Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters

Ontario

Canada

Business Results Through Essential Skills and Literacy

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Sincerely,

Ian Howcroft

Ian T. Howcroft
Vice President, Ontario Division
Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters

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"An investment in knowledge always pays the best interest."

– Benjamin Franklin

WHO SHOULD READ THIS GUIDEBOOK?

You should read this guidebook if you are:

- A manager or supervisor of employees
- Involved in human resource issues, (including recruitment, retention, training & development, diversity or other talent-related programs) for your organization
- Responsible for or involved in strategic planning for your organization
- Acting in a decision-making capacity

This Guidebook can provide you with context and practical information as you meet the current challenges in your industry/sector, and make choices that could affect the ongoing vitality of your organization.

Specifically, this Guidebook is intended to support those who are considering the examination of, and possible investment in, the skill sets of their workforce. It is designed to:

- Provide a clear picture of what "literacy" and "essential skills" mean and explain where we stand in Canada and in Canadian workplaces with respect to literacy and essential skills
- Raise awareness of the potential for employee essential skills issues to affect your organization's productivity and ability to change and adapt
- Help decision-makers in your organization identify the business benefits and understand why addressing and improving employee essential skills can lead to shareholder value, improved operations, and better bottom line results
- Allow you to evaluate where your organization is now
- Provide guidance and tools to help your organization conduct internal assessments to identify current essential skill levels and needed improvements
- Assist your organization in developing action plans to help and encourage employees to improve their essential skill levels in a way that improves business results

WHY TALK ABOUT LITERACY AND ESSENTIAL SKILLS IN THE WORKPLACE?

Talking about literacy and essential skills in the workplace helps to inform businesses about ***the competitive advantage of an appropriately skilled and flexible wordforce.***

What do we mean by "literacy" and "essential skills?"

Literacy and essential skills are terms often used to describe a set of skills that include:

- Using documents
- Using computers
- Working in teams
- Writing prose
- Oral communications
- Reading
- Thinking skills (including: problem-solving, decision-making and significant memory use)
- Continuous learning
- Numeracy

Obviously, having these skills is a benefit to the worker and the business. Having and keeping these skills at levels needed to adjust to changes in the workplace is an even bigger benefit.

So, when we say "literacy", we're not talking about whether or not an individual can read. We're talking about a complex mix of skills that an individual can use at work, at home or in the community; skills that generally require maintenance and upgrading over the course of a career – and a lifetime.

So what? Why think about these skills in the workplace?

It's clear that the world has quickly shifted towards an information-based, industrialized economy. Recent changes have put pressure on Canadian manufacturers as they contend with competition from other regions. As this edition is prepared, the situation is exacerbated by significant economic challenges.

These changes are threatening the success and, in some cases, the very survival of Canadian manufacturers. We must develop – and sustain - the ability to thrive in the very tough markets of the 21st century.

Canadian business is in a race with other countries to:

- Maintain and improve international competitiveness
- Retain and increase markets at home and abroad

The skills and productivity of our employees are key factors in our ability to compete. Employees today are expected to play broader, more responsible and self-directed roles than ever before in the production system. To do this, they need new and more varied skills than was considered necessary in the past.

Employees must be able to:

- Understand written materials
- Complete reports
- Have a good grasp of math
- Operate equipment
- Operate computers
- Have good logical abilities
- Have good problem-solving abilities
- Communicate with fellow team members

Whether in traditional or high-tech sectors, those organizations that continually develop new and innovative products, find new markets and improve production and delivery will not only survive but will also prosper and grow.

> *"In an innovation-based economy, there is a need for continued investment in the up-skilling and re-skilling of the workforce. This will increasingly be a competitive requirement for all parts of the manufacturing sector, from traditional activities … to leading-edge processes…"* [1]

It is clear that decision-makers must make the best "spend" possible when striving for competitive advantage. Most businesses are profit-driven and only have time and resources to concentrate on initiatives that affect their bottom line. Work-related learning has historically stood in line behind infrastructure, technology and other significant investments – but only because the return on education and training, particularly in literacy and essential skills, is poorly understood.

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[1] Adapted from *The Future of Manufacturing In Ireland: The Role of Partnership* Conference summary, 2007. National Centre for Partnership Performance

Because the results have been difficult to capture quantitatively, it has been up to the "wizards", those managers and executives with the vision to see less-tangible benefits, to create the opportunity and environment for this transformational training.

But it has become increasingly obvious that all employers and other organizational decision-makers, not just the wizards but the warriors as well, will have to re-examine the skills they expect of their workforce. Research indicates that there has been a dramatic drop in the nmber of skilled workers in Canada over the past decade. With smaller talent pools to draw from, it becomes significantly less viable to simply attempt to hire the perfect skill set. Instead, hiring for attitude or experience, and then training for additional skill or higher skill levels appears to result in a more loyal workforce with better retention levels.

GUIDEBOOK FORMAT

The Guidebook is divided into two main sections. The first part, *Literacy & Essential Skills in Business*, gives you the background and facts on literacy and essential skills, particularly in the workplace, to get you situated.

The second part, *A Workplace Literacy/Essential Skills Program Workbook* is, as the name suggests, the workbook section. This provides discussion stimuli and tools, like checklists, templates and worksheets, to help you:

- Develop your business case
- Get support and buy-in
- Plan and organize a workplace literacy program
- Implement and evaluate results.

You will also find appendices, which include supplemental and supporting data and information, guidelines, sources, and resources and references.

IMPLEMENTING A LITERACY & ESSENTIAL SKILLS PROGRAM: PROCESS OVERVIEW

**Your Business Case:
Assessing Your Situation and Identifying
Opportunities**

Identifying Signs of Literacy Issues

Raising Awareness

Evaluating Current and Future Skill Needs

Business Results from ES Development

Benefits to Business

- Productivity, quality, safety
- Business flexibility
- Employee relations
- Capacity for continuous improvement
- Ability to *introduce change*

Benefits to Employees

- Improved communication skills
- Better job/promotion prospects
- Enhanced self-esteem, confidence

**Developing Your Business Case for
Essential Skill Development**

Collecting Information

Assembling Information

Implementation

Gaining Employee Participation

Program Administration

Assessing Progress

Celebrating Program Achievements

Continuous Improvement

Planning and Organizing

ES Training & Workplace Skills Development

Learning from Others

Company Policies

Workplace Team

Workplace Needs Assessment

Implementation Plan

PART I - LITERACY AND ESSENTIAL SKILLS IN BUSINESS

About Literacy & Essential Skills: A PRIMER

What do we mean by "Literacy" and "Essential Skills"?

Literacy used to be defined as "the ability to read and write" (as opposed to "illiteracy"). Now, we recognize that literacy is a more complicated skill; or, rather, part of a set of skills, often called "basic" or "essential" skills (see sidebar). In this Guidebook, we use these terms interchangeably.

The Results[2]

Even among people who are employed in Canada, more than one person out of every three has difficulty meeting daily reading and quantitative numeracy requirements.

An individual's literacy level has a profound effect on their workplace competence and confidence (see sidebar).

A person who reads at the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) Levels 3, 4, or 5 can handle normal day-to-day requirements. A person who is at Levels 1 or 2 will have difficulty meeting daily requirements in a complex society such as Canada's.

You can also see Canada's international literacy standings in Appendix B – Dimensions of Literacy..

Literacy, essential or basic skills may include:

• **Reading** (also called "prose literacy"): understanding materials written in sentences or paragraphs (e.g. manuals, news stories)

• **Document Use:** locating, using and understanding labels, graphs, signs, job applications, payroll forms, maps, tables and other similar materials

• **Numeracy** (also called "quantitative literacy"): using and understanding numbers, applying arithmetic operations to numbers embedded in printed materials, such as completing an order form, determining the amount of interest on a loan from an advertisement

• **Writing:** writing text or typing on a computer

• **Oral communication:** using speech to share thoughts and information

• **Working with others:** interacting with others to complete tasks

• **Thinking:** reviewing information to make decisions; problem-solving; defining and planning job tasks; significant use of memory

• **Computer use:** using computers and other technical tools (e.g. fax machine)

• **Continuous learning:** participating in an ongoing process of gaining skills and knowledge (e.g. workplace training)

(For a more complete discussion on literacy & essential terminology, see Appendix A - Context for Literacy).

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[2]More information on IALS results can be found at http://www.nald.ca/nls/ials/introduc.htm

Canada's IALS Results

By Age Group

There is a particular decline in literacy levels above age 45. One factor may be that the levels of education are lower in older persons compared with younger. It is also thought that there is a "use it or lose it" factor in literacy. (also see Appendix B - *Dimensions of Literacy*)

By Industry Sector

The average literacy levels of people employed in the Construction, Transport and Manufacturing sectors are significantly lower than those employed in Financial or Personal services. They also rank below Trade and Agriculture. (see Appendix B - *Dimensions of Literacy* for graph).

By Education Levels

Very few adults who have completed Grade 8 or less have adequate literacy ability. Less than 40% of adults who have some secondary school education, but who have not graduated, have adequate literacy levels. Even some college and university graduates lack adequate literacy skills. (see Appendix B - *Dimensions of Literacy* for graph).

The Link to Immigration

The Canadian demographic is constantly changing. Over the last 10 years there has been another large influx of new immigrants to Canada. Research from 2006 indicates that 50% of permanent residents are

How Low Literacy Levels Play Out

In most cases, people with low literacy levels can read words and sentences. However, they may not understand what they are reading, or how to use the information in their daily life.

People with low literacy levels develop coping skills. They can be very adept at hiding their literacy shortcomings. For example, they may always use cash in order to avoid dealing with cheques. They may have trusted friends who will protect and cover for them. They may avoid activities where reading is needed, or claim to have forgotten their glasses.

People with low literacy levels may be good performers in their current jobs. They have learned their jobs by example and instinct, and through experience. However, they are likely to be slower to respond to new developments and change. They will have difficulty with situations requiring reading skills, such as training exercises, problem solving, computer skills, using charts and graphs and so on.

living in Ontario.[3]

It is difficult to determine literacy levels in new immigrants with respect to the newly hired. However, literacy levels of workforces are becoming clearer as companies invest in employee training.

Part of the problem, of course, can be attributed to those new immigrants to Canada for whom English (or French, in the case of Quebec) is a second language. Citizenship and Immigration Canada recently noted that 47% of new immigrants speak neither English nor French. Employers in areas with a major immigrant population are well aware of the challenges of adding people into the workplace who do not understand the language. However, our future success depends on rapid and effective integration, so that all employees have the skills to maximize their contribution to their organization.

New immigrants often find it difficult to meet the workplace expectations of 1) having pre-existing knowledge of the vocational language, 2) being able to read instructions and 3) produce the language of work within finite timelines. Without a solid understanding in their first language, literacy and essential skills in their second language can be extremely difficult. As with other adults struggling with literacy/essential skills issues, shame and a sense of inadequacy can inhibit self-identification. (See Appendix B - *Dimensions of Literacy* for a more complete discussion of this issue.)

[3]Facts and Figures 2006 Immigration Overview: Permanent Residents.
http://www.clc.gc.ca/english/resources/statistics/facts2006/permanent/17.asp

The Link to Learning Disabilities

A learning disability can be defined as a disorder that affects people's ability to either interpret what they see and hear, or to link information from different parts of the brain. Although the individual with a learning disability often has an average or above-average IQ, the disability becomes evident in academic, work and social situations. Learning disabilities may be divided into five categories:

"The number of Canadians aged 15 and over with learning disabilities rose by almost 40% to an estimated 631,000 in 2006." [5]

- **Visual problems:** poor visual memory, reversals in writing
- **Auditory problems:** poor auditory memory, speech problems
- **Motor problems:** Poor hand-eye coordination
- **Organizational problems:** poor ability in organizing time or space
- **Conceptual problems:** poor social skills and peer relations, difficulty correctly interpreting non-verbal language.[4]

While it is difficult to determine an accurate percentage of literacy/essential skills issues attributed to learning disabilities, recent surveys have shown that there is often a direct correlation between the two. A fact sheet published by Movement for Canada Literacy states that "..learning disabilities affect 10% of all Canadians. More than 80% of these experience difficulty in learning to read."[4]

Learning disabilities need not prevent an individual from leading a productive and happy life. Individuals with learning disabilities can be found in all facets of business, including the manufacturing industry.

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[4] Movement for Canadian Literacy. Factsheet #7 *Literacy and Learning Disabilities* http://www.literacy.ca/themes/md/PDF/litforlife/learndis.pdf
[5] Participation and Activity Limitation Survey, 2006

"But *we* don't have a literacy issue"...

Literacy is normally seen as a "given" for most adults in our society—few adults in Canada are unable to read at all. But there's a serious question as to whether most adults can read well enough to give the correct answers on test items that represent the range of difficulty found in tasks that they encounter in their daily lives. The ability to carefully and critically read printed materials while looking for key pieces of information is an essential skill.[6]

It can sometimes be difficult to recognize a workplace with low literacy/essential skill levels. People develop remarkable coping skills, and often acquire the means to carry out their current jobs.

However, they have difficulty in adapting to new or changing conditions. They have difficulty growing in their jobs. They are more likely to resist change and less likely to be able to cope with change. Many of these people are valued employees with good skills in their current jobs, yet they are ill-prepared for the future.

In fact, some experts suggest that we ALL could be defined as having one or more literacy/essential skills issues. For some of us, it's balancing a chequebook; for others, missing key details when we read a report or manual. It's often simply a matter of degree.

At any rate, there's little question that creating opportunities for employees to improve these essential skills can be of benefit to everyone in the organization.

Signs of Essential Skills Issues[7]

- Job instructions are not understood

- Workers taking a day off when training is scheduled or "failing" external training

- A high level of dependence on supervisors, team leaders or workplace translators

- Product errors or product recall because calculations are not done properly or procedures are not followed correctly

- ISO documentation not understood

- High levels of absenteeism

- Poor records of compliance with health and safety requirements

- People not taking promotion opportunities

- High staff turnover

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[6]*Literacy Utilization in Canadian Workplaces*, Harvey Krahn and Graham S. Lowe, Statistics Canada August 1998
[7]Adapted from *Everybody's Business: A Guide for Employers Implementing Literacy, English Language and Numeracy Training in the Workplace*, 1988

THE ROLE OF LITERACY/ESSENTIAL SKILLS IN THE SUCCESSFUL CANADIAN BUSINESS

"The Canadian industrial community is at a crossroads—it must continually improve its competitiveness or face extinction. While many Canadian businesses are world leaders, Canada's industrial performance as a whole lags behind that of our competitors in developing and commercializing new products, processes, skills, and technologies.

Innovation is critical to sustaining business competitiveness and in improving productivity. Improving innovation in Canada is both complex and fundamental to the quality of life for all Canadians. It is the foundation of our economic growth and jobs for our future."

- The Business Case for Innovation – Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters

"In 1917, Forbes created its first list of the 100 largest companies in the U.S. Seventy years later, in 1987, Forbes republished its original list, and compared the 1987 list to the 1917 list of top 100 companies. Sixty-one of the companies had ceased to exist altogether. Only 39 companies survived the 70-year period from 1917 to 1987. Only 18 companies had managed to stay in the top 100. But that's not the most telling part of the story. What's incredible is to look at what's happened in the 13 years since 1987—when the rate of innovation and technological change has accelerated so dramatically. In the 13 years between 1987 and 2000, the company turnover rate on the Forbes list increased nearly five-fold. Only 39 of the top 100 companies in 1987 were in the list in 2000.

In other words, it was five times harder to stay on the top 100 list in the 13 years between 1987 and 2000 than in the 70 years between 1917 and 1987. Five times harder to stay on top, to stay among the best, to continue to be a great company.

The velocity and volatility of change required even more robust strategies, choices, and priorities; even better execution and operational excellence; and even better leadership than at any other time in the history of private enterprise."

- A.G. Lafley, President and Chief Executive, Procter & Gamble Company

The Role of Employee Skills

As customer expectations, technologies, and business processes change, employee skills, knowledge, wisdom, and expertise become the most valuable assets for businesses. Employee capabilities and motivation are major factors in productivity and innovation.

In most workplaces, job requirements are steadily increasing. Many job functions now require a higher level of literacy and essential skills, such as:

- Computer skills
- Working with automated equipment
- Operating complex equipment
- Meeting safety requirements
- Keeping records
- Understanding training
- Understanding manuals and written instructions
- Problem-solving skills

How Companies are Responding to the Literacy and Essential Skills Challenge

Leading companies expect to maximize the performance and contributions of all employees. Employees who were hired years ago for their physical abilities are now expected to use their minds as well, or instead. Building multiple skills, handing over supervisory tasks to employees and expecting more from individual employees expands the capacity of an organization.

In the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters (CME)'s *2007–2008 Annual Management Issues Survey*, 47% of members reported that skilled labour is either a highly important or a critically important issue.

Respondents in the Survey identified a number of workforce skills in need of improvement which are part of the essential skills set. The top three are becoming more of an issue, identified by a higher percentage of companies than in last year's survey.

Workforce Skills Needing Improvement:

Problem solving (38%)

Technical skills (35%)

Teamwork (24%)

Basic employability (26%)

Verbal communication (27%)

Learning, flexibility (19%)

Reading/writing (16%)

Read, translate technical drawings (15%)

Computer (13%)

Math (10%)

Companies innovate by upgrading skills, developing new knowledge and building the experience of their employees and business partners. As companies focus on problem-solving and custom solutions, they become learning organizations, where new forms of knowledge are key to driving competitive success. Clearly, literacy and essential skills are the foundation upon which these other skills are built.

A Commitment to Lifelong Learning

It has become a cliché that people are the key to organizational and individual achievement.

Most Canadians believe that training is critical to the continued success of their organizations. At the same time, many Canadian workers feel they are not getting enough training to enable them to meet the challenges of technological and competitive change. They would like to see business play a more central role in providing that training.

Unfortunately, that is not happening. CME's *Management Issues Survey* points out that 34% of Canadian companies spend 1% or less of payroll budget on education and skills development.

If business wants to be able to attract and retain informed, dedicated and effective workers, it must invest in a vision of learning as a lifelong commitment; an important part of continual growth from early childhood through productive employment and retirement.

The success of this vision depends on an effective partnership of students, educators, literacy and essential skills organizations, government, and the business community. There is also a need to ensure that training opportunities are ongoing.

There is a need for business to develop leadership, trust and a set of goals that employees can commit to, join in and help achieve.

THE BUSINESS BENEFITS OF IMPROVING LITERACY AND ESSENTIAL SKILLS

Both employers and employees are concerned about the ability of today's workforce to take on new and more complicated assignments. Poor literacy and essential skills levels are barriers to making the changes and improvements needed to compete in today's world.

Improving the literacy and essential skills levels of employees will …

…improve productivity, quality and safety

- Employees will be better able to understand and make use of training,
- There will be fewer mistakes caused by employees not understanding instructions—reducing the need to scrap and rework.
- There will be reduced accidents and injuries because of improved understanding and communications.
- It will be possible to delegate higher levels of tasks.
- Communication will be better understood and acted on more effectively.
- Employees will be better able to problem solve.
- The need for "crutches" (such as the use of an interpreter) will be reduced, giving employees greater autonomy.
- Employees will better be able to use computers and other types of technology.

…improve flexibility

- Employees will be better able to take on broader responsibilities, including multi-skilling.
- Responsibilities requiring more literacy/essential skills can be delegated.
- The opportunities for employee growth will be enhanced.
- Introducing team-based work systems will be more effective.

…improve employee relations

- Employee self-confidence and morale will be higher.
- Communication throughout the organization will be better.
- There will be reduced employee fear and suspicion of management.
- Employee retention and loyalty will improve.
- Team skills and team morale will increase.

…improve the capability for continuous improvement

Continuous improvement processes depend on being able to:

- Document a best practice
- Standardize the use of the best practice
- Update (improve) the best practice to establish a new standard for use

Effective use of this type of process requires good documentation and the ability of employees to follow the documented procedures. As employee literacy & essential skills improve...

- The ability to use documentation will improve.
- The ability to standardize procedures will improve.
- Employees will be better prepared to participate in continuous improvement processes.

…improve the ability to introduce change

- Employee fear of change will be reduced.
- Improved self-confidence will result in less resistance to change.
- The ability to absorb training will improve.
- The speed of start-up of new processes will improve by reducing the learning curve and errors.

…result in major benefits for employers

Employees will:
- Have greater self-esteem and self-confidence
- Be more positive and less defensive
- Be able to participate more fully in the organization
- Have improved advancement and earnings prospects
- Benefit from better job security
- Experience an improved family and personal life, including the ability to help their children or grandchildren with schoolwork

BUSINESS CASE DRIVERS

Most literacy/essential skills initiatives are driven by organizational needs and other initiatives. These needs and initiatives can be classified as follows:

Quality and Safety Systems Driven

Training and paperwork requirements of quality, safety, and other similar systems require a workforce that can read and understand written material, and can participate in written reporting and control systems.

Technology Driven

Broad use of computer systems and use of e-mail, the ability to understand and use control charts and similar processes, the ability to use equipment manuals, etc., may drive the need to upgrade essential skill levels.

Qualification/Certification Driven

The need for employees to be formally qualified or certified for their job to meet regulatory requirements or organizational standards may be the driver to implement an essential skills program.

Organizationally Driven

Improvements in essential skills may be necessary to meet organizational goals and/or expectations for:
- Participation in teamwork systems
- Reporting and accountability processes
- Greater delegation of responsibilities
- Facilitating written communication in the organization

Promotion of a Learning Culture

Literacy/essential skills programs may develop from:
- Flexible - institutes change easily
- Responsive - accepts and expects change
- Participatory - encourages
- Encourages all employees to participate in increasing the knowledge of the organization
- Encourages all employees to participate in applying knowledge to continuous improvement of the organization

If you want 1 year of prosperity, grow grain.
If you want 10 years of prosperity, grow trees.
If you want 100 years of prosperity, grow people.

– Chinese Proverb

THE CHAMPIONS: LITERACY/ESSENTIAL SKILLS SUCCESS STORIES

The stories on these pages represent the achievements of a diverse collection of manufacturing organizations. They range from small to large and are situated all over Canada. They have developed many different approaches to building the literacy/essential skills levels of their employees.

They all share one thing, however - the desire to provide opportunities for their employees to contribute to their own well-being and the well-being of their families, their community and their company by advancing their own skill levels.

ARCELORMITTAL DOFASCO – Hamilton, Ontario

AN ONGOING COMMITMENT TO ESSENTIAL SKILLS TRAINING

ArcelorMittal Dofasco has remained committed to investing in its workforce through its Essential Skills program. Their primary mandate is "To provide the opportunity for employees to learn the basic skills needed to make the best contribution they are capable of in the workplace, at home, and in the community." Since the inception of the program over 12 years ago, approximately 500 workers have enrolled in their Essential Skills Computer classes, as well as their Basic Education courses.

The strategy for success exists in maximizing their partnership with Mohawk College and with the Adult Basic Education Association, which addresses employee assessments and designs courses. Sponsorship and support by upper management, coupled with a passionate coordinator, who personally follows up with respective attendees, has provided a supportive framework that builds confidence and inspires learning.

PALLISER FURNITURE - Winnipeg, Manitoba

MEETING THE NEEDS OF EAL WORKERS

With a workforce that is about 70% immigrant workers, English as an Additional Language (EAL) is a key concern. Palliser started EAL classes over 15 years ago, and has since added literacy, math/numeracy, computer, and leadership programs. In 2007, they changed the format of language delivery. While still offering some EAL classes at the end of the day shift, along with the other programs mentioned, they now coach each new EAL hire from their first day on the job. The amount of time spent with each employee is determined by their language and existing job skills. As the labour market has become very tight in Manitoba, Palliser wants to ensure that their new and longer term employees will succeed and stay with the company. This new initiative has been partly funded by the Manitoba government department, Labour and Immigration/Adult Language Training Branch.

While participation in the EAL classes is voluntary, employees are paid at their hourly rate for 50% of their time in class, while the other 50% of the class is on their own time.

The EAL trainers are on the plant floor daily to assist both the employees and their supervisors with language challenges. This new format provides a timely solution to many communication problems.

Employees that have experienced this kind of language support feel they are better prepared for their jobs and for cross-training. The company's retention levels are also higher.

CAVENDISH FARMS LEARNING CENTRE - Prince Edward Island

TEACHING AND LEARNING - EQUAL AND SEAMLESSLY INTERWOVEN

Cavendish Farms, "The Potato Specialists," is a quality producer of frozen potato products for retail, restaurant, and quick service markets. The New Annan production facilities employ approximately 700 people. The Learning Centre at Cavendish Farms is proud of its ongoing commitment to improve employee education. Its mandate, to provide a learner-centred environment with individualized instruction, is the central core and helps shape the evolving programs. Although the centre was originally designed to facilitate the completion of General Education Development (G.E.D.) certificates (high school equivalency), it has grown remarkably. Now offering adult basic literacy, GED, secondary English, mathematics, biology, physics and history, post-secondary refreshers, accounting, microeconomics, computer literacy, creative and professional writing, post-secondary facilitation, and assistance with professional licensing, the Learning Centre continues to listen to employees and rises to the challenge of meeting their unique needs.

Initially conceived in 2002, the Learning Centre became operational on a full-time basis in 2004. Learning has been made not only available but accessible. The cost-share initiative, day-time study hours, paid supplies, onsite classroom and full-time licensed instructor have collectively made this an exciting opportunity. Not only are the employees receiving their desired education, they are growing in self-confidence, employability assets and feelings of self-worth. The Learning Centre tailors its programs to meet the specific needs of individual learners. It does this by providing individualized instruction.

Overall, more than 300 people have participated in programs to date; this represents approximately 40% of the total workforce. As a direct result of the Learning Centre, employees have passed academic and corporate exams, which enable them not only to attain full-time employment in both general and posted positions, but they report feeling more fulfilled, both personally and professionally.

As one employee stated: *"I think the best environment for learning is one in which the student can learn at his own pace. People learn in different ways and at different speeds, even in different courses. Our differences are respected here and we can all take away learning that matters to us."*

KEYERA ENERGY - Calgary, Alberta

ALBERTA'S RECIPE FOR SUCCESS

The Competency Management and Development System (CMDS) of competency-based education and training uses industry professionals and certification standards to identify the knowledge and skills needed to master an occupation. This industry input provides the foundation for development of instructional materials that help prepare the comprehensively trained, highly skilled employees demanded by Keyera's workplace partners.

Written competency assessments are used to evaluate student performance. Results reports communicate competency assessment scores to students and provide a breakdown of assessment results by area of job responsibility. The results breakdown shows how well the student has mastered the skills needed to perform major job functions, and identify areas of job responsibility that may require additional instruction and/or training.

Group analysis of student results also provides feedback to instructors seeking to improve the effectiveness of career and technical training. Performance patterns in individual jobs indicate opportunities to evaluate training methods and customize instructions.

Today, over 3000 employees from 32 oil and gas companies are using the CMDS system and, in the past two years, over 1000 employees have received petroleum certificates granted from an Alberta post-secondary institution. The employee training has been achieved through on-site workplace training, e-learning opportunities and tutorials by subject matter experts.

The Petroleum industry, as with most industries in Alberta, is in desperate need of skilled employees and cannot provide their employees the opportunities to leave the workplace for training. To compensate for this, the 32 employers have provided access to the CMDS system for their employees. These training resources have been made accessible at any time and any place, whether employees are on the job or at home.

The training and certifications systems that have been in place for the past 100 years cannot meet industry needs, now or in the future. The CMDS is one solution that currently addresses the skill shortages impacting the growth of the petroleum industry.

MINAS BASIN PULP & POWER COMPANY LTD - Hantsport, Nova Scotia

RAISING THE BAR TO MEET COMPETITIVE NEEDS

Minas Basin Pulp & Power Company Limited was founded in 1927 in Hantsport, Nova Scotia. From 1927 to 1946, this family-owned and operated company produced a single product: ground-wood pulp. In 1946, the company added paperboard to its product offerings. In 1996, Minas Basin Pulp & Power introduced linerboard to its production line-up. Today, the company operates 24/7 and employs approximately 162 full-time employees.

Minas Basin Pulp & Power realized that, in order to grow and compete in the market, the company needed to raise the standard education level and improve the basic literacy and work skills of its employees. To this extent, the company developed its own Workplace Education Program (WEP) in an effort to address essential skills issues.

In 1999, Minas Basin Pulp & Power partnered with the Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Training and Skills Development division and adopted the partnership model approach to its training program. Minas Basin Pulp & Power worked with the department to develop and offer to its employees five workplace education programs:

- Essential Skills for GED Preparation/Upgrading
- Document Literacy
- Basic Upgrading for the Workplace
- Basic Computers
- Basic Math Refresher Course

The Workplace Education Program has been an overwhelming success on a personal level for all participants and has directly affected production levels in several key areas. Minas Basin Pulp & Power Company reported unprecedented operating efficiencies, an all-time low absenteeism rate, and a 13-fold reduction in lost time due to accidents, which definitively justifies the investment in training. Efficiencies on their machines exceeded 80 percent every month during 2004, something the company never achieved before. Absenteeism reached an all-time low at 6.9 days absent per employee in 2003 (the previous average was 10.91 days). A decline in lost time accidents lowered the company's safety performance index from 19.88 in 2003 to 1.5 in 2004 (383.5 days were lost in 2003 due to accidents, compared to 62.5 days lost in 2004).[8]

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[8] The Conference Board of Canada, "Building Essential Skills in the Workplace", 2005.
http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/workplaceskills/essential_skills/pdfs/awareness/building_es_case_studies.pdf

CANADA BREAD ATLANTIC - Halifax, Nova Scotia

COMPANY TRAINING WITH PERSONAL BENEFITS

Canada Bread, formerly known as Ben's Bakery, was established in 1913. The introduction of new machinery and a move toward computerized systems in the workplace necessitated essential skills training.

Like many traditional companies, many of the long-term employees had not completed high school and their essential skills were not at the level required to use the new equipment safely or efficiently. Canada Bread decided to make this a priority and partnered with the Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Training and Skill Development division in 1999 to offer GED and basic computer training to its employees. The partnership has continued over the last nine years, with the most recent Communication Skills Program completed in the fall of 2007.

Essential skills training has had a profound effect on many of the participants; one being Earl Leslie. Earl was a very quiet man and had worked at Canada Bread for many years. Until Earl participated in the first GED Program, he was very shy and lacked confidence. Since obtaining his GED, Earl has become an active member at his workplace, works with an elite Halifax boys choir and has become a spokesperson for workplace education throughout the province.

ELMSDALE LUMBER - Elmsdale, Nova Scotia

ON THE CUTTING EDGE OF WORKPLACE EDUCATION

Elmsdale Lumber Corporation (ELCO) is a family-owned producer, exporter and wholesaler of kiln-dried lumber, specializing in white pine, hemlock and SPF (spruce/pine/fir mix). Elmsdale Lumber has operated successfully for over 100 years and currently employs 57 people at its mill in Nova Scotia.

However, changes in technology have brought computers into lumber mills, transforming the industry from a low-tech sector to one using sophisticated equipment, and thereby

increasing the demand for a skilled and literate workforce.

An on-site program team runs learning programs for employees, covering communications for staff and supervisors, academic upgrading, written communications and basic computer literacy. This Workplace Education Program (WEP) has benefitted the organization economically and socially, as workers become more efficient and apply what they have learned to new ways of harvesting, processing and selling lumber. Developed in partnership with the Nova Scotia Apprenticeship and Skill Development division, the program helps ELCO manage change and keeps the company on the leading edge of its industry.

The WEP has helped to keep ELCO at the cutting edge of the lumber industry. In addition to a more knowledgeable and well-trained workforce, there have been real economic benefits to the company, including:

- Reduced sick time and absenteeism
- An improved safety record
- Increased productivity
- A better working environment
- Greater initiative shown by employees

Through the WEP, 10 employees have earned their GEDs and others have completed courses in the forestry program at the University of New Brunswick. In addition, individuals have achieved recognized standing in the industry, including:
- One 4th Stationary Engineer
- One licensed Lumber Grader
- One licensed Log Scaler

After almost ten years of workplace education programs, a new partnership was formed with the division to train Managers. A five-year agreement was signed to train and provide in-house Certified Elmsdale Lumber Managers. ELCO feels that investing in their management and leadership capacity, in areas such as communication, project management and business and human resources theory, can only strengthen their team.

The fact that a small, family-run lumber mill has created a sustainable workplace education program is, in itself, an innovation. ELCO is continuously looking for ways to enhance the skills of its employees through academic upgrading, computer skills and industry-related training.

FRONTIER COLLEGE

PARTNERING WITH BUSINESS

Founded in 1899, Frontier College is a leader in the Canadian literacy movement. Their Workplace Learning programs include English as a Second Language (ESL), program design and instruction, basic literacy, and one-to-one peer tutoring.

Frontier College offers flexible program models, depending on the needs of a particular workplace. These program models vary from training company staff as tutors to work one-to-one with their co-workers, to setting up a classroom environment in the workplace for those who need help with upgrading. The model is unique for each client and determined based on a needs assessment conducted by their trained staff.

Frontier College is a client focused organization that offers a range of strategies for workplace ESL instruction, including:

- Problem solving activities
- Working in pairs
- Small and large group activities
- Learning and transfer activities (training on company procedures and policy)
- Question and answer exercises
- Computer based learning

The College creates a specific program for small to medium sized companies, based on the results of a needs assessment. Program models range from peer tutoring sessions to paid instructors offering classes on an ongoing basis. Costs vary according to the program model.

Frontier College has worked with a wide range of clients, including:

Canada Post	Canadian Pacific Express and Transport
Cara Foods	CCL
Department of National Defence	Esselte Pendaflex
Great West Life / London Life	Palliser Furniture

i3DVR INTERNATIONAL - Toronto, Ontario

AFFECTING THE COMMUNITY, TOO

i3DVR International Inc. is a leading provider of digital video technologies for today's security industry. Founded in 1990, the company was originally established to assist customers with security installation. With subsequent advancements in technology, however, it soon began evaluating alternative technology solutions, finding a niche in the production and distribution of digital video management systems (DVMS).

The company soon excelled in developing cutting-edge technology solutions designed to take conventional security to the next level. By early 2000, it had earned a reputation as one of the most flexible and technologically innovative companies in the industry. Within a four-year period, the demand for its product had skyrocketed.

ESL Classes began when the company felt the need to offer assistance to some of their employees who were skilled immigrants and whose first language was not English. The class was also made available to staff from their Vietnamese Office, who come over to Canada for 3 months of training. Being able to read, write and speak English empowers employees to express their ideas and thoughts effectively, not only at work, but in their home and in the community they've decided to embrace.

Staff developed an ESL Class, taught on company premises once a week. It has helped staff develop their language skills so that they can engage in a conversation without struggling as much to be understood. When the program started in 2005, there were 5 employees attending and it gradually increased over the months to about 9 employees. The employees learned listening, speaking, reading and writing skills and, while some of them have moved on and are no longer with the company, those that remain are doing very well with the skills they acquired from the class. The focus for the future is to shape the class differently. Since employees are no longer struggling with basic English language skills, the company is looking at amending the class to focus more on stronger English conversational skills. Plans are to centre the class on current affairs discussion sessions to assist employees in getting more involved in carrying on a conversation with others around them.

Part II - Taking Action:

A Workplace Literacy/Essential Skills Program Workbook

A. ASSESSING YOUR SITUATION & BUILDING THE BUSINESS CASE

INTRODUCTION

Today, more than ever, business organizations need to increase their competitiveness. Innovation is the key to becoming more competitive. The skills and abilities of your employees are vital to your ability to innovate and keep a competitive edge. You need the participation of all your employees to make this happen.

The skills needed today may be very different than those required when your most experienced employees were hired. Further, the necessary skill sets will continue to change.

These new skill sets usually require higher literacy and other essential skills, including the ability to read and understand written materials and documents, and the ability to understand and use sophisticated math and numeracy principles. Yet 30% to 40% of employees working in manufacturing in Canada have difficulty functioning at required reading and numeracy levels. Many of these people are experienced employees who possess knowledge of your business that is valuable - and difficult to replace.

Recognizing the seriousness of this problem, leading organizations are starting to invest in their employees. Often, they find that this investment starts the company on a path of ongoing learning and skill building that continues to build its strength, and ability to innovate and compete. It lays the foundation to:

- Improve problem solving
- Improve the ability to introduce and handle change
- Introduce new technologies
- Improve employee relations and employee confidence
- Improve productivity, quality, and safety

This part of the Guidebook challenges you to:

- Recognize the literacy/essential skills situation in your organization
- Understand the impact literacy and essential skills have in your organization
- Build a business case for taking action to improve these skills in your employees

The following pages summarize key factors of many successful literacy and essential skills programs. They may be useful as an introductory checklist for your program.

LITERACY & ESSENTIAL SKILLS PROGRAM: KEY SUCCESS FACTORS

1   Management Commitment

- Employee skill development is part of the strategic plan for the organization.
- Roles for leadership and management of skill development are defined and responsibilities assigned.
- Program goals and action plans are developed.
- Management regularly reviews program progress and makes changes when needed.
- Enough funding is provided to manage the program.
- At least part of the program training is on the company time and employees are paid for this time.
- Management arranges scheduling issues to ensure employees can attend courses.
- Management throughout the organization visibly show support for the program and employee participation.

2   Employee Involvement

Employees are involved as partners in the planning and running of the program. Employee input affects all aspects of the program, including:

- Development of goals and action plans
- Communication plans and communications with employees
- Selection of consultants, assessors, instructors, etc.
- Planning and undertaking needs assessments
- Course design
- Company policies on confidentiality, voluntary participation, etc.
- Course scheduling
- Program evaluations and recommendations
- Program changes and evolution

3   Planning

- Essential skills development is part of an overall plan for developing skills and capabilities of all employees.
- A formal needs assessment is carried out and used for skill development plans. The needs assessment is renewed on a regular basis.
- People with appropriate expertise carry out the workplace needs assessments.
- Employee input is used, along with the needs assessment, to develop training plans.
- Policies on confidentiality and voluntary participation are in place.
- Procedures for individual assessments are in place.
- Training plans are goal-based and focused on job or personal needs, usable on the job, and individualized to participants' development needs.
- Strategies are in place to reach out and encourage employee participation.

4   Communication

Effective strategies for both management and employees are in place to:
- Communicate process, involvement and results of the workplace needs assessment
- Promote employee participation in the program
- Communicate the ongoing status of the program
- Celebrate success
- Communicate changes, improvements, etc.

5   Effective Operation of the Program

- Instructors and other persons are qualified for, and effective in, their roles and responsibilities.
- Instructors are enthusiastic, hands-on, and show a genuine interest in the employees' jobs.
- Instructors "teach to the task", using materials and examples from the workplace.
- Policies on confidentiality and voluntary participation are enforced.
- Conflict issues are worked through and resolved.

6   Continuous Improvement

- Processes are in place to listen, gather feedback and to change the program in response to employee and management issues and concerns.
- Processes are in place for regular program evaluation and identification of improvement opportunities.
- Action is taken to develop and implement agreed next steps.

YOUR WORKPLACE LITERACY/ESSENTIAL SKILLS NEEDS:
Now and in the Future

A major Ontario company realized that there was a significant literacy problem during implementation of a downsizing project involving a voluntary early retirement offering. Although there had been considerable written correspondence within the company – notices posted and letters and material sent to each affected employee's home – for some employees, retirement offering came as a total surprise when individual discussions took place.

Almost all of the growth in the workforce in Canada for the foreseeable future will come from immigration. How is this impacting your organization today, and in the future?

Workplace Literacy Affects Employer and Employee

Literacy/essential skills have been identified as the single most important determinant of employability and wage rates.

New operating conditions, such as rotation of jobs, more stringent quality control measures, new or updated equipment and technology, and particularly computer technology, put pressures on the existing workforce.

Many manufacturers have identified significant skills shortages; yet, their own workforce, with appropriate up-skilling and re-skilling, could relieve some shortage areas.

Some of the most significant barriers to literacy/essential skills training have to do with beliefs and attitudes. Employers say employees aren't interested and claim that there are no issues to do with literacy/essential skills in their companies. Employees don't want to be identified as lacking skills, in order to protect their jobs. Employers are worried about other companies poaching employees, even though studies have shown that those employees who have benefited from workplace literacy/essential skills training are likely to show greater loyalty to the employer that provided their training.

Some Questions to Consider

- What is the level of essential skills in your workforce today?
- What are the signs that might indicate that essential skills issues are affecting your organization today?
- How will your business be different in five years?
- How will skill requirements change?
- What changes to your current organization would make it more productive and effective?
- Are there opportunities for delegation of responsibilities, more teamwork, multi-skilling?
- What is limiting you from moving forward with these opportunities?

Literacy Issues Limit Progress

Too often, organizations have introduced new technology, or organizational change, only to discover that some of their employees lacked the basic skills to handle the new job requirements. These were valued employees with many skills important to the business—but their previous jobs did not require the reading, writing, math, communication or thinking skills needed in the new work environment. This discovery can:

- Create a crisis
- Cause delays
- Lessen the expected results
- Cause the change to fail

Regardless of how the crisis is resolved, the solution takes a lot of time and can be very costly. Taking action two to four years in advance of likely changes is not too early to ensure that employees are ready. It is also never too late to implement a literacy/essential skills improvement training program.

RAISING AWARENESS

This section of the Guidebook is intended to help you provide a framework for starting to consider literacy/essential skills as an issue in your workplace.

There are four activities in this section to help you and your organization:

- Understand literacy/essential skills issues better
- Recognize how they may be affecting your current operation
- Consider the potential for these issues to affect your future plans

The activities do not need to be labour intensive. The effort put forth should match the size and complexity of the organization. The activities may be carried out in a different order than presented. You may want to contact a literacy resource (see Appendix D - Sources of Help) before taking any action. You may want the people who will be involved in identifying signs of essential skills issues to have some education on the issues first. Do what works best for you and your organization.

Senior management needs to be brought on board early in the project. Important steps include:

- Educating management on literacy/essential skills issues and the potential impact on the workplace
- Agreeing on the need for a workplace needs assessment
- Giving management a chance to provide input into identifying potential signs of literacy/essential skills issues and developing plans for further action
- Appointing a project sponsor and project champion/manager
- Agreeing on starting the next phase

Obtaining buy-in and commitment from senior management and integrating the the initiative into the organization's over-all goals and work plan are essential for success.

The outcome of this raising awareness phase may be a decision to proceed with a more in-depth assessment of your literacy needs and the development of a business case for implementing a literacy/essential skills improvement program.

Preliminary Investigation Activities

1.   Identify Signs of Literacy/Essential Skills Issues in Your Workplace

This search will probably be quite informal and will look for anecdotal evidence (examples) rather than quantitative evidence.

Some of the signs may be fairly clear, such as employees who have poor English (or French in francophone areas) oral skills. Other signs may be more subtle.

A worksheet, *Identifying Signs of Literacy Issues,* is provided in this Guidebook to help you recognize the ways in which literacy issues may be affecting your organization today.

It is key that information be collected from supervisors, managers and people who have close working relationships with the employees in their areas of the business.

Action Item

It is best practice to:

- Select a cross-section of people to assist in completing the worksheet
- Include input from employees
- Complete the worksheet individually, then discuss as a team
- Be prepared that some feedback may be critical of management practices

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2. Contact a Literacy Resource

There are literacy organizations, schools and colleges, and private sector organizations across Canada that can help you with your literacy initiative .

Contact and consultation during this phase will help you gain further perspectives on literacy and essential skills issues, available community resources, costs, and potential courses of action. In this phase, the resource may also be able to:

- Provide education on the issues
- Help organize your plan/program
- Help identify signs of literacy/essential skills issues
- Help identify future skill needs

> ### *Action Item*
>
> Get additional context and professional "next-step" and long-term guidance from a literacy/essential skills practitioner or organization.

3. Raise Awareness

Begin to raise the awareness of your management group as to literacy/essential skills issues and the potential impact on your organization. This Guidebook is one resource. Literacy and essential skills organizations in your area may also be of assistance.

> ### *Action Item*
>
> Use this Guidebook, literacy/essential skills practitioners and organizations, the Internet, publications and other resources to raise awareness within your organization.

4. Analyze Future Skill Needs for Literacy/Essential Skills Concerns

In addition to identifying signs of literacy/essential skills issues in your current organization, it is very important to consider future developments in your business. Technology, organizational changes and increasing performance expectations are factors that may require higher essential skill levels. Your current employees most likely have knowledge and skills critical to your business success. However, they may require some help to adapt to future expectations. Upgrading skills takes time, especially if there is need to upgrade basic skills.

This activity challenges you to review the vision for your business and your strategic plan, and to identify your changing skill requirements. Section A contains a worksheet, *Evaluating Your Future Literacy/ Essential Skills Needs,* to help you assess future skill needs and skill development needs. Again, it is best practice to have broad input and to develop the answers through group discussion.

If you already have enough information from the first three activities to know that you will be moving ahead with a more in-depth assessment and development of a business case, you may want to leave this activity for the *Developing A Business Case* phase. Completing a workplace needs assessment (described in the Business Case phase) prior to analyzing future skill needs will increase the accuracy and value of the future needs assessment.

Action Item

Revisit your organization's vision, strategic plan and other guiding documents. Use the worksheet in this Guidebook to assess your future skill and skill development needs.

Completing these activities will give you a better picture of your current literacy situation and the ability of your organization to meet upcoming needs.

If this first stage shows that there is the need for further action, a more in-depth assessment and the development of a business case for implementing a literacy improvement program may be the next step.

IDENTIFYING SIGNS OF LITERACY ISSUES WORKSHEET

Instructions

This worksheet may be used to identify signs of literacy and essential skills issues and their impact on operations in your workplace. It is only intended to be the first step in seeing the issues that may be affecting your organization. This assessment may be used, along with the other worksheets in this section, to develop a basis for taking action, which would include a more thorough workplace essential skills needs assessment.

1. Input should be collected from a cross-section of people in the organization who manage or supervise, conduct training, or are involved in health and safety or quality processes.

2. Input from employees through focus groups or similar means is desirable. If a workplace committee has been established, it should be part of the planning.

3. Information should be collected from individuals who have direct working knowledge of a specific group of employees. For example, it is better to get input directly from manufacturing employees, their supervisors, and others who work directly with them, rather than getting input only from the manufacturing vice-president.

4. Be careful not to identify specific employees either by name or association. Maintaining the trust of employees will be key to the success of a literacy/essential skills initiative.

5. *The presence of a sign is only an indication of a potential literacy issue. There are many dynamics and factors involved in workplace environments. For example, employees may have difficulty understanding manuals and printed instructions because the manuals or instructions have been poorly written, are inaccurate or the instructions cannot be physically executed as written.* **The purpose of the worksheet is to invite further investigation and understanding, if there are issues.**

Indications of Potential Literacy Issues

Training

	Yes	No
1. Are there employees who have difficulty with training material/exercises — even when the majority of employees do not have problem?	☐	☐
2. Are there employees who avoid training sessions or who do not participate well (join in)?	☐	☐
3. Are there employees who need another employee to explain material to them?	☐	☐
4. Are there employees who have difficulty understanding workplace signs?	☐	☐
5. Are there employees who have difficulty understanding charts and graphs used in the workplace?	☐	☐
6. Are there employees who have difficulty with the math parts of their jobs (e.g. doing arithmetic calculations correctly, understanding charts or graphs)?	☐	☐

If you answered "yes" to one or more of questions 1 - 6, what is the business impact of these signs of literacy issues on productivity/cost, quality, safety, capacity for change, problem solving, employee relations, customer service, etc.?

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The impact of these issues on our business is:

☐ Major   ☐ Moderate   ☐ Little or none

Work Habits   Yes   No

7. Do you have employees who must always be with a buddy?   ☐   ☐

8. Do you have employees who make excuses when faced with written material (e.g. I   ☐   ☐
    left my glasses in my locker)?

9. Do you have morale or absenteeism problems that might be linked to the ability of   ☐   ☐
    employees to handle essential skills requirements?

10. Are there communication problems among staff (e.g. problems with employees   ☐   ☐
    following up on shift change notes)?

If you answered "yes" to one or more of these questions, what is the business impact of
these signs of literacy issues on productivity/cost, quality, safety, capacity for change,
problem solving, employee relations, customer service, etc.?

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The impact of these issues on our business is:

☐ Major   ☐ Moderate   ☐ Little or none

Adjusting to Change   Yes   No

11. Do you have turnover problems because people cannot do the job?   ☐   ☐

12. Do you have employees who have an unusually high level of unwillingness or fear of ☐   ☐
    new job requirements?

13. Do you have employees who are unusually slow to adjust to new needs/requests   ☐   ☐
    involving written material?

14. Do you have employees who are very slow (compared to other employees) to adjust   ☐   ☐
    to new math job requirements?

15. Do you have employees unwilling, or unable, to accept the change to using   ☐   ☐
    computers—when the most make the change successfully?

16. Is management unwilling to introduce change because of concerns about employees   ☐   ☐
    being able to respond to the new needs?

If you answered "yes" to one or more of these questions, what is the business impact of
these signs of literacy issues on productivity/cost, quality, safety, capacity for change,
problem solving, employee relations, customer service, etc.?

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The impact of these issues on our business is:

☐ Major   ☐ Moderate   ☐ Little or none

Recruiting

	Yes	No
17. Are you having problems recruiting employees with all the skills you require?	☐	☐
18. Are you having problems developing people to fill more senior positions?	☐	☐
19. Are would-be recruits having problems meeting/passing entrance requirements?	☐	☐
20. Do you recruit outside your organization because current employees do not have the skills to fill more senior positions?	☐	☐

If you answered "yes" to one or more of these questions, what is the business impact of these signs of literacy issues on productivity/cost, quality, safety, capacity for change, problem solving, employee relations, customer service, etc.?

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The impact of these issues on our business is:

☐ Major   ☐ Moderate   ☐ Little or none

English/French as a Second Language

	Yes	No
21. Do you have employees with poor oral English/French language skills?	☐	☐
22. Do you need to prepare instructions, signs, communications, etc., in a language other than English/French?	☐	☐
23. Do you need to use employees to interpret instructions for others?	☐	☐
24. Is a language other than one of English or French regularly used for workplace business communication?	☐	☐
25. Are there employees who regularly communicate business matters in a language other than English (or French, if that is normal workplace language)?	☐	☐

If you answered "yes" to one or more of the questions above, what is the business impact of these signs of literacy issues on productivity/cost, quality, safety, capacity for change, problem solving, employee relations, customer service, etc.?

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The impact of these issues on our business is:

☐ Major   ☐ Moderate   ☐ Little or none

Education   <u>Yes</u>   <u>No</u>

Only about 40% of persons who have not completed high school have the necessary literacy skills.

Answering "yes" to the question below does not indicate that you have an issue. However, this is a higher risk population and may be a factor in the signs identified in earlier questions.

26. Do you have employees who have not completed high school or equivalent?   ☐   ☐

If you answered "yes" to this question, what is the business impact of this sign of a literacy issue on productivity/cost, quality, safety, capacity for change, problem solving, employee relations, customer service, etc.?

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The impact of these issues on our business is:

☐ Major   ☐ Moderate   ☐ Little or none

Management Issues   <u>Yes</u>   <u>No</u>

Sometimes the signs identified using this worksheet may not be due to employee literacy skills, but rather due to some aspect of how they are managed. It is important to recognize where the issues originate, so that the right actions can be taken to improve the situation. The following questions deal with identifying management issues, which may initially appear to be employee literacy problems:

27. Do written instructions use clear, specific wording that is easy to understand? Do they describe both the performance standard and the actions needed to maintain the performance standard? Can they be followed in practice?   ☐   ☐

28. Is there a process that includes and involves employees in writing and updating instructions and practices?   ☐   ☐

29. Is employee feedback respected and are actions taken to address employee concerns?   ☐   ☐

If you answered "yes" to this question, what is the business impact of these signs of a literacy issue on productivity/cost, quality, safety, capacity for change, problem solving, employee relations, customer service, etc.?

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The impact of these issues on our business is:

☐ Major   ☐ Moderate   ☐ Little or none

Summary of Potential Literacy/Essential Skills Issues and their Impact on the Business:

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EVALUATING YOUR FUTURE LITERACY/ESSENTIAL SKILLS NEEDS WORKSHEET

Instructions

Your employees are a key factor in making your organization different from, and better than, your competition. The ability of the organization to meet the challenges of competition is affected by the skills, productivity and motivation of its employees. This worksheet challenges you to look at your future skills and needs, compare them with current skill levels, and assess how literacy/essential skills levels, may be affecting your ability to change.

The first section of the worksheet asks you to describe your business vision for five years from today.

The second section asks you to identify the new employee skills and abilities that will be necessary to deliver the vision. Be sure to include:

- Expected technological, organizational, and operating method changes
- Expectations for higher employee performance, especially for issues such as:
    - Problem-solving
    - Ability to function in a team environment
    - Ability to accept more responsibility
    - Ability to handle change

The third section gives you a chance to identify barriers to having the literacy and essential skills in place to deliver the vision, and potential solutions to help the organization put the required skills in place.

Completing this worksheet gives you an opportunity to gather broadly based input. Often, real learning will take place when people who are used to focussing on day-to-day issues have a chance to discuss the future and the steps needed to get there. Group discussions can be a valuable means of:

- Stimulating thinking
- Uncovering future needs
- Identifying barriers to achieving the vision
- Finding solutions to delivering the vision

Section I: Five-Year Vision for the Business

Consider the changes you expect will occur in your business in the next five years.

- How will the business be different? (e.g. Product or service range, markets served, pace of business change, etc.)

- What are the competitive pressures that you will need to respond to? (If it exists, your strategic plan may be a main source of information.)

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Section II: Future Skills and Abilities Requirements

Considering the expected business and technology changes you have identified, how will the skills and abilities of employees need to change?

Business Change	New Skills and Abilities Required
1) New Products, Services and Markets _____ _____ _____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____ _____ _____
2) New Technologies, Processes and Methods _____ _____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____ _____
3) Automation, Computer Usage _____ _____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____ _____
4) Productivity Improvements _____ _____ _____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____ _____ _____
5) Quality and Process Improvements _____ _____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____ _____
6) Other Issues _____ _____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____ _____

Organizational changes and changing employee job expectations may require new skills and abilities. Some of these may have been identified in Section I of this Worksheet. However, you may want to consider these issues here, separately.

Organization Change	New Skills & Abilities Expectation(s)
1) Multi-skilling	_____ _____ _____
2) Team Participation	_____ _____ _____
3) Greater Delegation of Responsibility	_____ _____ _____
4) Improved Problem-Solving Abilities	_____ _____ _____
5) Improved Employee Communication and Interpersonal Skills	_____ _____ _____
6) Better Employee Ability to Handle Change	_____ _____ _____
7) Other	_____ _____ _____

Section III: Literacy and Essential Skills Barriers to Reaching Vision - and Potential Solutions

A.   What challenges do you see in ensuring that the necessary essential skills and abilities are in place to address current and future needs?

Some potential problems may include the following:

- Management has not considered essential skills development issues.
- There is no plan to address these issues.
- Training and skills development is not a priority for the organization.
- Employees are not admitting their lack of literacy/essential skills.
- If a strategy is to hire the needed skills, are/will qualified applicants be available? Is the organization willing to pay higher rates to obtain higher qualified candidates?
- As your experienced people retire, how will you transfer their skills?

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B.   What are potential solutions to the literacy and essential skills needs, in order to deliver the vision?

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Developing Your Business Case

This section of the Guidebook contains a worksheet to help you develop a business case for starting a literacy/essential skills development program in your organization.

The information you have compiled in the previous worksheets may provide the basis for completing the *Developing Your Business Case Worksheet* that follows.

You may want to base your business case on more robust data than is produced by the worksheets you have already completed. If this is the case, then you may want to do a workplace needs assessment using outside literacy/essential skills resources, before preparing your business case.

The workplace needs assessment should normally be done before starting a training program so, if you are fairly certain that you will be starting a literacy/essential skills program, consider doing the workplace needs assessment at this point.

If you do an assessment ensure that employees who may be potential participants in a literacy/essential skills training program are consulted and included in the planning process. Usually this is done by including them on a workplace planning team.

The workplace needs assessment involves several steps, including employee surveys, employee interviews and observing how jobs are carried out in the workplace. You will want to make sure that you have a good communication strategy in place before proceeding. Clear communication will help you gain the support and participation of both management and employees.

DEVELOPING YOUR BUSINESS CASE WORKSHEET

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Instructions

This section provides a worksheet to help you prepare a business case for starting an essential skills program for your organization.

1. Use the results of your evaluations from the two previous worksheets: *Identifying Signs of Literacy/Essential Skills Issues* and *Evaluating Your Future Literacy/Essential Skills Needs*, to develop your business case.

2. It is recommended that you develop your business case using broadly based input from people in your organization.

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We have the opportunity to improve our current business performance by starting an essential skills development program. Our performance will improve in the following areas:

1. **Productivity, Quality, and Safety: identifying improvements and cost savings**

   - Reduced scrap, rework
   - Fewer injuries and lost time
   - Reduced workers' compensation costs and less equipment damage
   - Reduced start-up/learning curves
   - Reduced communication rework
   - Improved flexibility through cross-training, delegation of responsibilities, etc.
   - Reduced equipment downtime
   - Other

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2. Employee Relations:
- Improved employee self-confidence and morale
- Reduced fear and distrust of management
- Improved communications
- Improved employee retention (lower turnover) and loyalty
- Improved employee participation

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3. Capability for Continuous Improvement:
- Improved use of documentation
- More standardized procedures
- Aid in employees participating in continuous improvement processes
- Improved employee problem-solving

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4. Ability to Introduce Change:
- Reduced resistance to change
- Improved ability to absorb training
- Improved management confidence in proceeding with change efforts

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5. **Benefits for Employees:**
   - Improved self-esteem and self-confidence
   - Improved earnings and advancement opportunities
   - Improved job security

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6. **Results / Other Benefits:**

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7. **An Essential Skills Development Program also helps us achieve our Vision by:**

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Summary of Business Case:

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GETTING HELP

One of the first steps in your plan should be to contact the right organizations/agencies to obtain the help and expertise of people educated in literacy/essential skills development.

Why Use Outside Help?

Initially, confidentiality can be maintained by contracting with a neutral third party to manage employee contact, assessment, and placement in courses. The third party may be an individual or an organization.

The Literacy/Essential Skills Provider Community

There are many different organizations and individuals in Canada involved in the literacy and essential skills fields. The primary groups include: non-profit organizations, coalitions, and networks; educational institutions including colleges and local schools; labour organizations; private organizations; and freelance individuals. In addition, some provincial governments are directly involved.

The missions and strengths of these organizations vary. Some of the different services they provide include: research; advocacy; training and development of skill assessment processes; pre-employment skills development; community-based literacy/essential skills training; and workplace literacy/essential skills development.

As an employer, in most cases, you will want assistance from a literacy/essential skills provider or providers who have:

- Knowledge of workplace skills development processes
- Experience in working effectively in a business or industrial environment

Not all providers have these skills and experience. Selection of a literacy/essential skills provider is an important contributor to the success of your plan.

Skill Sets of Literacy/Essential Skills Providers

In addition to experience in workplace literacy/essential skills development, varying provider skills and experience will be required for your program. Some of the different skill sets include:

- Background information on specific literacy/essential skills issues
- Overall program management & group process facilitation
- Inspirational motivation
- Needs assessment
- Individual assessment
- Course development
- Instructor
- Program evaluation

It may be necessary to contract with more than one provider to obtain the necessary skill sets for your program.

Characteristics of a Good Literacy/Essential Skills Provider

The necessary or desirable skills and traits of a literacy/essential skills provider will depend on the job the provider is being contracted to do. You should assess the providers skills and traits on this basis.

In the initial stages of developing a project, it is likely that you will need someone who has vision, can conceptualize workable processes, can do project development and management, and is a facilitator. As you move through the project, the provider(s) will need skills in workplace assessment, individual assessment, course development, and course delivery and program evaluation. In all cases providers should have the following traits:

- An understanding of workplace cultures and the way that workplaces function
- The ability to accept and work with your workplace culture
- The ability to work with many different types of people and to relate to all levels of the organization
- A Good understanding of business processes (e.g. quality systems)
- Good listening skills (e.g. ability to listen to the needs of the organization)
- Good problem-solving skills
- The ability to work with different workplace interests (e.g. management, employees, union, etc.)
- The ability to draw sound conclusions and take action based on the conclusions
- Creativity in meeting both employer and employee needs
- Flexibility in thought and schedule
- Knowledge of different models of adult learning

Where to Find Help

Appendix D *Sources of Help* lists some primary non-profit organizations to contact, which is a good place to start. Some of these organizations offer workplace literacy/essential skills services themselves; some are referral organizations that can provide you with the best contacts or choices of contacts.

In some provinces, financial assistance or support may be available from a provincial government agency.

Other potential sources of literacy/essential skills providers include:

- Local colleges
- Your local school system (school boards etc.)
- Your labour union
- Private sector consultants and individuals
- ABC CANADA Literacy Foundation
- Ontario Literacy Coalition

B. PLANNING YOUR PROGRAM

INTRODUCTION

Success in implementing an essential skills program will require effective planning, commitment and involvement. As with any other business project, it will require an investment of time and resources to produce the expected returns.

Successful initiatives to improve literacy/essential skills in workplaces are the result of good leadership and management. This section includes:

- Approaches to literacy/essential skills training in the context of workplace needs and lifelong skills development
- Actions for addressing literacy/essential skills training that have been successful in other workplaces
- Planning and organizational issues that will support successful implementation.

The following leadership and management principles or practices are key factors to success:

- Management commitment
- Involvement of employees
- Planning
- Communication
- Effective execution
- Continuous improvement

Many organizations have undertaken literacy/essential skills improvement initiatives. Some have been successful, others have failed. This section draws on lessons learned from others to help you succeed.

LITERACY TRAINING AND WORKPLACE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Literacy/Essential Skills Development and the Individual

In the past, literacy was often considered to be an on/off situation; either a person could read and write or they could not. However, the International IALS redefined literacy to describe a range of skill levels. Some people have fewer literacy skills, others have more. Everyone is somewhere in the range. The same holds true for the other essential skills.

Job requirements for essential skills have increased for most in the workplace and are likely to become more demanding in the future. As well, other skill requirements are increasing rapidly. These include literacy and essential skills requirements for managers and supervisors, as well as those employees carrying out the simplest of tasks. All employees and management are affected.

The primary questions for an employer are:

- Are employees at the appropriate literacy/essential skills level?
- Does they possess the skills for their current job?
- Is skill development underway to meet future needs?

All employees are going to be at different points in their development and should be encourages to continue to develop their skills and abilities.

Leading employers have realized that ongoing development of all employees is critical to their future success. Every employee has a training and development plan that is individualized to meet his/her needs. In this environment, it is not unusual for employees to have an essential skills component to their training plan that will move them further along the essential skills scale. When development is expected for the full organization, individuals with the highest needs are more willing to participate.

Effective Workplace Training and Skills Development

Experience has shown that training for adults in the workplace is most effective when it is:

- **Focused** - The employee needs to see the training as relevant

- **Usable** - As soon after the training as possible ("use it or lose it")

- **Individualized** - Adults have different bases of knowledge. If the starting point of training is too low, the individual is not challenged and may lose enthusiasm. If the starting point is too high, the individual may not understand the training, which can be overwhelming and de-motivating.

Curriculum-based vs. Goal-based Training

Curriculum-based training is training which is defined by credentials. High school is an example of curriculum-based education. Graduation is achieved as a result of completing a specified curriculum. The graduation diploma is a person's record of having achieved a certain educational standard.

Goal-based training depends on defining desired outcomes for training and then providing the appropriate training to deliver the outcomes. As applied to the workplace, it means training that is designed to give people skills that are directly usable in their jobs. Skill development is aimed at skill gaps; it is not broad education.

Curriculum-based training is easier to administer and deliver. Standardized courses can be developed and given. Completion of a curriculum may give an individual knowledge of specified techniques, and, statistically, that person has a greater chance of undertaking work and thought processes at a higher level than someone who has not completed the training. Curriculum-based courses, however, may not be seen as relevant by the learner, probably will not be directly usable in the workplace, and may be too easy or too hard for an individual's experience.

On the other hand, goal-based training for employees in a workplace requires defining specific skill requirements for individual jobs. It requires assessing the skill gaps for employees in fulfilling their current or future jobs, and developing training that is designed to provide the skills to remove or address those gaps. The training should also use examples and situations related to the workplace, and should be applied in the workplace.

It is a common approach for employers looking to upgrade the qualifications of their employees to encourage them to complete grade 12 or GED qualification. This may or may not be successful, and may or may not obtain the expected results. It may be more successful to adopt a goal-based approach with outcomes that are usable in the workplace.

Take the time to understand what training requirements are needed and where your employees are, in relation to the skills required for their jobs. Teach to the task. This may result in less training time and less cost.

LITERACY & ESSENTIAL SKILLS PROGRAMS: LEARNING FROM OTHERS

Understanding the Employee with Essential Skills Challenges

Literacy is a very sensitive issue for those with low literacy/essential skills levels. Often, there are feelings of inadequacy and low self-esteem. Many employees have well-developed coping skills and will do anything to hide their lack of skills. Many also carry bad memories of their school experiences and classroom learning situations. They may measure their personal literacy or essential skill levels by the old definition: they are able to read words and write. The problem is that they do not understand, and cannot apply, the information they are reading.

This situation creates a challenge to introducing a successful workplace literacy/essential skills program. The following guidelines are learnings from successful programs.

Literacy/Essential Skills as Part of a Bigger Picture

Innovative organizations develop the skills and abilities of all employees. This is part of their strategy for survival and prosperity in the future. Innovation and productivity comes from knowledge; these companies invest in their employees to develop a more capable organization. Even the most innovative organizations have literacy/essential skills issues—and they address these issues as part of an overall skills development program.

Use Appropriate Terminology

Choosing the right name for your literacy/essential skills program is one of the first steps to success. Many organizations refer to their programs simply as "Basic Skills" or "Essential Skills." Other companies choose names like "Learning for Life," which conveys a broader and bigger picture. Given the sensitivity of this issue for most employees, the word "literacy" should not be used alone in the program name.

Involve Employees Early in Project

Encouraging employees to get involved early and to participate the planning and implementation of skills development training can be a key factor in a successful program. Many organizations form a joint employee and management committee to oversee the program. Participation fosters ownership, improves credibility and encourages committee participants to become promoters for the program. Include both potential participants and cynics on committees and help them get on board early. Consult with your union (if any) and get it involved as soon as possible. Some unions provide basic skills training to their members.

Focus on the Needs of the Employee

Many companies have experienced difficulty gaining the participation of those who need basic skills training the most. Often they have found the best success when they can tap into a personal need of the employee. The real drive for an employee to improve skill levels may come from a personal dream or desire, not job needs (e.g. to be able to read stories to grandchildren). Skilled instructors make sure course outcomes will result in skills that address these personal needs and are transferable to workplace tasks.

Participation in any essential skills program should be voluntary and confidential. Normally, individual assessments, individual course enrolment and individual outcomes are kept confidential from management. Combined data is shared. Usually, companies use third-party providers to assess and teach employees. Sometimes, basic skills courses are held off-site. In some cases, one-on-one tutoring is provided in the employee's home, as resources allow.

Successful programs work to remove barriers to participation. There is flexibility in scheduling classes around work schedules and employee personal needs. Support for childcare may be provided. Where participation is known, action may be taken to adjust shift schedules to permit class participation.

Partner with Outside Resources

You will need help in starting and running a program. Contact and build relationships with a third-party literacy/essential skills provider early. There are many resources that can help you develop a successful program. Use these resources to:

- Help organize and position the program
- Provide professional expertise in workplace literacy needs assessment
- Prepare or recommend courses
- Provide instructors
- Manage the student/learning interface
- Provide progress evaluations

Develop Strategies to Manage Costs

Different organizations use different strategies to meet the costs of literacy/essential skills programs. Many organizations have shared cost/time policies.

Examples of cost-sharing models:

- The organization pays instructor/course costs and pays the employee one hour of wage for every two hours of instruction.

- Instruction time is outside of the normal working hours so that normal work or shift time is not disrupted.

- Some organizations pay for one-on-one tutoring in the employee's home

- Community-based courses and assistance may be available at little or no cost to the organization or employee.

Costs will vary considerably, depending on the extent of the program and how the program is organized. For example,one large Ontario employer who has assisted 300 employees in basic skills development (reading, writing, math, and computer skills) over the last five years, approximately $600 per employee participant. Some of the outside costs that may be incurred include:

Training element	Sample costs
Program consultation	Hourly basis $40 to $50 per hour
Needs assessment	For an organization of 100 employees, a needs assessment may cost $2,000 to $4,000
Classroom space	Space will need to be rented if classes are held off-site
Pilot project	Average $3,000 to $6,000 if a course delivered on-site
Single session program	10–15 week session (30–45 course hours), 5–15 students 1 session, 1 instructor: typical cost: $10,000 1 session, 4 courses (each 30–45 hours) up to 60 students: 4 instructors: typical cost: $30,000
Multiple session programs	average cost ranges from $40,000 to $70,000 based on e.g. 2–3 sessions per year, 1–4 courses per session

In some provinces, financial assistance may be available. Check with the appropriate agency listed in Appendix D - *Sources of Help*.

Set Realistic Expectations

Improving employee literacy/essential skills is only one part of the plan to achieve your workplace goals. However, failing to improve skill levels may be a barrier to achieving those goals. Understanding how improved skill levels will add to your overall improvement goals will help position your strategic plan for success.

Also, be realistic about the progress and rate of progress that an employee may be able to achieve. For example, it is not realistic to expect that an employee with a grade 6 education will be able to complete requirements for the GED certificate (high school equivalency) in six months. Good progress can be made, but it is important to review with your skills provider(s) the rates of progress that can be reasonably expected.

Be Innovative

ArcelorMittal Dofasco, as part of its Essential Skills undertaking, has initiated a program of employee-to-employee tutoring. Employee volunteers (unpaid) work with employees participating in the essential skills program on a one-to-one basis, outside of company time. This program has been well received, both by the volunteers and the participants. Costs to the company are minimal. The Essential Skills instructors do volunteer screening and placement. Again, confidentiality of participants is maintained—except to the mentor.

Gain Management Support

There must be strong management commitment to make a literacy/essential skills program work. An organization may only get one chance. If you decide to proceed with an essential skills program—do it well and show the same energy, enthusiasm, and skill as you would in introducing a new product innovation:

Remember - although the organization expects to see benefits, the real customer is the employee. Consider the role of the customer in your product development, marketing, sales, and service. Do you listen to your customers? Do you respond to their needs? Do you adapt and change your products to meet changing needs? Do you make it easy for them to purchase your products? Keep these views in mind when you are designing and implementing your essential skills program.

PROGRAM PLANNING

The purpose of this phase is to develop the plans for implementing a workplace literacy/essential skills program. There are many details and cost impacts associated with the various strategies for implementation. Consequently, this phase will require a good understanding of the basis for management agreement, as well as good communication with senior management during plan development.

Planning activities may include:

- Developing the objectives and goals for the program
- Assigning roles and responsibilities
- Informing employees about the program
- Creating a workplace committee involving employees, the union (if any), and management
- Contracting with an outside resource for help in developing and carrying out assessments, course requirements, sources of courses and instructors, employee evaluations and program evaluations
- Conducting a needs assessment
- Defining the skill areas and success expectations to be included in program
- Determining an employee relations policy on confidentiality and voluntary participation, and how these will be protected
- Determining where classes will be held, who will be responsible for obtaining instructors, contractual plans for the training portion, etc.
- Development of the implementation strategy, including consideration of an initial pilot project, marketing, and promotion
- Determining the organization's policy for course costs, course scheduling, pay and other employee supports
- Ensuring management agreement/support

1.   Establish the objectives and goals for the program

Your objectives will be drawn from the literacy/essential skills needs in your workplace, as determined by your business case, and should be part your strategic plan to deliver a longer-term vision. Specific goals will include 1) defining measurable outcomes to help focus action steps and 2) developing strategies to assess progress and success. Preliminary goals, at this point, will help focus the planning process and development of action plans.

2.   Establish roles and responsibilities

As with any business project, ensuring sound organization for the project will help to ensure success. This is a time when it is important that key roles are filled and responsibilities assigned.

Two key roles include:

Project Sponsor: This is typically a member of senior management. In a small company, it will typically be the owner or general manager. In a larger organization, it will typically be a senior manager with a committed interest in the project and its success.

Project Champion/Manager: In successful projects, this person has come from a number of different sources. A member of the Human Resources Department is one source, but leadership may also come from a line department, union leadership or an outside resource, as other examples.

If the worksite has a union(s), you need to determine how it will be involved. Several of the unions have basic skills development programs for their members and may be able to provide leadership in encouraging employees to join.

3.   Let the employees know

Do:
- Include the literacy/essential skills project with other skill development programs
- Connect the project to business and job skill needs
- Stress skills development (i.e. over literacy)
- Include ways for employees to be involved in the planning

Don't:
- Use language like "literacy" or "low-literacy"
- Single out employees in terms of their need to upgrade basic skills
- Promise promotions or job security on the basis of individual results from a program

4.   Establish a workplace committee involving employees, the union (if any) and management

Many organizations have found that early and continuing employee participation in the planning and running of a basic skills program is essential to the success of the program. One of the first steps in the planning has been to create a management/employee planning team.

Employee members can:

- Help identify issues and root causes
- Assist in the plan to address the training needs
- Assist in the selection of service providers
- Assist in the promotion and marketing strategy to other employees
- Be effective ambassadors for the program
- Help to develop workplace buy-in and ownership

Management needs to:

- Be receptive to employee input
- Listen and respond to employee concerns

The planning and implementation team should be prepared to listen, listen, listen, and adapt, adapt, adapt. The issues and the right course of action may not always be what management thinks.

Membership on the team should:

- Reflect the diversity of the workplace
- Include employees who will be potential users of the program

You will need to decide what the role and responsibilities will be for the planning team. Consider:

- How much time will membership on the team require? How will this be accommodated in work schedules?
- Who will provide leadership for the team?
- Will the team be self-directed or will it require a facilitator?
- What specific tasks will the team work on?
- What team training and team building will be required?

5.   **Contract with an outside resource** for help in developing and carrying through assessments, course requirements, sources of courses and instructors, employee evaluations and program evaluations

Most organizations have used outside resources for many parts of their programs. There are two basic reasons for doing this:

- The organization does not have the necessary expertise in-house
- The organization has policies that maintain the confidentiality of the individual assessments and other aspects of individual employee participation in the program

Professional resources may be needed to:

- Conduct an essential skills needs assessment
- Do assessments of the essential skill levels of individuals
- Provide courses and instruction
- Provide individual tutoring
- Do program evaluations

In addition, depending on organizational needs, other outside professional skills may also be needed.

Recommendation: Have the planning team participate in the selection of outside resources.

6.   Conduct a Workplace Skills Assessment

An essential skills assessment done by a skilled assessor will help to confirm the actual skill gaps that exist or could exist based on anticipated workplace plans. A typical skills assessment will document essential skills needs in the workplace.

The assessor will do this by:

- Analyzing workplace tasks and documents
- Interviewing employees for their background and abilities
- Documenting and measuring attitudes and expectations around education and training
- Investigating other aspects of the organization that relate to essential skills

The assessor may also use an employee survey and/or a focus group(s) to obtain input. Normally, a sampling of employees and jobs will be involved.

Recommendation: Have the planning team participate in determining the scope and contents of the needs assessment.

7.   Establish the skill areas and success expectations to be included in the program

These should be based on the workplace skills assessment.

The needs assessor and/or the employees may have viewpoints that vary with management's viewpoint. Be open and receptive to feedback. For example, management's perception may be that the reason employees do not do what management expects is that employees are lacking basic skills. The assessment feedback may be that management practices are a source of difficulty. It may be a sign that managers and supervisors would benefit from improving their management skills. The organization and its goals are best served by addressing all training needs positively, whether for employees or management.

Recommendation: Plan in conjunction with the workplace committee.

8.   Determine how individual training needs will be addressed

Recommendations:

- Design training to address the specific gaps that have been identified (teach to the task).
- Include essential skills training in other skills training plans and schedule so that skills learned in training can be practiced/used very soon after training.
- Develop individual training plans for each person, based on his/her specific skills gaps.

9. **Determine employee relations policy on confidentiality and voluntary participation and decide how it will be protected.**

Include input from the planning team in developing these policies. Ensure that they are applied and maintained, once they have been established. Some organizations have experienced pressure from supervisors for information about the status and progress of their employees, despite the fact that confidentiality policies are in place. Employees' confidence and willingness to participate in literacy/essential skills programs will diminish if confidentiality is not maintained.

10. **Determine organization policy for course costs, course scheduling, pay and other employee supports**

Decisions made on costs, scheduling, pay and other supports will reflect management commitment and the strength of the business case. Successful programs have generally been cost- and time-shared. Typical levels of support include:

Course Costs	• Paid for by company.
Scheduling	• Courses are scheduled to be convenient for employees. • Employees are consulted for best scheduling. • Typically, courses may be scheduled before or after shifts. • Course schedules are worked out to be compatible with shift scheduling. • Supervisors support individuals in working shift scheduling conflicts/issues.
Pay	• It is common for the company to pay an employee one hour of regular wage rate for every two hours of courses attended. (**Note:** One way to do this is to schedule courses one hour on company time, and one hour on employee time. If this is done at the beginning or end of a shift, employees from two shifts may attend the same course.)
Other Supports	• Some programs offer to pay for childcare costs for an employee on a course attended outside of normal working hours.

11. **Determine where classes will be held, who will be responsible for obtaining instructors, contractual arrangements for the training portion, etc.**

The following table outlines different approaches, with pros and cons to starting literacy and essential skill development programs. As noted in Appendix D - *Sources of Help*, service providers may include: local colleges, local school system (e.g. school boards), voluntary literacy organizations, literacy/essential skills professionals/freelancers and labour organizations.

Training Approach	Pros/Cons
1. Use of standard credit courses (high school or college)	**Pro***:* • Lowest cost **Cons:** • Inflexible schedule - May be difficult for employees to participate • Curriculum-based - Fixed course content – normally no tailoring for organization or individual needs
2. Use of community-based literacy classes	**Pros:** • Classes are free • Flexible access **Con:** • Not related to specific company needs - No company influence on program design, etc.
3. Custom-designed courses or courses tailored by a literacy/essential skills provider	**Pros:** • Flexibility in content, timing, and location of course delivery • Greatest chance for success if material is focused, specifically applicable to the learner, and immediately usable **Cons:** • Much more organization involvement • Higher cost
4. Establish a Learning Centre	**Pro:** • Easy, convenient access for employees • Easier to offer individual programs **Cons:** • Requires allocation of space • Staffing considerations • On-site location may be deterrent for some participants
5. Individual tutoring	**Pro:** • Offers greatest flexibility and ability to respond to individual needs **Con:** • Labour intensive

12.   Develop the implementation strategy, including consideration of an initial pilot project, marketing and promotion

In a very large organization, consider a pilot project in one or two departments to start. How the program is introduced to employees will affect its success. In developing your process consider:

- A name that will convey the vision for the program and encourage participation
- Tying in to, and building on, other skill development programs. Can you bring them together under one umbrella program?
- How your initiative can include development for people at all levels of the organization
- An event that lets people know they can learn and grow
- How initial notification will be made to employees
- Building appeal ("fun") into your kick-off

13.   Ensure management agreement/buy-in

Before proceeding, ensure that the management team is kept in the loop. Successful programs require cooperation, active support, and effort by all managers and supervisors. There needs to be commitment at all levels. Each manager and supervisor needs to understand what is expected of them, and their buy-in must be secured. For example, a supervisor may need to schedule an employee's shifts around training times. If the organization is doing some of the training on company time, then that needs to be worked into the schedule. Making a plan work will require everyone's support and commitment.

C. IMPLEMENTATING & EVALUATING YOUR PROGRAM

This phase implements the results of the organizing and planning phase. It is recommended that the workplace team assume a leading role in making decisions for the implementation phase. Activities may include:

1. Sell the program and gain employee participation

A plan may be necessary to develop interest and secure employee participation in an essential skills upgrading program. There are many factors that may influence people to avoid participating. The implementation plan should address possible barriers to participation and have plans to overcome these barriers.

Some of the barriers may include:

Lack of Employee Interest

Some employees have never thought about upgrading their literacy/essential skills. They may consider that they are too old. Other employees may be in denial about their problem or may have developed coping skills that, in their mind, overcome the problem. Certian employees may come from a family, cultural background or community that does not value "academic" skills. Many employees do not understand the economic impact of their current abilities.

Fear, Anxiety, and Nervousness

There may be fear of the unknown, anxiety about starting something new and not knowing what to expect. Employees may be concerned about the nature and content of the training experience. Some may recall bad experiences—frustration and humiliation from their school days. There may be concerns about being singled out, concerns of not being able to do what's expected or concerns about showing a weakness.

Scheduling and Personal Life Conflicts

Classes scheduled outside of the normal working hours may cause conflicts with personal life issues and responsibilities. Some of these conflicts may include childcare issues, transportation issues, family responsibilities or unsupportive partners.

Not Enough Drive to Take Action

Some employees may not see a need to improve literacy/essential skills. They may feel that higher skill levels are not necessary for their job or personal lives. They may also think that, at this stage of their life, improvement is not worth the effort. Others may realize that they need improvement but lack enough willpower to do something to improve. Taking steps to improve is making a change in their lives. This means taking a risk to make the change and, for some, the benefits do not seem to be worth the risk.

Receiving Mixed Signals from Management and Fellow Employees

Employees may receive mixed signals about participating in the program. While senior management and human resources personnel may strongly support participation, employee supervisors, or even fellow employees, may discourage participation if it creates other difficulties for them. Supervisors may give verbal or other signals about the problems created in having to schedule around employee absences from the workplace. Fellow employees may signal their unhappiness at having to pick up extra work. Lack of support from employees' closest contacts in the workplace may be a large barrier.

Some actions that will help to overcome barriers include many of the recommendations contained in earlier sections of the Guidebook, such as:

- Involving employees actively in the design and implementation of the program.
- Listening to employees and making the program design is responsive to their concerns.
- Working hard to ensure agreement and support throughout the organization.
- Designing training to be hands on, closely related to the employee's job or to his/her personal life, and usable very shortly after training.
- Employ instructors who have a real interest in the employees, and who can relate to the employee's jobs and personal lives.
- Ensure training uses adult education principles.
- Continue to work "barrier" issues, being flexible.
- Engaging employees' interest with a "hook" or "fun" activity

For many employees, school and formal learning situations may have ended many years ago. There may be a reluctance to volunteer for formal learning events or courses - particularly if school experiences were frustrating. One employer designed a course for all employees, entitled "Learning to Grow," that put a positive and stimulating light on learning. This course introduced and promoted the concept of lifelong learning and the need for all employees to continually build their skills and capabilities. This was coupled with a learning fair to stimulate employee interest in building their skills and capabilities.

For some employees, the drive to become involved in basic skills development may come from a non-work source, such as a spouse or family member. Keep in mind that success will breed success. A limited training event (both in selection of employees and in length), done well, can help build a core of believers who will spread the word. A second event, also done well, can reinforce the positive experience. Events that are fun, non-stressful and useful can start to break down the barriers and encourage participation.

2. Conduct individual assessments

An assessment of an employee's basic skills should only be carried out after the employee has volunteered for skills development. The purpose of the assessment is to determine learning goals and course placement for the employee. The assessment should be completely confidential to the employee. In leading organizations, assessments are carried out by a third party assessor, and no individual results (only total results for a significant number of employees) are shared with anyone in the company. This confidentiality is needed to obtain and retain the confidence and participation of the employee.

3. Fine-tune actual course design and schedules

It is recommended that the assessor and the planning team work together to determine the best way to meet the needs identified through the individual assessment process. The key objectives will be to determine the best instructional methods (e.g. classroom, one-to-one, or peer tutoring). The planning team should then be involved with the selection of the instructor(s), and the development of courses. Course material, if possible, should include actual workplace material. The planning team can help facilitate with identification of materials and processes that would be suitable to include in the course(s). Scheduling of courses and individual training schedules needs to be done in conjunction with affected managers, supervisors and participating employees, working through conflicts and issues in a cooperative manner.

4. Deliver training

The responsibility for logistics and communication of physical arrangements needs to be assigned and an individual made accountable, to make sure that:

- The classroom (or alternative learning) locations are determined and scheduled
- Support equipment, materials, etc., are available
- Participants know where and when the activity will take place

Continued management support during this phase and ensuring that supervisors are supported and their issues are worked out is critical.

The planning team can play a key role in monitoring the process, listening for issues and assisting in solving issues as they arise.

5.   Evaluate training

Each course or learning activity should have an evaluation, including input from the instructor and participants. This can be a responsibility of the planning team. This evaluation could include:

- Input from the instructor and participants
- Input on course-related issues from supervisors and others affected
- Feedback from participants who did not complete the course

Learning and improvement opportunities should be documented and used for continuous improvement of the program.

Be sure to thank participants and others who provided feedback.

6.   Celebrate progress – of individuals and of the initiative

Individual assessments need to be confidential, but recognizing of completion of a course, and celebrating success are important motivators, both for participants and others. Certificates and a presentation ceremony will recognize the success.

7.   Evaluate program and enable continuous improvement

Successful programs have processes in place for management to regularly review progress towards goals. These processes help:

- Hold those responsible to be accountable
- Demonstrate management's commitment to the organization
- Provide the opportunity to make changes to keep the program on track

Course evaluations and overall assessments of the program will provide input to make improvements and establish new expectations and goals. A regular review of the Key Success Factors in Section A, as well as course reviews and other feedback received, will give insight for continuous improvement of the program and its success.

In conclusion…

We hope this Guidebook has given you the inspiration and tools to champion workplace literacy and essential skills in your own working environment. It is clear that such champions have the power to change the lives of those who participate, as well as to improve business results and contribute to the organization's competitive advantage. We wish you well.

Do you have a story to tell?

We'd like to hear from you. Please contact us at the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, Business Results Through Literacy and Essential Skills Project. Telephone: 905-672-3466

Tell *your* story!

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A - CONTEXT FOR LITERACY: THE INTERNATIONAL ADULT LITERACY SURVEY DATABASE (IALS)

1. Terminology

Different companies, organizations and agencies use various terms to label literacy skill needs. Some of the terms include "essential skills", "basic skills", "foundation skills" and "workplace literacy skills". Some groups apply a narrow definition to a term; others may use the same term but apply a broader definition.

Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) has defined **nine essential skills:**

❶ Reading Text   ❷ Writing
❸ Document Use   ❹ Numeracy
❺ Thinking Skills   ❻ Working with Others
❼ Computer Use   ❽ Continuous Learning
❾ Oral Communication

More information and sample occupational profiles of essential skills requirements can be found at the HRDC Essential Skills website:

http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/workplaceskills/essential_skills/general/home.shtml

In this Guidebook, we use the terms literacy, basic and essential skills to mean the general skills needed for day-to-day functioning in the workplace and/or the skills needed for a specific job. The definitions may be interpreted either narrowly or more broadly. The choice is up to you and your organization.

A narrow definition of literacy includes only reading and math skills. A broader definition may include other basic or essential skills, such as oral communication skills, computer skills, interpersonal interaction skills, problem solving skills, etc.

Each of these terms covers a broad range of skills. All persons are somewhere in the range. Every job has basic and essential skill requirements that are somewhere in the range.

The International Adult Literacy Survey Database

During the 1980's, it was realized that the traditional measures of literacy no longer met the needs of modern society. The fact that a person could read the words of written material did not mean that they understood or could use written material effectively. To discover the true levels of literacy, the International Adult Literary Survey Database (IALS) was developed to measure the ability of a person to understand and use written material.

The survey involved seven countries (Canada, Germany, the Netherlands, Poland, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United States) in a cross-sectional research initiative conducted in the fall of 1994. Subsequently, 15 other countries also used the survey. Its goal was to create comparable national literacy profiles by testing literacy skills with complex measurement methods, using materials from the real world. The Canadian survey sample size was 5,660.

Literacy profiles can be computed for each of the three different domains listed below:

Prose literacy — the knowledge and skills needed to understand and use information from texts including editorials, news stories, poems and fiction.

Document literacy — the knowledge and skills required to locate and use information contained in various formats, including job applications, payroll forms, transportation schedules, maps, tables and graphics.

Quantitative literacy — the knowledge and skills required to apply arithmetic operations, either alone or sequentially, to numbers embedded in printed materials, such as balancing a cheque book, figuring out a tip, completing an order form or determining the amount of interest on a loan from an advertisement.

The scores range on a scale from 0 to 500 points for each domain. Each of the scales are split into five different levels from level 1 for the lowest literacy proficiency to level 5 for the strongest level of literacy proficiency.

IALS Literacy Levels[9]

To report more accurately, The IALS created 5 levels of competency in each of the literacy domains it tested (prose, document and quantitative). They scored participants in each domain and combined the scores of all three domains to determine each participant's literacy level.

In each of the three literacy domains, tasks of varying difficulty were placed on a scale from 0–500. The range of scores corresponding to each level are as follows:

Level 1 (0–225)
Level 2 (226–275)
Level 3 (276–325)
Level 4 (326–375)
Level 5 (376–500)

[9] Source: www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/89-588-XIE/about.htm

Description of the IALS Prose, Document, and Quantitive literacy levels

	Prose	Document	Quantitative
Level 1 (0 to 225)	Most of the tasks at this level require the reader to locate one piece of information in the text that is identical or synonymous to the information given in the directive. If a plausible incorrect answer is present in the text, it tends not to be near the correct information.	Most of the tasks at this level require the reader to locate a piece of information based on a literal match. Distracting information, if present, is typically located away from the correct answer. Some tasks may direct the reader to enter personal information onto a form.	Although no quantitative tasks used in the IALS fall below the score value of 225, experience suggests that such tasks would require the reader to perform a single, relatively simple operation (usually addition) for which either the numbers are already entered onto the given document and the operation is stipulated, or the numbers are provided and the operation does not require the reader to borrow.
Level 2 (226-275)	Tasks at this level tend to require the reader to locate one or more pieces of information in the text, but several distractors may be present, or low-level inferences may be required. Tasks at this level also begin to ask readers to integrate two or more pieces of information, or to compare and contrast information.	Document tasks at this level are a bit more varied. While some still require the reader to match on a single feature, more distracting information may be present or the match may require a low-level inference. Some tasks at this level may require the reader to enter information onto a form or to cycle through information in a document.	Tasks in this level typically require readers to perform a single arithmetic operation (frequently addition or subtraction) using numbers that are easily located in the text or document. The operation to be performed may be easily inferred from the wording of the question or the format of the material (for example, a bank deposit form or an order form).
Level 3 (276 to 325)	Tasks at this level tend to direct readers to search texts to match information that require low-level inferences or that meet specified conditions. Sometimes the reader is required to identify several pieces of information that are located in different sentences or paragraphs, rather than in a single sentence. Readers may also be asked to integrate or to compare and contrast information across paragraphs or sections of text.	Tasks at this level appear to be most varied. Some require the reader to make literal or synonymous matches, but usually the matches require the reader to take conditional information into account or to match on multiple features of information. Some tasks at this level require the reader to integrate information from one or more displays of information. Other tasks ask the reader to cycle through a document to provide multiple responses.	Tasks found in this level typically require the reader to perform a single operation. However, the operations become more varied—some multiplication and division tasks are found in this level. Sometimes two or more numbers are needed to solve the problem and the numbers are frequently embedded in more complex displays. While semantic relation terms, such as "how many" or "calculate the difference", are often used, some of the tasks require the reader to make higher order inferences to determine the appropriate operation.
Level 4 (326 to 375)	These tasks require readers to perform multiple-feature matching or to provide several responses where the requested information must be identified through text-based inferences. Tasks at this level may also require the reader to integrate or contrast pieces of information, sometimes presented in relatively lengthy texts. Typically, these texts contain more distracting information and the information that is requested is more abstract.	Tasks at this level, like those in the previous levels, ask the reader to match on multiple features of information, to cycle through documents, and to integrate information; frequently however, these tasks require the reader to make higher order inferences to arrive at the correct answer. Sometimes, conditional information is present in the document, which must be taken into account by the reader.	With one exception, the tasks at this level require the reader to perform a single arithmetic operation where typically either the quantities or the operation are not easily determined. That is, for most of the tasks at this level, the question or directive does not provide a semantic relation term ,such as "how many" or "calculate the difference", to help the reader.
Level 5 (376 to 500)	Some tasks at this level require the reader to search for information in dense text that contains a number of plausible distractors. Some require readers to make high-level inferences or use specialized knowledge.	Tasks at this level require the reader to search through complex displays of information that contain multiple distractors, to make high-level inferences, process conditional information, or use specialized knowledge.	These tasks require readers to perform multiple operations sequentially, and they must disembed the features of the problem from the material provided or rely on background knowledge to determine the quantities or operations needed.

APPENDIX B - WHERE WE STAND: CANADA'S RESULTS IN THE IALS

The International Adult Literacy Survey Database (IALS) is an ongoing, cross-sectional research initiative. The goal of the IALS was to create comparable national literacy profiles by testing literacy skills with complex measurement methods using materials from the real world.

The IALS literacy tests covered three domains: prose, document and quantitative. In each of the three domains, tasks of varying difficulty were placed on a scale from 0-500, with Level 1 as the lowest level (0-225) and Level 5 as the highest level (376-500). These literacy levels have been used to describe an individual's or group's ability to function in our complex society (see below).

The Results

IALS results demonstrated a strong, plausible link between literacy and a country's economic potential.

"Even though Canadians are better educated and their living environments more literacy rich than ever before, many adults nevertheless experience a literacy challenge in everyday life. … Literacy requirements in Canadian workplaces have increased over time, by some measures dramatically so. In addition to the abilities normally associated with literacy – mainly reading and writing – people today also require higher-order analytical skills, numeracy and technological and computer literacy…. Contrary to expectation, the report finds little improvement in literacy proficiency since 1994. The new survey shows almost nine million Canadians, aged 16 to 65 (12 million if Canadians over 65 are included), score below the desirable threshold of prose literacy performance." [10]

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[10] www.nald.ca/fulltext/booc/booc.pdf

Levels of Prose, Document, And Quantitative Literacy, Canadian Adults Aged 16 And Over and Employed Population, 1994[11]

Literacy Level	Total Adult Population			Employed Population		
	Prose	Document	Quantitative	Prose	Document	Quantitative
		%				
Level 1	21	23	22	12	12	12
Level 2	26	24	26	25	24	25
Total Levels 1&2	**47**	**47**	**48**	**37**	**36**	**37**
Level 3	33	30	32	37	35	36
Level 4/5	20	22	20	26	29	27

Literacy by Age Group[12]

Age is also a factor in literacy results. There is a particular decline in literacy levels above age 45. Although conclusive research has not been done, one factor may be that the levels of education are lower in older people compared with younger. It is also thought that there is a "use it or lose it" factor in literacy.
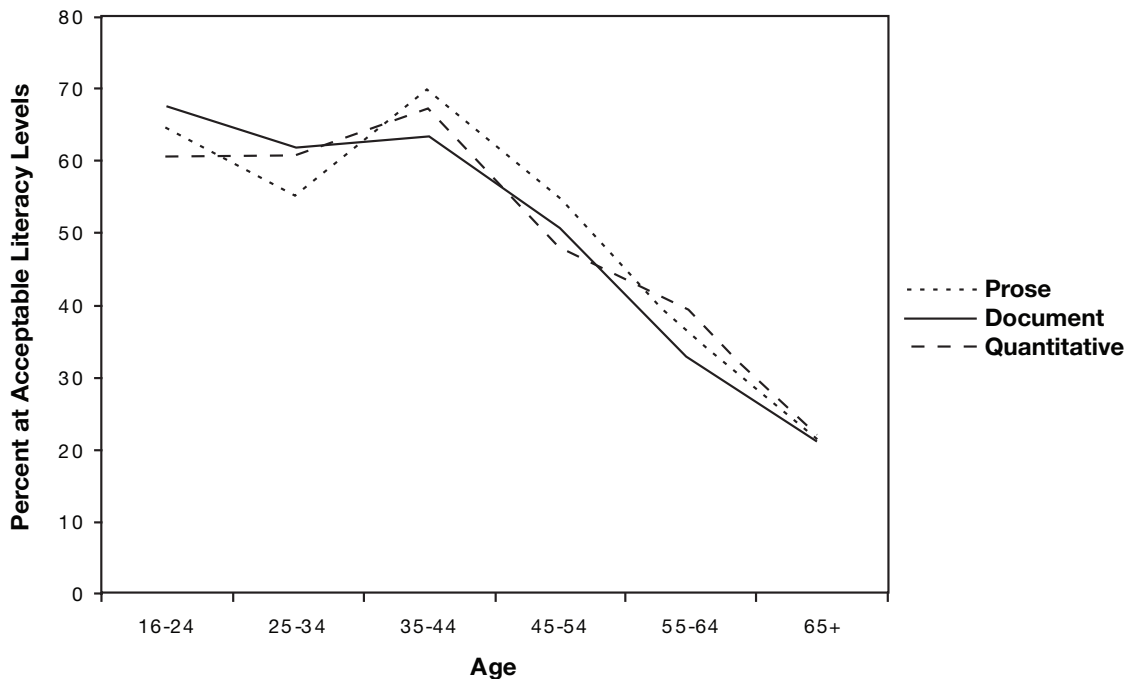
[11] Literacy Utilization in Canadian Workplaces, Krahn & Lowe, Statistics Canada, 1998, Pg. 17
[12] At Risk: A Socio-economic Analysis of Health and Literacy Among Seniors, Page 51, Statistics Canada - Catalogue no. 89-552, no. 5

Literacy and Education Level

Very few adults who have only completed Grade 8 or less have adequate literacy ability. Less than 40% of adults who have some secondary school education (but who have not graduated), have adequate literacy levels. Even some college and university graduates lack adequate literacy skills.
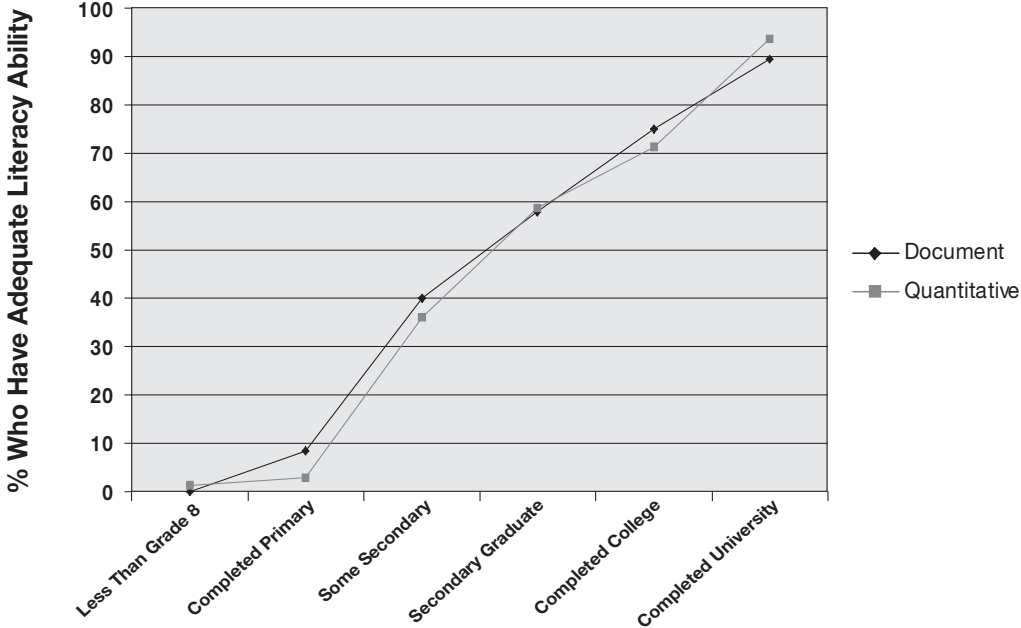
Average Literacy Ability by Industry Sector

The average literacy levels of people employed in various industry sectors also varies. The average literacy level of people employed in Construction, Transport, and Manufacturing sectors is significantly lower than those employed in Financial or Personal services.
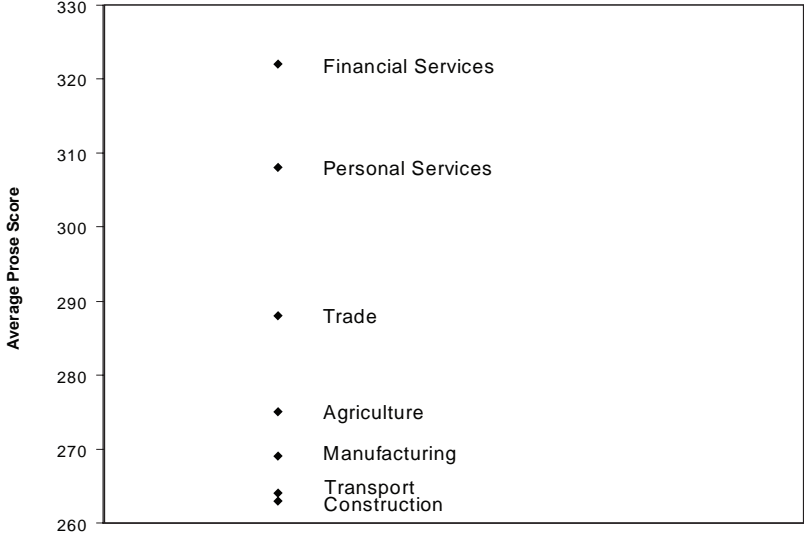
English As A Second Language (ESL) and Literacy

The Canadian demographic is constantly changing and over the last 10 years, there has been a large influx of new immigrants to Canada. A 2006 report published by Citizenship and Immigration Canada determined that 50% of permanent residents could be found in Ontario.[13]

Canada – Permanent Residents by Province or Territory, 2006 (Showing Percentage Distribution)

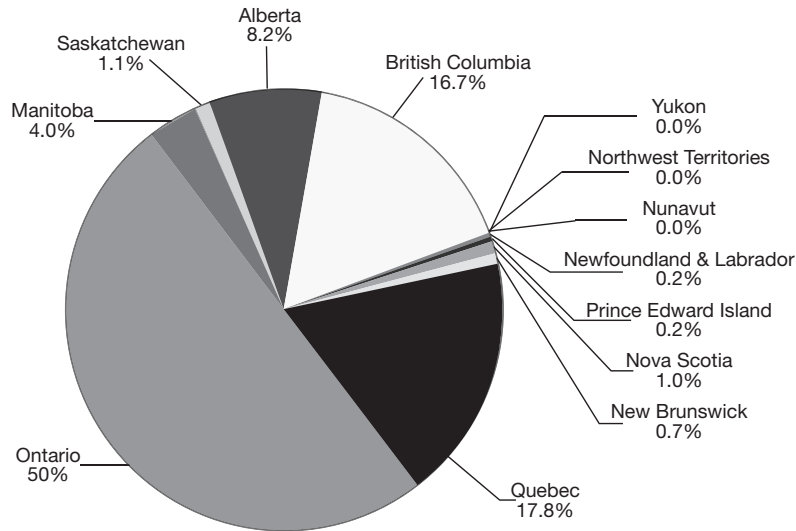| Province/territory	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
					Percentage distribution					
Newfoundland and Labrador	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2
Prince Edward Island	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.2
Nova Scotia	1.3	1.2	0.8	0.7	0.7	0.6	0.7	0.8	0.7	1.0
New Brunswick	0.3	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.7
Quebec	12.9	15.3	15.3	14.3	15.0	16.4	17.9	18.8	16.5	17.8
Ontario	54.5	53.0	54.8	58.7	59.3	58.3	54.1	53.0	53.6	50.0
Manitoba	1.7	1.7	2.0	2.0	1.8	2.0	2.9	3.1	3.1	4.0
Saskatchewan	0.8	0.9	0.9	0.8	0.7	0.7	0.8	0.8	0.8	1.1
Alberta	5.9	6.4	6.4	6.3	6.5	6.4	7.2	7.0	7.4	8.2
British Columbia	22.1	20.7	19.0	16.5	15.4	14.9	15.9	15.7	17.1	16.7
Yukon	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Northwest Territories	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Nunavut	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Province or territory not stated	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

[13] Facts and Figures 2006 immigration Overview: Permanent Residents.
http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/statistics/facts2006/permanent/17.asp

Canada - Permanent Residents by Province or Territory

To gain a better understanding of the actual number of permanent residents, the 2006 study also provided population numbers based on each province.

Province/territory	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
					Population Number					
Newfoundland and Labrador	417	402	424	417	393	407	359	579	496	511
Prince Edward Island	144	136	135	189	134	106	153	310	330	565
Nova Scotia	2,832	2,043	1,594	1,609	1,700	1,418	1,474	1,770	1,929	2,585
New Brunswick	663	723	660	758	798	706	665	795	1,091	1,646
Quebec	27,936	26,622	29,155	32,503	37,601	37,591	39,553	44,243	43,312	44,677
Ontario	117,737	92,397	104,166	133,505	148,640	133,592	119,723	125,092	140,524	125,914
Manitoba	3,703	2,997	3,725	4,635	4,593	4,619	6,502	7,426	8,096	10,051
Saskatchewan	1,734	1,564	1,729	1,882	1,704	1,668	1,668	1,942	2,107	2,724
Alberta	12,832	11,188	12,089	14,363	16,408	14,767	15,837	16,473	19,404	20,717
British Columbia	47,836	35,973	36,126	37,430	38,474	34,055	35,231	37,028	44,771	42,079
Yukon	89	62	77	60	65	50	59	62	65	65
Northwest Territories	100	63	58	83	95	60	94	89	84	98
Nunavut	0	0	14	12	13	12	9	8	12	9
Province or territory not stated	15	25	5	13	23	0	24	7	18	8
Total	**216,038**	**174,195**	**189,957**	**227,459**	**250,641**	**229,051**	**221,351**	**235,824**	**262,239**	**251,649**

Due to a lack of data, it is difficult to discern what the literacy levels are in new immigrants as, it pertains to the newly hired. However, as more companies invest in employee training, a more comprehensive picture is emerging regarding the literacy level of their respective workforce.

Much of the policy developed to address ESL and literacy issues is dictated by labour force needs. Even when there is some level of functional, everyday language and some literate background, new immigrants find it difficult to meet the workplace expectations of 1) having a pre-existing knowledge of the vocational language 2) being able to read instructions and 3) being able to produce the language of work. A policy with finite timelines and work language expectations is truly distanced from the ESL learner.[14]

To complicate this situation further, some new immigrants arrive without a solid understanding of their first language, which makes it difficult to master literacy and numeracy in their second language. Like many adults struggling with literacy issues, the ESL learner struggles with an overwhelming sense of shame and inadequacy, which is often compounded by the traumatic events that have influenced their migration.

Manufacturers who identify an ESL literacy barrier would benefit from implementing a consistent training program that nurtures trust and fosters an environment that is conducive to learning. This can be achieved through smaller weekly classes, having a dedicated trainer and presenting the material in context. Almost all ESL literacy learners lack familiarity with a formal education system and can, therefore, find it difficult to initially work independently. Individual attention to the learner is beneficial, with routine follow-up to evaluate if the educational objectives are being met. Allowing the learner to assist in the curriculum development (providing input by expressing language goals) creates a worker-centered approach from the very beginning.

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[14] INSCAN: International Settlement Canada, Vol.20, no. 4 (Spring 2007), pp.6-8

A more comprehensive understanding of international cultures and languages would lend itself to a more holistic approach to teaching the ESL literacy learner and addressing their needs. An article published by Allene Guss Grognet, Center for Applied Linguistics, Project in Adult Immigrant Education (PAIE), June 1997, suggests that similar characteristics in ESL learners can be seen in sectors such as Manufacturing, Technical, Service and Agricultural.

The perceived needs of ESL learners have been broken down into three distinct categories that adequately articulate the necessity for literacy training.

The three categories are as follows:

To Get a Job
To secure a job (other than through familial connections), second language learners need to be able to orally give personal information; express ability; express likes and dislikes; and answer and ask questions. They might also need literacy skills, such as reading a want ad and writing an application form.

To Survive on a Job
To survive on a job, second language learners need to be able to follow oral and written directions; understand and use safety language; ask for clarification; make small talk; and request reasons. If there are any manuals and job aids involved, they need to locate written information; find facts or specifications in text materials; determine the meaning of technical vocabulary and those enabling words attached to them like twist, stir, and pour; and cross-reference text information with charts, diagrams, and illustrations.

To Thrive on a Job
To thrive on a job and have job mobility, second language learners need to be able to participate in group discussions; give and follow directions; teach others; hypothesize; predict outcomes; state a position; express an opinion; negotiate; interrupt; and take turns. On a literacy level, knowing how to access and use written information from diverse sources is essential. In addition, many recent arrivals will benefit from classes to help cultural integration. Often new immigrants come from countries where business is conducted differently and relationships between employees and management are different. Many will welcome a chance to understand aspects of integrating into the community and society.

Learning Disabilities and Literacy/Essential Skills
Employees with literacy and learning disability barriers have benefited tremendously from the implementation of literacy workplace training programs. Initial assessments are an invaluable tool to assist the trainer in tailoring a training program that best suits the needs of the learner. Routine program evaluation is paramount because it provides an opportunity to measure the success of the training sessions.

Exciting technological advances have been made to assist employers and employees overcome these obstacles. Special needs computers and other specialized devices to address specific learning disabilities are slowly becoming more prominent in the workplace. Word prediction software, which is particularly useful for slow typists, probe or pen users, and people with minor visual impairments or dyslexia, provides an invaluable tool for improving the literacy/essential skill levels of the learning disabled.

Employee literacy/essential skill training programs serve to improve overall awareness, improve productivity and output, and promote a sense of company cohesion. For a more comprehensive look at available resources and employment of people with disabilities, visit CME's *Business Takes Action Initiative* website at **www.ten20action.ca.**

APPENDIX C - DATABASES, GUIDES & TOOLKITS

Research & Databases

Literacy in Canada

This list is by no means exhaustive, as studies and research findings are becoming available on a regular basis, but here are some excellent starting points:

National Adult Learning Database (NALD). www.nald.ca

The International Adult Literacy Survey website: http://www.nald.ca/nls/ials/introduc.htm

Reading the Future: A portrait of Literacy in Canada. Starts at www.nald.ca/nls/ials/ialsreps/ialsbk1.htm

Breaching The Barriers to Workplace Literacy, Phase I Report, Conference Board of Canada, January, 2001. http://www.conferenceboard.ca/education/pdf/barriers.pdf

Nonparticipation in Literacy and Upgrading Programs, A National Study. By Ellen Long, Leanne Taylor, Doug Hart, 2002. Published by ABC CANADA, Toronto, Ontario

Workplace Literacy: An Introductory Guide for Employers. By Sue Waugh, 1991. Published by ABC CANADA eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/recordDetail?accno=ED362660

Skills and Talent

Shifting Demographics: The Search for Talent, 2006. Ministry of Small Business and Entrepreneurship, Partnership and Business Development, Business Advisory Services Branch, Toronto, Ontario www.sbe.gov.on.ca

Workplace Literacy

Whose responsibility? Employers' views on developing their workers' literacy, numeracy and employability skills. By Ray Townsend, Peter Waterhouse, Workplace Learning Initiatives Pty Ltd., Australian Government, 2008. Adelaide, SA 5000, 2008. www.ncver.edu.au

Building Momentum and Finding Champions for Workplace Literacy in Ontario (field report). By Judith Bond, Workplace Training & Services Inc., Ontario Literacy Coalition. www.on.literacy.ca

Connecting the Dots… Linking Training Investment to Business Outcomes and the Economy. By Allan Bailey, Work and Learning Knowledge Centre, April, 2007. info@wlkc-csamt.ca

Programs in the Workplace: How to Increase Employer Support. By Lynette Plett, Canadian Council on Social Development, 2006. www.ccsd.ca

Guides & Toolkits

1. *The Guide to Clear Language* is available from a number of sources. A very good compendium is available from: www.camacam.ca/downloads/en/2005-01-Clear-Language-Literacy-Resources.pdf

2. Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) has a variety of essential skills tools. Start at http://srv108.services.gc.ca/english/general/employer.shtml

3. Frontier College, through its New Readers Bookstore, is a distributor of ESL and literacy resources. Some of the series include *On The Job English* and *English…No Problem*. www.frontiercollege.ca.

Frontier College has developed a number of innovative approaches and materials for ESL instruction. Start with:
*   *The Wonderful World of Words*
*   *A Toolbox for ESL Tutors – An Instructional Guide for Teaching English as a Second Language to Newcomers*

4. Workplace Central offers tools and advice. www.conferenceboard.ca/workplaceliteracy/

5. Another view of the competitive advantages of supporting workplace literacy: www.workplaceliteracy.ca/Celebrating_Literacy_Resource_Manual_2007.pdf

6. National Adult Learning Database (NALD) www.naldatwork.ca/ offers a variety of resources, including research and information on starting your own workplace literacy program.

7. ABC Literacy Foundation offers a publication that showcases leadership in workplace literacy. www.abc-literacy.org/en/workplace_literacy/training_matters

8. Resources to Guide Literacy Program Implementation:

    *   *Workplace Education Program Implementation Models: The Roles of Companies and Literacy Networks in Workplace Education*. By Paul Leegsma, Dale Iljow, and Paula Kent-Kuchmey. Published by Adult Basic Education Association of Hamilton, Hamilton, Ontario.

    *   *Workplace Literacy and Basic Skills*. By Sue Folinsbee. Published by National Literacy Secretariat, Ottawa, Ontario. 1990, updated 1994.

    *   *Good Practice in Use – Guidelines for Good Practice in Workplace Education*. By Mary Ellen Belfiore. Published by Ontario Literacy Coalition, September 2002.

9. Workplace Training Modules: Contact: *Team Time Training*
                                    Workplace Education Consultants
                                    Tel: 604-270-6899 local 246
                                    or
                                    CME - BC Division at Tel: 604-713-7800

APPENDIX D: SOURCES OF HELP

Alberta	**Alberta Workforce Essential Skills Steering Team (AWES)** Tel: 780-427-5717 **Alberta Association for Adult Literacy** Ste 605, 332 6 Ave. S. E. Calgary, AB T2G 4S6 Tel: 403-297-4994 Fax: 403-297-6037 Email: office@aaal.ab.ca Website: www.nald.ca/aaal.htm
British Columbia	**Literacy BC** Ste 601, 510 West Hastings Street Vancouver, BC V6B 1L8 Tel: 604-684-0624 Toll free in BC: 1-800-663-1293 Fax: 604-684-8520 Email: info@literacy.bc.ca Website: www.nald.ca/lbc.htm
Manitoba	**Workplace Education Manitoba** Ste 200, 800 Portage Ave. Winnipeg, MB R3G 0N4 Contact: Sandi Howell Advanced Education & Training, Industry Training Partnerships, Manitoba Government Tel: 204-945-1682 Fax: 204-945-0356 Email: showell@gov.mb.ca Website: www.wem.mb.ca
New Brunswick	**Literacy New Brunswick Inc.** Place 2000 250 King Street P.O. Box 6000 Fredricton, NB E3B 5H1 Tel: 506-457-7323 Fax: 506-453-3300 Website: www.anbi-lnbi.nb.ca/English/LNBhome.htm

New Brunswick (con't)	**New Brunswick Coalition for Literacy** 944 Prospect Street Fredricton, NB E3B 9M6 Tel: 506-457-1227 Toll free (NB): 1-800-563-2211 Fax: 506-458-1352 Email: nbcl@nbnet.nb.ca Website: nald.ca/nbclhom.htm
Newfoundland & Labrador	**Literacy Development Council of Newfoundland & Labrador** PO Box 8174 Station A St. John's, NF A1B 3M9 Tel: 709-738-7323 Toll Free: 1-800-563-1111 Fax: 709-738-7353 Email: dcoish@literacydevelopmentcouncil.nf.net Website: www.nald.ca/nfldlit.htm
Nova Scotia	**Nova Scotia Department of Education** Marjorie Davison, Manager, Labour Market Programs, Skill Development & Training 4th Floor, 2021 Brunswick St., PO Box 578 Halifax, NS B3J 2S9 Tel: 902-424-5191 Fax: 902-424-0489 Email: davisome@gov.ns.ca **Nova Scotia Federation of Labour** Linda Wentzel, Workplace Education Coordinator PO Box 1750, Lunenburg, NS B0J 2C0 Tel: 902-634-4501 Fax 902-527-8648 Email: linda.wentzel@ns.sympatico.ca **Association of Workplace Educators of Nova Scotia** Margan Dawson 33 Old Mill Road, Hammonds Plains, NS B3Z 1K3 Tel: 902-835-7949

Nova Scotia (con't)	**The Nova Scotia Provincial Literacy Coalition** P.O. Box 1516 Truro, NS B2N 5V2 Tel: 902-897-2444 Toll Free: 1-800-255-5203 Fax: 902-897-4020 E-mail: nsplc@truro.nscc.ca Website: www.nald.ca/nsplc.htm
Northwest Territories & Nunavut	**NWT Literacy Council** Box 761 5122-48th Street Yellowknife, NT X1A 2N6 Tel: 867-873-9262 Fax: 867-873-2176 Email: info@nwtliteracy.ca Website: www.nald.ca/nwtlc.htm **Workplace Education:** **Consultant, Literacy Support Services** **Literacy & Adult Education** Colleges & Careers Development GNWT Department of Education, Culture and Employment PO Box 1320 Yellowknife, NT X1A 2L9 Tel: 867-920-8816 Fax: 867-873-0237 Email: nwtliteracy@gov.nt.ca
Ontario	**Ministry of Education and Training** **(Ontario Government Training Hotline)** Tel: 1-800-387-5656 or 416-326-5656

ONTARIO REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

A

ABC Canada Literacy Foundation   Tel: (416) 218-0010
4211 Yonge St   Fax: (416) 218-0457
Suite 235   Website: www.abc-canada.org/
Toronto, ON, M2P 2A9

Action Community Literacy Centre   Tel: (519)836-2759
2 Quebec St.   Fax: (519) 836-7020
Suite 220   Website: www.actionread.com/
Guelph, ON, N1H 2T3

Adult Basic Education Association
35 King St E
Suite 7 (Main Floor)
Hamilton, ON, L8N 489

Tel: (905)527-2222
Fax: (905)527-2166
Website: www.abea.on.ca/index.shtml

Adult Literacy Council of Fort Erie
294 Ridge Rd N, P.O. Box 550   Fax:
Ridgeway, ON, L0S 1N0

Tel: (905) 894-9229
(905) 894-2759
Website: www.literacyforterie.ca/index.html

**A Commitment to Training
and Employment for Women**
215 Spadina Ave
Suite 350
Toronto, ON M5T 2C7

Tel: (416) 599-3590
Fax: (416) 599-2043
Website: www.actew.org

B

The Barrie Literacy Council
80 Bradford St
Unit 244
Barrie, ON, L4N 6S7

Tel: (705) 728-7323
Fax: (705) 728-7155
Website: www.nald.ca/litweb/province/on/barrie.html

C

**Centre d'apprentisage et de
formation PLUS**
123 Pitt St
Cornwall, ON, K6J 3P5

Tel: (613) 932-0165
Fax: (613) 932-9400
Website: www.cafplus.ca/english/index_en.html

CESBA
Box 611
Iroquois, ON, K0E 1K0

Tel: (613) 652-1595
Fax: (613) 652-4297
Website: www.nald.ca/litweb/province/on/barrie.html

**Colleges of Ontario Network for
Education & Training CON*NECT**
210 Adelaide St W
Toronto, ON, M5H 1W7

Tel: (416) 351-0330
Fax: (416) 351-9631
Website: http://collegeconnect.on.ca

Contact North
Northeast Regional Coordinating Centre
410 Falconbridge Rd
Unit 1
Sudbury, ON, P3A 4S4

Tel: (705) 560-2710
Fax: (705) 525-0136
Website: www.cnorth.edu.on.ca/cnorth/English/english.htm

D

Deaf Literacy Initiative
420 Britannia Rd E
Unit 109
Mississauga, ON, L4Z 3L5

Tel: (905) 897-5656
Fax: (905) 897-6676
TTY: (905) 897-6772
Website: www.deafliteracy.ca

E

East Parry Sound Literacy Council
324 Hwy 11
PO Box 280
South River, ON, P0A 1X0

Tel: (705) 386-0764
Fax: (705) 386-0764
Website: www.eastparrysoundliteracycouncil.ca/

F

Frontier College
35 Jackes Ave
Toronto, ON, M4T 1E2

Tel: 1-800-555-6523

H

Haldimand-Norfolk Literacy Council
47 Robinson St
Simcoe, ON, N3Y 1W5

Tel: (905) 774-9141
Fax: (905) 774-6464
Website: www.hnliteracy.com/index.php

Hamilton Literacy Council
75 MacNab St N (YMCA)
3rd Floor
Hamilton, ON, L8P 3C1

Tel: (905) 529-9907
Fax: (905)529-0526
Website: www.hamiltonreads.ca/index.php

L

Literacy Network of Durham Region
850 King St W
Suite 20
Oshawa, ON, L1J 8N5

Tel: (905)725-4786 or
1-800-263-0993
Website: www.lbspractitionertraining.com/index.html

Literacy Link of Eastern Ontario
(LLEO) (Kingston)
Bayridge Plaza
830A Development Dr
Kingston, ON, K7M 5V7

Tel: (613) 389-5307
Fax: (613) 389-5174
Website: www.lleo.ca/index.html

Literacy Network Northeast
(Timmins)
121 - 38 Pine St N
Timmins, ON, P4N 6K6

Tel: (705) 267-5663
Fax: (705) 267-5711
Websitew: ww.nt.net/~literacy/INDEX.htm

Literacy Link Niagara
Pen Centre
221 Glendale Ave
Unit 614L
St. Catharines, ON, L2T 2K9

Tel: (905) 937-8887
Fax: (905) 937-3555
Email: literacylink@on.aibn.com

Literacy Link South Central
(LLSC) (London)
213 Consortium Court
London, ON, N6E 2S8

Tel: (519) 681-7307
Fax: (519) 681-7310
Website: www.llsc.on.ca/

Literacy Northwest
(Thunder Bay)
135 North Syndicate Ave
Suite 204
Thunder Bay, ON, P7C 3V6

Tel: (807) 622-6666
Fax: (807) 622-5100
Website: www.literacynorthwest.on.ca/

Literacy Ontario Central South
(LOCS) (Peterborough)
113 Park St S
Suite 203
Peterborough ON, K9J 3R8

Tel: (705) 749-0675
Fax: (705) 749-1883
Website: www.locs.on.ca/index.cfm

M

Metro Toronto Movement for
Literacy (MTML)
344 Bloor St W
Suite 306
Toronto, ON, M5S 3A7

Tel: (416) 961-4013
Fax: (416) 961-8138
Website: www.mtml.ca/

Mid North Network for
Adult Learning
(Sudbury)
109 Elm St
Suite 202
Sudbury, ON, P3C 1T4

Tel: (705) 560-4774
Fax: (705) 560-0101
Website: www.mnlearn.on.ca/#

N

Niagara Training and
Adjustment Board (NTAB)
1 St. Paul St
Suite 605
St. Catharines, ON, L2R 7L2

Tel: (905) 641-0801
Fax: (905) 641-0308
Website: www.ntab.org

Niagara Regional Literacy Council
3 Great Western St
St. Catharines, ON, L2S 2K3

Tel: (905) 687-8299
Fax: (905) 687-8040
Website: www.literacyniagara.org

O

Ontario Literacy Coalition
65 Wellesley St E
Suite 503
Toronto, ON M4Y 1G7

Tel: (416) 963-5787
Fax: (416)963-8102
Website: www.on.literacy.ca

Ottawa-Carleton Community
Coalition for Literacy
107-211 Bronson
Ottawa, ON, K1R 6H5

Tel: (613) 233-3232
Fax: (613) 233-0299
Website: www.occl.ca/

P

Peel/Halton/Dufferin Adult Learning Network
c/o Meadowvale Branch
6677 Meadowvale Town Centre
Mississauga, ON, L5N 2R5

Tel: (905) 812-3533
Fax: (905) 812-3733
Website: www.phdaln.on.ca/main.cfm

Project READ Literacy Network
298 Frederick St
Kitchener, ON, N2H 2N5

Tel: (519) 570-3054
Fax: (519) 570-9510
Website: www.projectread.ca/

Q

Quill Network
(Walkerton)
PO Box 148
Walkerton, ON, N0G 2V0

Tel: (519) 881-4655
Fax: (519) 881-4638
Website: www.quillnet.org/index.htm

S

Simcoe/Muskoka Literacy Network
575 West St S
Unit 15, Rm 9
Orillia, ON, L3V 7N6

Tel: (705) 326-7227
Fax: (705) 326-7447
Website: www.nald.ca/litweb/province/on/smln/index.htm

T

Tri-County Literacy Network
(Chatham)
10 Fifth St S
2nd Floor
Chatham, ON, N7M 4V4

Tel: (519) 355-1771 or
1-877-333-4833
Website: www.tcln.on.ca/

W

Work and Learning Knowledge Centre
1 Nicholas St
Suite 1500
Ottawa, ON, K1N 7B7

Tel: (613) 241-3222
Fax: (613) 563-9218
Website: www.ccl-cca.ca/worklearning

| Prince Edward Island | **Workplace Education PEI**
PO Box 3254
3 Queen Street
Charlottetown, PEI, C1A 8W5

Tel: 902-368-6280
Fax: 902-368-4844
Email: workpei@pei.sympatico.ca
Website: http://www.nald.ca/wepei.htm

PEI Literacy Alliance
11 Queen Street, 1st Floor,
PO Box 400
Charlottetown, PEI C1A 7K7

Tel: 902-368-3620
Fax: 902-368-3269
Email: peiliteracy.alliance@pei.sympatico.ca
Website: www.nald.ca/peila.htm |
| Quebec | English:
Literacy Partners of Quebec
4855 Kensington Ave
Montreal, Quebec H3X 3S6

Tel.:   514-369-7962
Fax: 514-489-5302
LEARN Line   514-369-4447
Email: jbrandeis@nald.ca
Website: www.nald.ca/lpq.htm

The Centre for Literacy
3040 Sherbrooke Street. West
Montreal, Quebec H3Z 1A4
After April 21, 2009
2100 Marlowe Ave
Suite 236
Montreal, Quebec H4A 3L5

Tel: 514-931-8731
Fax: 514-931-5181
Email: info@centreforliteracy.qc.ca
Website: www.centreforliteracy.qc.ca |

Saskatchewan	**Saskatchewan Labour Force Development Board** Ste 202, 2222 13th Ave Regina, SK S4P 3M7 Tel: 306-352-5999 Fax: 306-757-7880 Toll free: 1-800-394-3899 Email: slfdb@slfdb.com Website: www.slfdb.com **Saskatchewan Literacy Network** Ste 206, 220 3rd Ave South Saskatoon, SK S7K 1M1 Tel: 306-653-7368 Fax: 306-653-1704 Email: saskliteracy@sasktel.net Website: www.nald.ca/sklitnet.htm
Yukon	**Yukon Learn** 308 Hanson St Whitehorse, YT Y1A 1Y6 Tel: 867-668-6280 Toll Free: 1-888-668-6280 Fax: 867-633-4576 Email: learn@yukonlearn.com Website: www.nald.ca/yuklearn.htm

Organizations

ABC CANADA

ABC CANADA Literacy Foundation is a national, registered charitable organization committed to promoting literacy to the general public and to the private sector. It is a partnership of business, labour, educators and government. ABC CANADA focuses on public awareness programs and creates and conducts national literacy awareness campaigns, provides promotional support to local literacy groups and conducts research to further the development of a fully literate Canadian population.

ABC CANADA Literacy Foundation
1450 Don Mills Road
Don Mills, ON M3B 2X7

Tel: 416-442-2998 in the greater Toronto area, or 1-800-303-1004
Fax: 416-442-2987
E-mail: abc@corporate.southam.ca
Website: www.abc-canada.org

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Ottawa, ON K1H 8M7

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Fax: 613-526-4857
Website: www.conferenceboard.ca

THE NATIONAL ADULT LITERACY DATABASE INC. (NALD)

The National Adult Literacy Database Inc. (NALD) is a federally incorporated, non-profit service organization that fills the crucial need for a single-source, comprehensive, up-to-date, and easily accessible database of adult literacy programs, resources, services, and activities across Canada. It also links with other services and databases in North America and overseas.

National Adult Literacy Database Inc.
Scovil House, 703 Brunswick Street
Fredericton, NB
E3B 1H8
Tel: (506) 457-6900/1-800-720-NALD (6253)
Fax: (506) 457-6910
E-mail: contactnald@nald.ca
Website: www.nald.ca

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