tracking tool to manage essential, workplace and technical skills attainment and validation, as well as a self-assessment tool for individuals. The project aims to increase training opportunities for employees and people who want to work in the information and communications technology sector.

Project Active

### Department of Workforce and Advanced Learning – Post-Secondary and Continuing Education

*GOVERNMENT OF PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND (PEI) WORKPLACE ESSENTIAL SKILLS CERTIFICATION, 2019–2023*

Prince Edward Island's (PEI) Department of Workforce and Advanced Learning, in partnership with Workplace Learning PEI, is developing workplace essential skills certification for individuals with low essential and employability skill levels. This project will help address the shortage of skilled workers in PEI by increasing employers' integration of literacy and essential skills education in the workplace, and by offering a reputable certification that employers recognize and trust.

## 8.7 Apprentices

### Numeracy skills will help construction electricians

- determine the correct placement of switch boxes using a tape measure
- estimate the time and materials required for a job
- calculate the average amount of power being used in a building
- use formulas to design or modify electrical installations.

### Literacy skills will help plumbers

- read health and safety notices
- read text to understand the science related to plumbing. Such as the properties of water, metals and alloys
- complete workplace accident reports.

### Employers are looking for

- good work ethic
- good literacy skills, including spelling, grammar and punctuation
- Strong soft skills, such as interpersonal skills and teamwork.

Trades play a crucial role in the Canadian economy, with one in five Canadians employed in the skilled trades and related occupations. However, projected retirements due to an aging population will lead to a significant loss of skills and experience in the trades, and increased demand for skilled tradespeople. This is in addition to new challenges stemming from increased use of technology and automation, requiring workers to have strong essential skills.

Apprenticeship is widely recognized as a proven approach to teaching the required skills to an industry standard through a combination of on-the-job and classroom technical training. Apprenticeship training and certification is an industry-driven system under provincial/territorial jurisdiction, but the Government of Canada has a role in ensuring an efficient supply of skilled, mobile and certified workers to support labour market needs.

Research has shown that low levels of essential skills and literacy continue to be a key barrier for some apprentices, who struggle with passing trade exams to become certified journeypersons. This is of greater concern among certain vulnerable populations, such as Indigenous people, people with disabilities and newcomers, among whom low levels of literacy and essential skills are more prevalent.

Most occupations require workers to have skills at level 3 out of 5 or higher in reading, writing and problem solving, as measured by the OECD's Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies. Evidence suggests that apprentices with skills at level 3 or above have a greater likelihood of completing technical training, resulting in greater returns on investments for businesses.



The Government of Canada makes significant investments in apprenticeship and the skilled trades through the Red Seal Program, which sets common standards to assess the skills of tradespeople across Canada. The Program is a partnership between the federal government and provinces and territories, which are responsible for apprenticeship training and trade certification in their jurisdictions. Industry is heavily involved in developing the national standard for each trade. These standards and examinations are used to issue Red Seal endorsements to tradespeople across Canada. Each trade's occupational standard now includes a section that describes how each of the essential skills is used in that trade.

- There are 56 Red Seal Trades
- 79% of all registered apprentices are in a Red Seal Trade

The Canadian economy stands to benefit as apprentices complete training and fill the skills gap in the trades. Increased awareness of the value of essential skills in apprenticeship has enabled provinces and territories to seek new ways of incorporating essential skills into their apprenticeship systems. OLES continues to support projects that demonstrate the value of integrating essential skills in apprenticeship training, as shown by the examples of past and current projects.



**The increase the use of in technology is changing the nature of jobs, and individuals need higher levels of skills to do their work or even remain in the same job.**

**“...apprenticeship training, both on-the-job and technical training, will demand a higher level of computer literacy than in the past as apprentices will be asked to find codes and regulations online and use smartphones, apps and tablets.”**

Canadian Apprenticeship Forum Report

## Apprentices

Elizabeth Fry Society of Greater Vancouver (EFry)

BRITISH COLUMBIA / 2008–2010  
(24 MONTHS)

SECTOR: TRADES

### Project Description

The Elizabeth Fry Society of Greater Vancouver (Efr) supports women, girls and children at risk, involved in or affected by the justice system.

Efr developed the first literacy and essential skills training program for criminalized women to achieve Level 1 roofing apprenticeship, which included a three-month practicum through the Roofing Contractors Association of British Columbia. The program included experiential learning that went beyond essential skills to include physical training and nutrition.

Upon completion, learners earned their inter-provincial Level 1 Roofing Apprenticeship certificate, which enabled them to continue and become fully qualified roofers within three years.

#### Essential skills targeted:



## Raising the Roof

### Literacy, Essential Skills and Work for Marginalized, Socially Excluded Women

#### KEY STEPS:

The close working relationship with the Roofing Contractors Association of British Columbia enabled practicums that paid nearly twice the minimum wage, and led to full-time employment. In addition, the women received Red Seal Level 1 certification and apprenticeship incentive grants. As project committee participants, organizations serving women provided key insights in developing the curriculum, refining it to meet the women's needs.

#### RESULTS:

Seven of 20 women in the first cycle and 5 of 21 women in the second cycle completed the program and obtained the roofing certificate. A follow-up of 20 women found they were all employed, with 11 in the roofing trades and the other 9 in other trades. An assessment of income gains attributable to training showed that pre-program total income was \$220,800 and post-program total income was \$377,800, an increase of 71.11%.

#### WHAT'S HAPPENED SINCE 2010?

*Other regions adopted Efr's training model. Efr in Quebec developed a trade-certified program with the Quebec culinary association to train culinary assistants. The Yukon Mining Association negotiated with the apprenticeship authority to fund a similar program.*

#### PILOT SITE:

British Columbia



#### Contact information:

Elizabeth Fry Society of Greater Vancouver (EFry) | Tel.: 604-520-1166  
Email: [info@elizabethfry.com](mailto:info@elizabethfry.com)  
402 E. Columbia Street,  
New Westminster, BC V3L 3X1

## Apprentices

### Canadian Apprenticeship Forum (CAF)

ONTARIO / 2010–2012  
(18 MONTHS)

SECTORS: TRADES AND  
APPRENTICESHIP

#### Project Description

The Canadian Apprenticeship Forum (CAF) evaluated the effectiveness of literacy and essential skills tools and resources developed by ESDC. The goal was to increase service providers' awareness of resources and build capacity to develop effective training for Indigenous learners interested in entering, or already in an apprenticeship program. The project established a working group with representation from Indigenous Skills and Employment Training Program agreement holders. The agreement holders guided project activities and hosted workshops across the country to gather feedback from First Nations, Inuit and Métis service providers.

#### Essential skills targeted:



# Promoting and Assessing Essential Skills Apprenticeship Tools within the Aboriginal Community

#### KEY STEPS:

The Canadian Apprenticeship Forum (CAF) used a consultative approach in designing and delivering the workshops, which ensured the right participants were involved. For balanced representation, Indigenous Skills and Employment Training Program agreement holders were selected, with regional representation, local partners, and a mix of urban and rural locations for all three Indigenous groups. Due to high demand, CAF hosted 29 workshops, exceeding the initial target of six.

#### RESULTS:

CAF developed a [guide](#) for service providers to integrate essential skills into apprenticeship training for Indigenous people. CAF facilitated cross-country workshops with over 400 participants. Through post-workshop evaluations, service providers reported an increased awareness and use of the resources.

#### Promising practices for evaluating essential skills:

- Assessment questions should use culturally relevant examples.
- Consider life experiences that enable Indigenous learners to develop essential skills, not just work experiences.
- Build on existing skill strengths and track work so learners can see improvements.
- Guide the learner when using the tools or providing training. Otherwise, the learner may become overwhelmed and discouraged.
- Any action plan should have achievable goals with a specific timeframe.

#### WHAT'S HAPPENED SINCE 2012?

CAF developed a [guide on integrating essential skills into apprenticeship](#), and prepared a [final report](#). Both are available on its website.

Following this project, workshop participants collaborated with CAF to hold two employer engagement forums on reserve First Nation communities.

#### OTHER RESOURCE:

- [final report](#)

#### Contact information:

Tel.: 613-235-400 | Email: [info@caf-fca.org](mailto:info@caf-fca.org)  
Suite 812 – 116 Albert St, Ottawa,  
ON K1P 5G3 | [caf-fca.org](http://caf-fca.org)

#### PILOT SITES:

New Brunswick,  
Quebec, Ontario,  
British Columbia,  
Yukon



## Apprentices

### Métis Nation British Columbia (MNBC)

BRITISH COLUMBIA / 2010–2012  
(24 MONTHS)

SECTORS: CARPENTRY  
AND CULINARY ARTS

#### Project Description

The Métis Nation British Columbia (MNBC) works to create opportunities for Métis communities by implementing culturally relevant social and economic programs and services. MNBC is a partner in the [Essential Skills for Aboriginal Futures program](#), and has contributed to the delivery of the program through client referral, marketing, employer recruitment, staff advising, and funding contributions.

To improve essential skills levels and completion rates of Métis learners, MNBC partnered with Douglas College to adapt an essential skills curriculum to be culturally relevant for Métis learners entering carpentry and culinary arts. Skills gain was measured by the Test of Workplace Essential Skills (TOWES), which was given before and after training. Project results were disseminated to Indigenous organizations across Canada.

#### Essential skills targeted:



## Essential Skills for Trade

#### KEY STEPS:

A key factor in the project's success was the culturally appropriate curriculum and the holistic and supportive focus in program delivery. This allowed practical opportunities for learners and monitoring of the learners' progress and challenges. One strong partnership led to the learners participating in the 2011 Canadian Conference in Vancouver. In addition, the strong partnership with the Métis community ensured the participation of Métis learners from remote communities and those disconnected from their families who would otherwise be unable to participate in Métis cultural ceremonies and practices.

#### RESULTS:

Métis learners increased their essential skills levels after participating in the training. Completion rates also improved and retention increased throughout the duration of the project. The learners who chose to pursue education in the culinary industry (Professional Cook Level 1) were all successful in completing the program, achieving some of the highest scores.

#### WHAT'S HAPPENED SINCE 2012?

The Stó:lo Nation in the Fraser Valley is delivering the [Stó:lo Aboriginal Skills Employment Training Culinary Arts Program](#), which is based on the Culinary Hospitality Opportunities Program (CHOP) developed by MNBC.

#### PILOT SITE:

British Columbia



#### Contact information:

Métis Nation of British Columbia  
mNBC.ca | Unit 107-5668  
192<sup>nd</sup> Street, Surrey, BC V3S 2V7  
Tel.: 604-557-585



## Apprentices

Workplace Learning PEI Inc.  
(WLPEI)

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND / 2018–2019  
(12 MONTHS)

SECTOR: CONSTRUCTION

### Project Description

Construction firms in PEI often have problems finding, attracting and retaining new hires, and new hires often lack essential skills required for positions. To address these skills gaps and to increase the skilled labour force in PEI, WLPEI, conducted a training needs analysis of the construction sector.

The project analyzed the supply and demand of essential skills, identified gaps and recommended a training model to address those gaps.

# A Training Needs Analysis

## Essential Skills for the Construction Sector on PEI

### KEY STEPS:

WLPEI conducted a literature scan followed by on-site interviews of about 1.5 to 2 hours with managers and owners of 30 construction companies across PEI. This approach ensured the findings reflected the concerns of the construction industry. The steering committee provided insight, guidance and support to the project's design, analysis and outcomes.

### RESULTS:

Companies reported that their most pressing issues were employee engagement, skill development, dealing with generational differences, recruitment and retention, and developing fully skilled, autonomous workers in a timely manner. Construction firms were largely unaware of the significant problems brought on by their employees lacking essential skills. Often, they also lack the capacity to train their employees in these skills. A structured mentoring program for apprentices was recommended, based on a model used by [BuildForce](#). This model would address issues of timing and relevance that can be a challenge with traditional training. The project is confirming that structured mentoring can address core issues in job-specific skills, engage youth and foster work ethic and development. Structured mentoring is expected to provide results for construction companies, particularly small ones. Final results will be available upon the project's completion.

### WHAT'S NEXT?

*WLPEI has been communicating with the construction industry to gauge their uptake of the project findings. WLPEI is also looking for opportunities to implement the structured mentoring model.*

#### ● Contact information:

Workplace Learning PEI Inc. (WLPEI) | Tel.: 902-368-6498  
40 Enman Crescent, Charlottetown, PE C1E 1E6 | [workplacelearningpei.com](http://workplacelearningpei.com)

#### Essential skills targeted:



## Apprentices

BuildForce Canada

ONTARIO / 2017–2021  
(48 MONTHS)

SECTOR: CONSTRUCTION

### Project Description

Mentorship is important for the development of the next generation of qualified journeypersons. It relies heavily on strong essential skills, particularly soft skills (video). Currently, there are inconsistencies and quality concerns with the delivery of mentorship. To address this, and increase apprenticeship completion rates in the construction sector, BuildForce, along with SkillPlan and the Social Research and Demonstration Corporation, is developing training that will integrate essential skills into existing mentorship structures. The goal is to improve mentorship quality and long-term skill development and productivity of apprentices and journeypersons, and ultimately organizational outcomes. The project evaluation will include an assessment of return on investment.

#### Essential skills targeted:



# Improving Productivity and Skills Development in the Construction Sector through Mentorship

## KEY STEPS:

BuildForce's strong partnerships with employers, labour groups, and industry associations allowed it to engage with a wide range of construction owners, contractors, labour providers and industry associations. BuildForce conducted an organizational needs assessment through which employers articulated the importance of cultivating a strong mentorship culture. The assessment identified business needs and skill gaps among apprentices and journeypersons and established a common language for communicating with workers and contractors. This led to buy-in and more businesses interested in participating. A wide variety of construction companies are involved, including commercial, institutional and industrial companies of all sizes. In-kind contributions from these companies are key to the program's success, since they enable apprentices and mentors to participate in on-the-job training.

## RESULTS:

BuildForce expects over 1,000 tradespeople to participate in the program and will prepare over 100 trainers to deliver the mentorship program across the country. Tools developed include mentee and mentor training guides, video clips on mentorship (e.g., [Mentorship Alliance](#)), and a Mentorship Advantage App (soon to be launched). Mentees, mentors and supervisors will use the mobile app to track training progress.

## WHAT'S NEXT?

Upon completion of this project, BuildForce expects employers to continue using the model in their organizations on a wider scale. Upon completion of the project, the app and other tools developed will continue to be available for a fee.

## PILOT SITES:

Newfoundland,  
New Brunswick,  
Quebec, Ontario,  
Manitoba, Saskatchewan,  
Alberta, British Columbia

## Contact information:

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## Six Training Elements for Mentoring



## Skills for Apprentices (Mentee/Mentoree)

Skill 1	Effective communication
Skill 2	Active listening
Skill 3	Asking questions
Skill 4	Receiving feedback
Skill 5	Proactive learning
Skill 6	Setting goals

## Apprentices

### Bow Valley College

ALBERTA / 2017–2021  
(48 MONTHS)

SECTOR: TRADES

#### Project Description

Bow Valley College is a leader in essential skills assessment, training, and research. In 2004-2005, the College and Northern Alberta Institute of Technology developed and tested a model to help first-year apprentices succeed in technical training by identifying skills gaps early in their program and providing essential skills training before proceeding to technical training.

Bow Valley College is building on this model by piloting the approach nationally and expanding it to an online open educational resource. The project will evaluate the returns on training investment. TOWES will be used to assess essential skills gain before and after training.

# Improving Reading and Document Use Skills to Improve Success Rates in Apprenticeship Training (Essential Skills for Apprentices)

#### KEY STEPS:

To create awareness of the project and generate stakeholder buy-in, Bow Valley College engaged with numerous stakeholders through national conferences. The College also delivered the instructor training at each pilot location instead of gathering all instructors from across the country for a one-day session, as had been planned. This approach ensured that more instructors participated in the training.

Identifying at-risk learners is usually challenging because of the difficulty in scheduling a long (2 to 3 hour) assessment at the beginning of the program. To address this, Bow Valley College created a screening test of 60 to 75 minutes.

#### EXPECTED RESULTS:

Bow Valley College will target 355 participants scoring below level 3 on TOWES for training registration, and will train instructors to deliver essential skills to pre-apprentices and apprentices.

#### WHAT'S NEXT?

After completion of the project, Bow Valley College will make available free of charge on its website the bilingual materials and tools developed.

#### PILOT SITES:

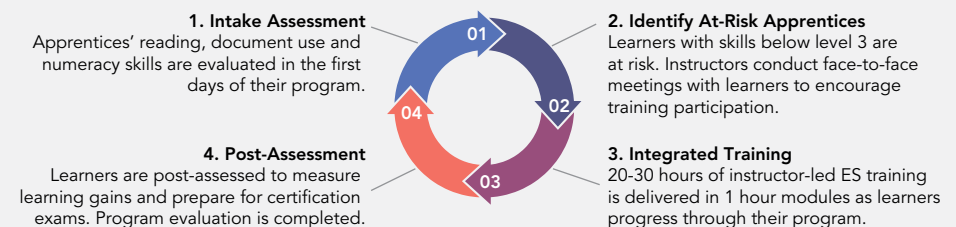
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### Integrated Essential Skills Model



#### Essential skills targeted:



#### Essential Skills



## Snapshots of projects focused on apprentices

Project Complete

### Wellington County Learning Centre

*COMPLETING YOUR APPRENTICESHIP: DEALING WITH BARRIERS, 2008–2009*

Wellington County Learning Centre developed online resources for navigating the apprenticeship system, including choosing a trade, identifying literacy and essential skills needed, and overcoming barriers to completing apprenticeship training in entry-level jobs in the service, construction, transportation and manufacturing sectors. Wellington County Learning Centre designed teaching tools for use by adult learners or by literacy programs or agencies. This project targeted low-skilled learners and helped them gain an understanding of the essential skills required for specific trades.

Project Complete

### Canadian Apprenticeship Forum (CAF)

*THE CAUSAL EFFECT OF LITERACY AND ESSENTIAL SKILLS ON LABOUR MARKET OUTCOMES FOR CANADIAN WORKERS, 2013–2015*

Using various methodologies and multiple data sources—the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies, the census and the National Graduate Survey—CAF created a statistical measure of the relationship between literacy/essential skills and labour market outcomes for Canadian workers (e.g. labour force participation, employment and hourly wages). The project paid particular attention to sub-groups, including journeypersons and Indigenous people, immigrants and people with disabilities. Evidence from this project demonstrated benefits of literacy/essential skills training on the earnings of workers and apprentices, and made a business case for investing in essential skills training.

Project Complete

### Frontier College

*LITERACY AND ESSENTIAL SKILLS FOR THE BUILDING TRADES, 2014–2017*

The project was carried out in partnership with Canada's Building Trades Unions. It aimed to address the low rates of apprenticeship completion in Canada by offering customized supports for essential skills-related barriers (literacy, numeracy, problem solving and test preparation). Participants included apprentices and union members, as well as individuals who wished to enter the trades or begin an apprenticeship but lacked foundational skills or academic credits. Frontier College conducted outreach across Canada to foster relationships with local unions, union-employer apprenticeship committees, trades employers, and community-based pre-trades programs. Project sites included Saskatoon, Regina, Toronto, and Iqaluit. This project yielded valuable insights on collaborating with union training centres to deliver essential skills training to members. Through this pilot project, 172 apprentices and pre-apprentices improved their essential skills, fulfilled their academic requirements for union membership and became better equipped to succeed in apprenticeship and trade exams.

# Snapshots of projects focused on apprentices

Project Complete

## Skills Canada

*ESSENTIAL SKILLS AWARENESS FOR SKILLED TRADES AND TECHNOLOGIES, 2014–2017*

Skills Canada conducted activities and developed materials to create awareness of the value of essential skills in skilled trades and technology careers. It targeted funding and project partners, stakeholders and employers to help address current and future labour market skills shortages. Resources that were developed included an [Essential Skills Mobile App](#) assessment tool for teachers and students, the [Essential Skills Work Ready Youth Program](#), and skills profiles for jobs in the trades. The organization drew attention to essential skills during the national Skills Canada Competition activities through forums, contests and tools.

Project Complete

## Industry Training Authority (ITA)

*ITA ESSENTIAL SKILLS WEBSITE REFRESH AND UPDATE, 2018*

ITA updated its essential skills website and tools to provide users with a clear understanding of essential skills results and the levels of competencies required for different trades. The update allows pre-apprentices and apprentices to better assess their essential skills gaps in relation to the trade they wish to undertake. Early assessment and intervention will help pre-apprentices and apprentices succeed in trades training.

Project Active

## Canadian Apprenticeship Forum (CAF)

*ENGAGING UNDERREPRESENTED GROUPS IN PRE-APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMS, 2019*

Essential skills upgrading is a key component of pre-apprenticeship programs because understanding basic principles and concepts, especially in math, facilitates further learning about advanced technical concepts. Earning the required safety certifications and gaining employability skills, including essential skills, means candidates are ready to work when they get a job. Almost a quarter of survey respondents suggested that more essential skills training should be embedded in pre-apprenticeship programs. CAF's report identifies many organizations across Canada that incorporate essential skills into their pre-apprenticeship programs. Essential skills training is identified as a program success factor for pre-apprenticeship, along with engaging local employers, assessing candidates, safety and hands-on training, and meaningful work placements. Pre-apprenticeship programs can lead to employment, apprenticeship and/or further skills development.

# Snapshots of projects focused on apprentices

Project Active

**Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour, Government of New Brunswick**

*VIRTUAL LEARNING STRATEGIST MODEL PILOT PROJECT, 2019-2023*

This project is testing a proven classroom-based Essential Skills Assessment (ESA) tool for apprentices through an online platform. It includes an ESA 5 assessment (which includes science questions) for the electrical family of trades and ESA 10 assessment for all the other trades. The online ESA would provide an alternative to the classroom-based exam, which is administered to a large group. It would increase accessibility to learners in rural and isolated communities, as well as mobile learners or those who perform better in a private setting. A virtual learning strategist model incorporated into the online platform is also being tested to help learners address essential skills barriers that are identified through the ESA assessment. Alternative supports are also included, such as online video appointments, screening for possible learning disabilities, psycho-educational assessment referrals, and arrangements for learning supports and exam accommodations. These supports are expected to expand the ESA's reach to apprentices interested in using learning supports to help them gain the skills required to achieve certification in a trade. Pilot locations include Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Labrador, Prince Edward Island, Yukon and Saskatchewan.



# 9 Looking Forward

This Playbook highlights initiatives undertaken by OLES-funded service providers, partners and other stakeholders over the past several years to test different approaches to improving the essential skills of Canadians for the workplace.

OLES will continue to focus on testing, replicating and scaling-up broad access to effective and innovative essential skills training, and supports for integrating essential skills into labour market programs delivered by service providers, partners and other stakeholders.

Promising practices will be rigorously challenged. For example, the milestones approach to measure participants' progress along the pathway to employment will be tested to determine whether performance payments lead to better results. OLES plans to test additional social innovation and social finance approaches as well.

OLES plans to improve communication with other levels of government, service delivery organizations, industry representatives and other key players to meet emerging needs, understand better how to sustain effective essential skills training over the long term and prepare for the next call for proposals. We will also need to work closely with partners and stakeholders on renewing the Essential Skills Framework, including incorporating soft skills, which have been shown to be good predictors of life success.



# 10 Acknowledgements

Thanks to our federal, provincial and territorial colleagues for their collaboration expertise, support and feedback.

We gratefully acknowledge the organizations featured in the Playbook:

*ABC Life Literacy Canada*

*Aboriginal Community Career Employment Services Society (ACCESS)*

*Actions interculturelles de développement et d'éducation (AIDE)*

*Actua*

*Alberta Workforce Essential Skills Society (AWES)*

*Association des collèges et universités de la francophonie canadienne (ACUFC)*

*Biotalent Canada*

*Bluedrop*

*Blueprint ADE*

*Bow Valley College*

*BuildForce Canada*

*Calgary Catholic Immigration Society (CCIS)*

*Canadian Career Development Foundation (CCDF)*

*Canadian Apprenticeship Forum (CAF)*

*Canada West Foundation*

*Centre for Education & Work*

*Centre for Skills Development*

*Classroom Connections*

*Coalition ontarienne de formation des adultes (COFA)*

*Colleges and Institutes Canada (CICan)*

*Community Business Development Corporation (CBDC) Restigouche*

*Community Economic Development and Employability Corporation (CEDEC)*

*Compétences/Skills R&D Inc.*

*Construction Foundation of BC*

*Dalhousie University*

*DataAngel*

*Decoda Literacy Solutions*

*Digital Nova Scotia*

*Directions Evidence and Policy Research Group*

*Douglas College*

*Elizabeth Fry Society of Greater Vancouver (Efry)*

*Environmental Careers Organizations of Canada (ECO Canada)*

*Excellence in Manufacturing Consortium (EMC)*

*Food Processing Skills Canada (FPSC)*

*Frontier College*

*Further Education Society of Alberta (FESA)*

*FutureWorx*

*Industry Training Authority (ITA)*

*Joint Economic Development Initiative (JEDI)*

*Kiikenomaga Kikenjigewen Employment & Training Services (KKETS)*

*LearnSphere Canada Inc.*

*Literacy Coalition of New Brunswick*

*Louis Riel Institute Adult Learning Centre*

*Métis Nation British Columbia (MNBC)*

*Mining Industry Human Resource Council (MiHR)*

*Native Education College*

*Niagara Peninsula Aboriginal Area Management (NPAAMB)*

*NorQuest College*

*Nunavut Literacy Council*

*NWT Literacy Council*

*Ottawa Chinese Community Service Centre (OCCSC)*

*Outside Looking In*

*Pathway To Possibilities (PTP)*

*Raising the Roof*

*Réseau pour le développement de l'alphabétisme et des compétences (RESDAC)*

*Saint John Learning Exchange*

*SkillPlan (BC Construction Industry Skills Improvement Council)*

*Skills Canada*

*Shareholder Association for Research and Education (SHARE)*

*Social Research Demonstration Corporation (SRDC)*

*Temiskaming Native Women's Support Group (TNWSG)*

*The Canadian Chamber of Commerce*

*Trucking Human Resource Sector Council – Atlantic*

*Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM)*

*University of Ottawa*

*Wellington County Learning Centre*

*Workplace Education Manitoba (WEM)*

*Workplace Learning PEI Inc.*

*Yellowhead Tribal College*

*YWCA Toronto*

# 11 Annex

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[epri.ca](http://epri.ca)
- **Yellowhead Tribal College**  
780-484-0303 / 1-877-982-3382  
10045-156 Street NW  
Edmonton, AB T5P 2P7  
[ytced.ab.ca](http://ytced.ab.ca)

## Industry Associations

- **Biotalent Canada**  
613-235-1402 / 1-866-243-2472  
[operations@biotalent.ca](mailto:operations@biotalent.ca)  
130 Slater Street, Suite 650  
Ottawa, ON K1P 6E2  
[biotalent.ca](http://biotalent.ca)
- **BuildForce Canada**  
613-569-5552  
[info@buildforce.ca](mailto:info@buildforce.ca)  
220 Laurier Avenue W, Suite 1150  
Ottawa, ON K1P 5Z9  
[buildforce.ca](http://buildforce.ca)
- **Canadian Apprenticeship Forum (CAF)**  
613-235-4004  
[info@caf-fca.org](mailto:info@caf-fca.org)  
2197 Riverside Drive, Suite 404  
Ottawa, ON K1H 7X3  
[caf-fca.org](http://caf-fca.org)
- **Community Business Development Corporation (CBDC) Restigouche**  
506-753-3344  
41 Water Street  
Campbellton, NB E3N 1A6  
[restigouchecbdc.ca](http://restigouchecbdc.ca)
- **Construction Foundation of BC**  
250-220-5861  
[info@constructionfoundation.ca](mailto:info@constructionfoundation.ca)  
963 Langford Parkway, Suite 215  
Victoria, BC V9B 0A5  
[constructionfoundation.ca](http://constructionfoundation.ca)
- **Environmental Careers Organizations of Canada (ECO Canada)**  
1-800-890-1924  
[info@eco.ca](mailto:info@eco.ca)  
105 12 Avenue SE, Suite 400  
Calgary, AB T2G 1A1  
[eco.ca](http://eco.ca)
- **Excellence in Manufacturing Consortium (EMC)**  
519-376-0470 / 1-866-323-4362  
[info@emccanada.org](mailto:info@emccanada.org)  
Box 396  
Owen Sound Ontario N4K 5P7  
[emccanada.org](http://emccanada.org)
- **Mining Industry Human Resource Council (MiHR)**  
613-270-9696  
[info@mihr.ca](mailto:info@mihr.ca)  
50 Frank Nighbor Place, Unit 105  
Ottawa, ON K2V 1B9  
[mihr.ca](http://mihr.ca)
- **The Canadian Chamber of Commerce**  
613-238-4000  
[info@chamber.ca](mailto:info@chamber.ca)  
275 Slater Street, Ottawa, ON K1P 5H9  
[chamber.ca](http://chamber.ca)
- **Food Processing Skills Canada (FPSC)**  
613-237-7988 / 1-877-963-7472  
[info@fpssc-ctac.com](mailto:info@fpssc-ctac.com)  
3030 Conroy Road, Suite 201  
Ottawa, ON K1G 6C2  
[fpssc-ctac.com](http://fpssc-ctac.com)
- **Trucking Human Resource Sector Council – Atlantic**  
902-893-8410 / 1-877-858-1908  
[info@thrsc.com](mailto:info@thrsc.com)  
14 Court Street, Suite 301  
Truro, NS B2N 3H7  
[thrsc.com](http://thrsc.com)

## Research, Evaluation, and Consultant Groups

- **Blueprint ADE**  
647-956-1408  
[info@blueprint-ade.ca](mailto:info@blueprint-ade.ca)  
180 Bloor Street West, Suite 903  
Toronto ON M5S 2V6  
[blueprint-ade.ca](http://blueprint-ade.ca)
- **Canada West Foundation**  
403-264-9535  
134–11 Avenue SE, Suite 110  
Calgary, AB T2G 0X5  
[cwf.ca](http://cwf.ca)
- **Compétences/Skills R&D Inc.**  
514-288-7139  
1 McGill Street, Suite 207  
Montreal, QC H2Y 4A3  
[competencesrd.com](http://competencesrd.com)
- **DataAngel**  
613-240-8433  
Ottawa, ON  
[dataangel@mac.com](mailto:dataangel@mac.com)  
[dataangel.ca](http://dataangel.ca)
- **Directions Evidence and Policy Research Group**  
604-569-1471  
[info@directions-eprg.ca](mailto:info@directions-eprg.ca)  
470 Granville Street, Suite 220  
Vancouver, BC V6C 1V5  
[directions-eprg.ca](http://directions-eprg.ca)
- **Shareholder Association for Research and Education (SHARE)**  
604-408-2456  
1155 Robson Street, Suite 510  
Vancouver, BC V6E 1B5  
[share.ca](http://share.ca)
- **Social Research Demonstration Corporation (SRDC)**  
613-237-4311  
55 Murray St., Suite 400  
Ottawa, ON K1N 5M3  
[srdc.org](http://srdc.org)



## Provincial and Territorial Governmental Departments

- **Government of Alberta**  
**Ministry of Advanced Education**  
310-0000 (Alberta only) / 780-427-2711  
(Outside Alberta)  
[www.alberta.ca/ministry-advanced-education.aspx](http://www.alberta.ca/ministry-advanced-education.aspx)
- **Government of British Columbia**  
**Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills & Training**  
250 356-5170  
[gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/organizational-structure/ministries-organizations/ministries/advanced-education-skills-training](http://gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/organizational-structure/ministries-organizations/ministries/advanced-education-skills-training)  
**Ministry of Social Development & Poverty Reduction**  
1-866-866-0800  
[AEST.GeneralInquiries@gov.bc.ca](mailto:AEST.GeneralInquiries@gov.bc.ca)  
[gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/organizational-structure/ministries-organizations/ministries/social-development-poverty-reduction](http://gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/organizational-structure/ministries-organizations/ministries/social-development-poverty-reduction)
- **Government of Manitoba**  
**Department of Education and Training**  
204-945-3744 / 1-866-626-4862  
[mgi@gov.mb.ca](mailto:mgi@gov.mb.ca)  
[www.edu.gov.mb.ca](http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca)
- **Government of New Brunswick**  
**Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour**  
506-453-2597  
[dpetlinfo@gnb.ca](mailto:dpetlinfo@gnb.ca)  
Chestnut Complex  
P. O. Box 6000  
Fredericton, NB E3B 5H1  
[www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/departments/post-secondary\\_education\\_training\\_and\\_labour.html](http://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/departments/post-secondary_education_training_and_labour.html)
- **Government of Newfoundland and Labrador**  
**Department of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour**  
709-729-2480  
[AESL@gov.nl.ca](mailto:AESL@gov.nl.ca)  
3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, West Block  
Confederation Building  
P.O. Box 8700  
St. John's, NL A1B 4J6  
[aesl.gov.nl.ca](http://aesl.gov.nl.ca)
- **Government of Nova Scotia**  
**Department of Labour and Advanced Education**  
902-424-5301 / 1-844-424-5301  
[novascotia.ca/lae/contact](http://novascotia.ca/lae/contact)  
P.O. Box 697  
1505 Barrington Street  
Halifax, Nova Scotia B3J 2T8  
[novascotia.ca/lae](http://novascotia.ca/lae)
- **Government of Northwest Territories**  
**Department of Education, Culture and Employment**  
<https://www.ece.gov.nt.ca/en>  
[www.ece.gov.nt.ca/en/ece-service-centres](http://www.ece.gov.nt.ca/en/ece-service-centres)
- **Government of Nunavut**  
**Department of Family Services**  
There are three regional Career Development offices ready to assist you:  
Kitikmeot – 1-800-661-0845  
Kivalliq – 1-800-953-8516  
Qikiqtani – 1-800-567-1514  
[info@gov.nu.ca](mailto:info@gov.nu.ca)  
[gov.nu.ca/familyservices](http://gov.nu.ca/familyservices)
- **Government of Ontario**  
**Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities**  
416-325-2929 / 1-800-387-5514  
[ontario.ca/feedback/contact-us?id=7477&nid=72702](http://ontario.ca/feedback/contact-us?id=7477&nid=72702)  
14<sup>th</sup> Floor, Mowat Block  
900 Bay Street  
Toronto, Ontario M7A 1L2  
[ontario.ca/page/ministry-training-colleges-universities](http://ontario.ca/page/ministry-training-colleges-universities)
- **Government of Prince Edward Island**  
**Department of Workforce and Advanced Learning**  
902-368-6290  
[wal@gov.pe.ca](mailto:wal@gov.pe.ca)  
3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, Shaw Building  
105 Rochford Street  
P.O. Box 2000  
Charlottetown, PE C1A 7N8  
[princeedwardisland.ca/en/topic/workforce-and-advanced-learning](http://princeedwardisland.ca/en/topic/workforce-and-advanced-learning)
- **Government of Saskatchewan**  
**Ministry of Immigration and Career Training**  
[saskatchewan.ca/contact-us](http://saskatchewan.ca/contact-us)  
1000–2103 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Regina, SK S4P 3Z8  
[saskatchewan.ca/government/government-structure/ministries/immigration-and-career-training](http://saskatchewan.ca/government/government-structure/ministries/immigration-and-career-training)
- **Government of Yukon**  
**Department of Education**  
867-667-5141 /  
1-800-661-0408, local 5141  
[contact.education@gov.yk.ca](mailto:contact.education@gov.yk.ca)  
P.O. Box 2703  
Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 2C6  
[education.gov.yk.ca](http://education.gov.yk.ca)

## END NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Essential skills profiles: <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/essential-skills/profiles.html>
- <sup>2</sup> Job Bank: <https://www.jobbank.gc.ca/essentialskills>
- <sup>3</sup> Source: <https://brookfieldinstitute.ca/work-stream/skills-for-an-innovation-driven-economy/>
- <sup>4</sup> <https://www.oecd.org/g20/topics/employment-and-social-policy/Enhancing-Employability-G20-Report-2016.pdf>
- <sup>5</sup> <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/171025/dq171025a-eng.htm>
- <sup>6</sup> <http://www.cmec.ca/Publications/Lists/Publications/Attachments/315/Canadian-PIAAC-Report.EN.pdf>
- <sup>7</sup> <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/9789264300477-6-en/index.html?itemId=/content/component/9789264300477-6-en>
- <sup>8</sup> <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-627-m/11-627-m2017028-eng.htm>
- <sup>9</sup> <https://www.cmec.ca/Publications/Lists/Publications/Attachments/375/PIAAC%202012%20Immigrants%20Canada%20Final%20EN.pdf>
- <sup>10</sup> <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/dt-td/Rp-eng.cfm?LANG=E&APATH=3&DETAIL=0&DIM=0&FL=A&FREE=0&GC=0&GID=0&GK=0&GRP=1&PID=109525&PRID=0&PTYPE=109445&S=0&SHOWALL=0&SUB=0&Temporal=2016&THEME=115&VID=0&VNAMEE=&VNAMEF=>
- <sup>11</sup> RBC, Office of the CEO, 2018. Humans wanted: How Canadian youth can thrive in the age of disruption, pg. 3 [https://www.rbc.com/dms/enterprise/futurelaunch/\\_assets-custom/pdf/RBC-Future-Skills-Report-FINAL-Singles.pdf](https://www.rbc.com/dms/enterprise/futurelaunch/_assets-custom/pdf/RBC-Future-Skills-Report-FINAL-Singles.pdf)
- <sup>12</sup> Ibid., pg.7.
- <sup>13</sup> Manpower Group, Solving the Talent Shortage Build, Buy, Borrow and Bridge, pg. 4. [https://go.manpowergroup.com/hubfs/TalentShortage%202018%20\(Global\)%20Assets/PDFs/MG\\_TalentShortage2018\\_lo%206\\_25\\_18\\_FINAL.pdf](https://go.manpowergroup.com/hubfs/TalentShortage%202018%20(Global)%20Assets/PDFs/MG_TalentShortage2018_lo%206_25_18_FINAL.pdf)
- <sup>14</sup> <http://www.piaac.ca/>
- <sup>15</sup> [https://www.conferenceboard.ca/press/speech\\_oped/14-05-12/Employers\\_Must\\_Start\\_Investing\\_in\\_Skills\\_Training\\_or\\_Risk\\_Having\\_Public\\_Policy\\_Nudge\\_Them\\_Along.aspx?AspxAutoDetectCookieSupport=1](https://www.conferenceboard.ca/press/speech_oped/14-05-12/Employers_Must_Start_Investing_in_Skills_Training_or_Risk_Having_Public_Policy_Nudge_Them_Along.aspx?AspxAutoDetectCookieSupport=1)