NATIONAL FRAMEWORK
AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO DEVELOPING ESSENTIAL SKILLS
We thank HRSDC for funding the pan-Canadian National Framework for Developing Essential Skills project. We acknowledge employers, college managers, faculty members and ES practitioners for going above and beyond our expectations. Special thanks to the 1,300 individuals, youth and adults from all walks of life, who agreed to an assessment of their ES levels. Without their engagement, this project would not have been possible.
FOREWORD

Canada is facing a skills crisis as a result of significant economic changes. There is a growing need for advanced technical skills and for skills that employers and international organizations consider to be essential to succeed in an increasingly knowledge-based, technology-driven, global economy. These essential skills (ES) include the foundational skills of reading, writing and numeracy, as well as the skills to manage information and problem solve, to work with and communicate effectively with others, and to use digital technology effectively.1

More than 40% of Canadian adults cannot read, write, do mathematics or solve problems at the level required to fully participate and succeed in today’s economy.2 Between 40% and 60% of adults enrolled in college applied programs do not master the ES at the level of complexity they need to learn technical skills, and a significant percentage are at risk of not completing their college programs. 3

The Integrated Approach to Developing Essential Skills (ES) is designed as a practical user-friendly guide for practitioners. It captures, codifies and structures elements of effective ES practice that, when systematically implemented, have been demonstrated to support ES skills gains with diverse priority groups and in diverse settings.

A product of a participatory action-research project led by the Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC), the Integrated Approach to Developing ES has been enriched by experienced ES experts and practitioners from 12 colleges and institutes working in 8 provinces in French and in English (ref. Annex B for a complete list of participating colleges and contributors). It has been tested in 17 pilot sites including nine colleges with more than 880 youth and adults enrolled in applied technical training programs, and eight workplaces with more than 450 employees of diverse socio-economic backgrounds.

The Integrated Approach to Developing ES is also meant to provide a solid, evidence-based reference point for adult educators, for ES practitioners and for those in a position to facilitate integration of ES into technical training programs, in order to increase the employability of Canadians.

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1. For more information on Essential skills, please visit the ACCC ES website: www.accc.ca/essentialskills2011/index.php/en/abouts
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

While the kind of practical knowledge through ES interventions is usually based on observations and narrative reports, the Integrated Approach to Developing ES allowed colleges to gather the expertise of experienced practitioners and create a network or a community of practice. Through its long-term support in successive ES projects, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) has contributed to the development of a growing community of ES practitioners, with an increased capacity to effectively address ES challenges in communities across the country. Through its’ funding of the pan-Canadian National Framework for Developing Essential Skills project, HRSDC provided the means for this community of practice to undertake an ambitious action-research initiative and to produce a systematic body of knowledge to inform and support effective ES practice in colleges, workplaces, and communities.

The purpose of this document is to give practitioners the opportunity to validate their practice, identify their interventions and capture the essence of their work and their relationships with learners, colleagues, employers and partners in order to share their expertise with beginners in the field of ES.

The ES Team wishes to extend their gratitude to Mrs. Wendy Magahay, Program Coordinator at Camosun College and to Mrs. Anne-Josée Tessier, Education Advisor at Collège Lionel Groulx for their dedication, their rigor in documenting each step of the Integrated Approach and for providing a user friendly guide to practitioners, decision-makers in institution and organization.

We thank HRSDC for funding the pan-Canadian National Framework for Developing Essential Skills project. ACCC acknowledges employers, college managers, faculty members, and ES practitioners for going above and beyond our expectations. Special thanks to the 1,300 individuals, youth, and adults from all walks of life, who agreed to an assessment of their ES levels. Without their engagement, this project would not have been possible.
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THE CASE FOR INVESTING IN ESSENTIAL SKILLS

There is always opportunity in crisis and Canada is facing a skills crisis. If we want to improve life for all Canadians, we need to engage fully in Essential Skills.”
— Sharon Carey, President, Bow Valley College

Over the last ten years, major changes have occurred that affect the workplace. Globalization of the economy and exponential development of information, communications and digital technology, product and just in time process innovations, quality control, health and safety requirements, etc. have increased the complexity of tasks in most jobs. Consequently, the levels of skills required of Canadians to perform at home and to compete on the global stage have also increased. These changes affect well-paying skilled jobs as well as those which used to be considered low skilled work. For example, shelf stockers now use personal digital assistants to keep track of supplies. Employers increasingly require employees that have the foundational skills to learn advanced technical skills, to innovate, and to adapt as technology evolves.

The relationship of foundational and other ES to the full set of required workplace skills is shown in the following figure.

Figure 1: Skills Pyramid

Literacy, numeracy, document use and oral communications are the foundation to acquire other skills. Critical thinking and complex problem solving, using digital equipment, team work, and continuous learning are also essential for performance and innovation, and to adapt to change.

Together, these essential skills provide the Velcro™ to which technical, academic and career skills can stick. The skills at the top of the pyramid are job-specific and are generally not transferable from one job to another.

An increasing number of companies that hired for many years on technical competencies alone recognize that performance problems and difficulties of integrating new employees in the organizational culture are more often than not linked to gaps in essential skills. They are adapting their human resources practices to ensure a good mix of technical and essential skills when hiring and promoting staff.

Four out of ten Canadian adults have levels of ES too low to be fully competent in most jobs in our modern economy. This means that employers do not have access to a supply of fully skilled workers, and that many of those who are working lack the foundational skills needed to innovate and to adapt to new technologies. This seriously constrains their ability to achieve their potential and to fully contribute to the Canadian economy.

4. Ontario Literacy Coalition, Menial No More - A discussion paper on advancing our workforce through digital skills.
5. These figures are taken from the OECD and from the Conference Board of Canada 2012 report card, How Canada Performs. www.conferenceboard.ca/hcp/Details/education.aspx. Results for the OECD Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC), are anticipated in Fall 2013. For more information go to www.oecd.org/education/highereducationandadultlearning/piaacprogrammeforth internacionalassessmentofadultcompetencies.htm
Mastery of ES is measured on a 500-point scale from the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey (IALSS). The scale is divided into 5 levels, where Level 1 is the lowest level of mastery and Level 5 the highest.

### Table 1: Levels of Mastery of Essential Skills: Prose and Document Use literacy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Levels</th>
<th>Prose</th>
<th>Document Use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level 1</strong></td>
<td>Most of the tasks in this level require the respondent to read</td>
<td>Tasks in this level tend to require the respondent either to locate a piece</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0-225 points)</td>
<td>relatively short text to locate a single piece of information that</td>
<td>of information based on a literal match or to enter information from</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>is identical to or synonymous with the information given in the</td>
<td>personal knowledge onto a document. Little, if any, distracting information is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>question or directive. If plausible but incorrect information is</td>
<td>present.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>present in the text, it tends not to be located near the correct</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>information.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level 2</strong></td>
<td>Some tasks in this level require respondents to locate a single</td>
<td>Tasks in this level are more varied than those in Level 1. Some require the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(226-275 points)</td>
<td>piece of information in the text; however, several distractors or</td>
<td>respondents to match a single piece of information; however, several</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>plausible but incorrect pieces of information may be present, or</td>
<td>distractors may be present, or the match may</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>low-level inferences may be required. Other tasks require the</td>
<td>require low-level inferences. Tasks in this level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>respondent to integrate two or more pieces of information or to</td>
<td>may also ask the respondent to cycle through information in a document or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>compare and contrast easily identifiable information based on a</td>
<td>to integrate information from various parts of a document.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>criterion provided in the question or directive.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level 3</strong></td>
<td>Tasks in this level tend to require respondents to make literal or</td>
<td>Some tasks in this level require the respondent to integrate multiple pieces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(276-325 points)</td>
<td>synonymous matches between the text and information given in the</td>
<td>of information from one or more documents. Others ask respondents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>task, or to make matches that require low-level inferences. Other</td>
<td>to cycle through rather complex tables or graphs containing information that</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>tasks ask respondents to integrate information from dense or lengthy</td>
<td>is irrelevant or inappropriate to the task.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>text that contains no organizational aids such as headings.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Respondents may also be asked to generate a response based on</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>information that can be easily identified in the text. Distracting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>information is present, but is not located near the correct</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>information.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level 4</strong></td>
<td>These tasks require respondents to perform multiple-feature matches</td>
<td>Tasks in this level, like those at the previous levels, ask respondents to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(326-375 points)</td>
<td>and to integrate or synthesize information from complex or lengthy</td>
<td>perform multiple-feature matches, cycle through documents, and integrate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>passages. More complex inferences are needed to perform successfully.</td>
<td>information; however, they require a greater degree of inference. Many of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conditional information is frequently present in tasks at this level</td>
<td>these tasks require respondents to provide numerous responses but do not</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and must be taken into consideration by the respondent.</td>
<td>designate how many responses are needed. Conditional information is also</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level 5</strong></td>
<td>Some tasks in this level require the respondent to search for</td>
<td>present in the document tasks at this level and must be taken into account by</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(376-500 points)</td>
<td>information in a dense text that contains a number of plausible</td>
<td>the respondent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>distractors. Others ask respondents to make high-level inferences or</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>use specialized background knowledge. Some tasks ask respondents to</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>contrast complex information.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Literacy for Life: Further Results from the Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey
Profound changes in the global economy are driving an unprecedented increase in the demand for foundational literacy skills at Level 3 and above, a demand that is rapidly outstripping growth in the supply of skills. The following chart reveals just how rapid the rate at which the Canadian economy is becoming more knowledge and skill-intensive by shedding jobs that demand Level 1 and 2 literacy and replacing them with jobs that demand Levels 3, 4, and/or 5.

**Figure 1:** Rate of knowledge and skill intensification by province, jobs held by adults 16 and over in Canada, 2001–2010

![Chart showing rate of knowledge and skill intensification by province in Canada, 2001–2010.](chart)

Source: DataAngel LFS prose literacy skill demand series.

Looking forward, it would be easy to assume that investments in education will generate enough graduates to address the skills shortages. Unfortunately, skills shortages are projected to grow over the coming decades because several key sources of the new labour supply include relatively high proportions of Level 1 and 2 adults.6

More specifically:
- 40% of youth leaving the secondary system in Canada.
- 60% of current college-level learners.
- 50% of recent working age immigrants to Canada.
- 65% of Aboriginal adults.

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6 The Quality of Secondary Education in Ontario, a review of evidence. DataAngel 2010. Done for the Ontario Ministry of Education.
Developing Essential Skills (ES)\textsuperscript{7} is increasingly recognized as a significant means to increase employability of these groups.

\textbf{Six out of ten first year college students tested for the ACCC National Framework for Developing ES project (2010-13) had foundational ES below the level of mastery necessary to succeed in their studies and in their chosen occupation.}\textsuperscript{8}

Of the 882 college students who were tested, 67\% scored below Level 3 including 25 \% at Level 1. These students are likely to face difficulties in reading and integrating information, managing time and acquiring technical skills, and are at risk of dropping out. This finding suggests a need for early diagnosis and ES upskilling to increase their chances of success and retention in college programs.

These findings reinforce the call for increased efforts to identify ways to raise the graduation rates of college students, increase employer-provided training, improve literacy rates and create a more integrated educational system.\textsuperscript{9} To that end, Rick Miner calls for an “integration of functional skills and critical thinking” in post-secondary programs, arguing that there is a need to “shift our focus from what educational institutions want to what is best for the students, for employers and for the taxpayers”. This includes the provision of training in “basic and specific employability and literacy skills.”\textsuperscript{10} The Integrated Approach to Developing ES offers a practical way to address the issue.

Canadian colleges, cégeps, and institutes have a key role to play to equip students and workers with the skills they need to succeed in a knowledge intensive and digital economy, and to meet the increasing skill demands of the Canadian workplace. The college network already plays a significant role in the provision of education:

- Colleges are focused on education for employment: they offer a wide range of demand-driven, applied degree, and diploma programs. They are assessed on Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) including the percentage of students that obtain employment in their field within one year after graduation.

- Colleges focus on applied learning and produce a significant number of the graduates with advanced skills required by Canadian employers. They upgrade the skills of current employees and the unemployed, and provide access to post-secondary education to under-represented groups, in particular Aboriginal peoples, immigrants, and persons with disabilities.\textsuperscript{11} They also have experience with older learners, with individuals that have taken alternate learning paths out of high school, and/or those that are unattached to the labour market.

- Colleges have a wealth of experience in occupational needs analysis, managing program intake, assessment, and program delivery that is relevant to the workplace through Contract Training (CT) services. College CT teams work closely with local and regional business networks to faithfully and nimbly respond to business needs.

Building on that solid foundation, the provision of ES services to meet sector, organizational and occupational needs is a natural fit. The Integrated Approach to Developing ES is designed to support employers, colleges, and community partners to address these issues in a systematic and effective way.

\textsuperscript{7} For the purposes of this document the term ES is used to refer to those skills identified by the Government of Canada and PIACC research. In light of patterns in job creation and demographic shifts in Canada, Miner (2012) recommends that ‘entrepreneurship’ and ‘inter-cultural communications’ be added to the list of essential skills. Conference Board includes ‘personal management’ and ‘information management’ in its list of essential employability skills.


\textsuperscript{10} Ibid.

OVERVIEW

WHAT IS THE INTEGRATED APPROACH TO DEVELOPING ES?

The Integrated Approach to Developing ES is a practical, user-friendly guide to assist adult educators to enhance learner success, worker performance and productivity, and overall employability of Canadians through the development of ES levels. It is:

- A systemic approach to engage employers, colleges and other key stakeholders to increase employability of Canadians by increasing their ES.
- Grounded in practice and in evidence-based action research.
- Validated through a series of pilot projects.
- Applicable to diverse contexts and priority groups.
- Intended to introduce a common language to describe ES solutions across a range of formal and informal learning contexts including in the workplace, the education system and the community.

HOW THE INTEGRATED APPROACH WAS DEVELOPED

A product of a participatory action-research project led by the Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC), the Integrated Approach to Developing ES has been informed by different information sources, such as:

- Consultations with a core working group of ES practitioners from Canadian colleges, institutes and Cégeps.
- A content analysis of common factors of success described through practitioners’ stories, to structure an initial version of the approach.
- Input from a team of ES specialists to refine the initial version of the approach.
- Consultations in three national meetings of ES practitioners, college and industry decision makers, and with an Advisory Committee of representatives from government, sector councils, unions, employers, colleges and literacy organizations.
- Working groups on social marketing and on practitioner competencies.

- Pilot testing of the approach in 17 sites across Canada to validate its applicability to meet the ES requirements for diverse occupations and diverse learner groups. These included workers and college learners, and those frequently marginalized from the labour force such as Aboriginal persons and immigrants to Canada.
- A national debriefing workshop of college managers and ES practitioners and employers involved in the pilots to review and enrich elements the Integrated Approach in light of experience in the pilots.
- Systematic analysis of quantitative information gathered through assessments and questionnaires12 to identify which types of solutions lead to skill gains and under what conditions.
- Systematic analysis of case studies to identify effective ES practices.

At each stage of this information gathering process, the emerging Integrated Approach to Developing ES was reviewed and enriched.

WHO ARE THE INTENDED USERS?

While the Integrated Approach to Developing ES was developed through research in Canada’s public colleges, cégeps, and institutes, it is designed for all educators and managers who wish to enhance productivity and employability through the development of ES levels of Canadians. It is primarily intended for:

1. Policy makers and managers
   They will find the Integrated Approach useful to support strategic and operational planning for performance improvement through development of ES. They can also use it as a reference tool for assessing quality of ES programs and services offered in their organizations. Managers and supervisors will also find the approach useful to identify skills, knowledge, and competencies requirements for educators assigned to develop ES of priority groups.

2. Instructors, faculty, and trainers
   The Integrated Approach provides experienced ES instructors with a structured body of knowledge that validates their experience, and upon which they may build to train others in their college, organization, and community. For faculty, workplace trainers, and literacy educators who may be relatively new to ES,

12 Namely: the Learner Profile, the Primary Instructor Profile, the College Capacity Profile, the Learner Withdrawal Questionnaire, the Learner Satisfaction Profile, the Learner Impact Questionnaire, and the ES Intervention Profile.
the *Integrated Approach* offers guidance, models, strategies, resources, and references to support them as they develop their ES practice.

3. **Career counsellors and skills coaches**
   
The *Integrated Approach* to Developing ES serves to increase their understanding of the ES needed for a successful career path, and to provide easy access to ES profiles, assessment and training tools that are available to increase ES levels of individuals. Career counsellors and skills coaching may also find that ES practices identified in the approach to be applicable to career planning activities, for example portfolio development and job search.

4. **Curriculum developers and education advisors**
   
The *Integrated Approach* to Developing ES and supportive resources available in the ACCC Virtual library offer practical insights and tools to support needs analysis and design of curricula that integrates ES assessment and upskilling in technical training programs.

**HOW DOES IT WORK?**

The *Integrated Approach to Developing ES* consists of 9 separate and complementary elements or steps in the process aimed at meeting the demand of the employment market for ES, and increasing employability of individuals. They include:

- Three preliminary steps to **set the groundwork** for effective ES solutions:
  1. Needs Analysis
  2. Partnering
  3. Awareness and Engagement

- Four steps to **generate appropriate ES solutions** for learners:
  1. Identification of pathways to employability
  2. Assessment
  3. Training / Learning
  4. Feedback and follow up

- Two **critical conditions for success**:
  1. Organizational / institutional capacity
  2. Practitioners’ skills

A graphic representation of the approach and summary descriptor of each element is included on page 12-13.

There is a prescriptive aspect to the *Integrated Approach to Developing ES* that is based on a summary of good practice. The elements of the approach are arranged in a sequence, where later elements build on a solid foundation set down by the first. The sequence of elements can be followed for effective ES solutions that lead to increased employability.

The approach is designed so that users may hone in on one or more elements that are most relevant to their specific context and step of solution at any given point in time. It is expected that with practice, users will customize how they work with each of the elements, adapting them to the unique needs of their learners and learning contexts.

For ease of use, each element of the *Integrated Approach to Developing ES* is documented using the same structure:

- **Overview** provides the rationale and general review of what the element of the approach entails.
- **Snapshot** highlights key points to remember.
- **Guidelines** present crucial elements or steps that emerged from the practical experience.
- **Additional Resources** is an inventory of effective ES practices that support application of these guidelines. Detailed tips are included in Annex A. They offer a wealth of tested, validated, and documented information to help succeed in implementing ES in institutions/organizations.

Readers can also refer to **Case Studies** written by college practitioners who were accompanied by specialists to report on the validation of the Approach within their projects. A specific methodology was used for this reporting. Abstracts of each Case Study are gathered in the booklet “Filling Canada’s Skills Gap: Case Studies On The Impact Of Essential Skills Training”\(^\text{13}\) that can be viewed on ACCC Web pages.

ES Web pages, ES Tools and Resources developed throughout the project can also be found in the ACCC Virtual Library of ES.

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13 Consult the ES pages on the ACCC website to read abstracts of Case Studies on an electronic format.
14 ES Resources include case studies, testimonials, references to research and project reports, ES assessment and instructional tools, and information on how to contact ES service providers. Tools and resources have been screened to meet specific criteria.
AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO DEVELOPING ESSENTIAL SKILLS

Employment Market Demand

Needs Analysis

Partnering

Awareness and Engagement

Pathways to Employability

Essentials Skills Solutions

Assessment

Training / Learning

Feedback and Follow-up

Increased Employability
ELEMENTS of the INTEGRATED APPROACH for the DEVELOPMENT of ESSENTIAL SKILLS (ES)

The Integrated Approach consists of nine elements which are divided into three main categories. Some of the elements are interconnected, some are related to each other while others are necessary throughout the process. The Integrated Approach used in its entirety will lead to increased employability for college students, workers and job seekers.

ANCHOR THE INTEGRATED APPROACH
This stage consists of the first three elements.

NEEDS ANALYSIS
This step involves analysis of the socio-economic context, of performance issues in the workplace and/or college, and of learners’ needs and goals. It also involves analysis of other information that may impact on employability of learners.

PARTNERING
Establish partnerships internally with decision makers, externally with employers, unions, community and government agencies, and also with the learners seeking to improve their performance.

AWARENESS AND ENGAGEMENT
Offer ES as a solution to address issues of issues of retention, performance, productivity, as well as health and safety in the workplace. Raise stakeholders’ awareness of the benefits of integrating ES into their training/learning programs, and engage them as allies in order to ensure success of proposed actions.

ES SOLUTIONS FOR LEARNERS
This stage consists of four elements that involve actions to be taken and tools to support them in order to increase the ES and employability levels of individuals.

PATHWAYS TO EMPLOYABILITY
Explore the different options available for learners to reach their employability goals, for instance: professional or technical programs, work placement, prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR) and remedial training.

ASSESSMENT
This step involves identifying the level of mastery of ES at intake, so as to inform the design of the ES intervention. Assessing the level of mastery periodically, at the end of training and beyond helps provide evidence of skills gain and informs whether other actions are necessary to achieve skills and employability goals. Assessment tools can include standardized tests, observation, interviews, and demonstration.

TRAINING / LEARNING
ES upgrading is integrated into learning activities that focus on performance of occupational tasks. Learning activities are structured and adapted to meet needs and fill skills requirements for employability.

FEEDBACK AND FOLLOW-UP
This step covers the type of support the learner needs during training: regular meetings, individual sessions, motivation, learning materials, psychosocial services, guidance.

CRITICAL CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS
These two elements are crucial throughout the process.

ORGANIZATIONAL / INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY
This step is about assessing the organization’s capacity to meet the needs of learners: human, financial and materials resources, as well as senior level and administrative support. It is also about building in actions to strengthen organizational capacity to provide high-quality, effective ES solutions.

PRACTITIONERS’ SKILLS
This step is about identifying the required set of competencies for ES instructors and coaches, curriculum developers, guidance counselors and managers to achieve intended outcomes.

For more information on Essential Skills visit the ACCC website at: http://www.accc.ca/essentialskills2011/index.php/en
ELEMENTS OF THE INTEGRATED APPROACH

GETTING STARTED

The first three steps in the Integrated Approach to Developing ES set the groundwork for effective, contextualized ES solutions. They include:

1. Needs Analysis
2. Partnering
3. Awareness and Engagement

NEEDS ANALYSIS

OVERVIEW

Four out of ten Canadian adults do not have the Essential Skills (ES) levels needed to succeed at work, in education, and in life.¹⁵ Levels in prose literacy and in document use (the skills needed to manage information) of Canadians are well below those needed to meet the occupational requirements of available jobs and to be productive in today’s competitive economy. They are also well below those needed to learn advanced technical skills in college and in the workplace.

If ES upskilling is to constitute a meaningful and effective solution to address the skills shortage, and an effective pathway to employment for individuals, it must meet the needs of the employment market. In two recent annual reports on national consultations, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce noted that educators may not be fully aware of employers’ needs and identified the need to improve connections between employers and educators as one of its top priorities.

Effective ES interventions meet clearly identified needs.¹⁶ Needs analysis involves understanding goals and needs of individual learners, and understanding those needs in the wider socio-economic and organizational context.

Analysis of the socio-economic context

Current labour market information (LMI) can be a good place to start to get a global picture of growing economic sectors and high demand occupations in Canada and in each province/region. ES occupational profiles also constitute good reference tools to identify the ES required to perform tasks on the job. It is by identifying and responding to specific labour market gaps through rigorous analysis and positioning increased ES as the solution that colleges and institutes can illustrate and move the business case for ES programming to business reality.

While labour market information is very useful as background preparation, the hard work of needs analysis requires an analysis of the performance challenges and/or goals of the organization and of the learners, in order to determine whether ES is part of the problem, and ES upskilling part of the solution. It also requires a clear focus on meeting the learners’ needs. This is equally important whether the ES intervention is to happen in a workplace or in an educational setting.

¹⁵ Most recent OECD figures available. Results for the OECD Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC), underway at the time of writing, are anticipated in Fall 2013 www.oecd.org/education/highereducationandadultlearning/piaacprogrammeforthetheinternationalassessmentofadultcompetencies.htm [Accessed November 14, 2012].

**Needs analysis in the workplace**

Once the sector and regional skill needs are clearly identified, the next step towards implementing an effective training program is usually a “work situation analysis.” This is a two-stroke step: first working with employees executing tasks, and then with these employees’ supervisors to verify those tasks. The analysis answers the question: “What is the skill gap between what employees need to be able to do (the employers’ skill expectations) and what they can do now (the employees’ actual skills)?”

Key questions to explore in needs analysis include the following:

- What are issues of concern to the organizations? For example, productivity, material wastage, occupational health and safety, retention and promotion, etc.
- Have there been significant changes impacting on the complexity of tasks to be performed, requiring a higher level of ES in certain occupations? For example, changes in technology, work processes, performance or quality standards, etc.
- In light of these changes, what tasks does the organization expect workers to perform and at what level of mastery? What goals would it like to achieve?
- Which essential skills could contribute to improve the performance of individuals and of the organizations?

**Needs analysis in an educational setting**

The analysis answers the question: “What is the skill gap between what students need to be able to do to succeed in their technical programs, and what they are able to do now? Some of the key questions to explore include the following:

- What are some of the key performance issues facing the college? For example, retention and persistence to graduation, rates of success on exams, etc.
- In what programs and among which students’ populations are there students at risk of failing or not completing their program because of inadequate academic preparation?
- What difficulties are students facing? For example, difficulty with understanding or answering questions, studying for exams, managing time between heavy study load and part-time work, etc.

- Which of the ES could contribute to improve the success of students and of the college?
- How is the college currently addressing these challenges? For example, referral to student services, remediation, Adult Basic Education (ABE), etc. With what level of success?
- What could be some of the critical conditions for success from both student and instructor perspectives?

By focusing on the specific performance improvements needed, college practitioners can design and deliver solutions that are effective and efficient and that yield meaningful results. Understanding and responding to the needs of employers and of college decision makers is a critical condition for engaging them in the ES solution.

**Understanding learners’ needs: at the heart of the ES intervention**

Whether ES upskilling occurs in the workplace or in a college program, its outcomes largely depend on the motivation and engagement of individuals to invest in their learning. Motivation and engagement will be higher where the ES solution that is offered addresses a clearly identified need, and is viewed as contributing to achievement of a career goal that is meaningful to the individual.

A survey of learners’ needs, and a comparison with needs identified by supervisors (in the workplace) or faculty (in the college) can help focus the learning activities on outcomes that will be meaningful to both learners and organizations. Consideration of the learners’ cultural background, language, socio-economic status, general level and previous experience with education, etc. can inform design of more effective ES interventions.

**Assessing organizational capacity to deliver effective ES interventions**

Organizational capacity to deliver on ES interventions is a critical condition for achievement of learning and employment outcomes. This can include consideration of:

- The level of senior management support for HR development generally and more specifically for the ES intervention, and readiness to engage with ES assessment and upskilling.
• Supportive organizational policies, systems, and practices. For example, joint management union agreement that level 3 in document use is necessary for recruitment or for promotion, institutionalization of ES testing and upskilling in the first term of college programs as a key strategy for students’ success.

• Availability and competencies of instructors identified in the practitioners profile further in document.

• Material, financial, and technical resources needed for effective ES intervention. These may include access to educational materials, funds to pay for testing, availability of computer labs, etc.

An in-depth assessment of existing capacity to deliver ES solutions that meet learners’ needs is necessary for planning conditions to ensure success.

**GUIDELINES FOR EFFECTIVE NEEDS ANALYSIS**

1. **DO YOUR HOMEWORK: UNDERSTAND THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONTEXT.**
2. **IDENTIFY PERFORMANCE ISSUES AND GOALS.**
3. **IDENTIFY HOW ENHANCED ES CAN MEET THE NEEDS.**
4. **ADOPT A LEARNER-CENTERED APPROACH.**
5. **ASSESS CAPACITY OF INSTITUTIONS AND ORGANIZATIONS TO DELIVER ES INTERVENTIONS.**

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

**CASE STUDIES**

- **Douglas College Case Study**: View Appendix B of Case Study: Needs analysis and survey instruments to use with college learners.
- **Camosun College Case Study**: View Appendix A of Case Study.
- **Bow Valley College Case Study**: View Appendix B Needs Assessment in Case Study.

**VIRTUAL LIBRARY**

PARTNERING

OVERVIEW

Effective ES solutions are demand-driven and supported by collaborative arrangements that engage all key stakeholders.

When undertaking an ES intervention, it is important to engage key decision makers among the employers, Human Resources and training staff, union representatives, and the workers themselves. In the college, obtaining senior management support and adopting a collaborative team approach with faculty, career counsellors, curriculum developers, and students are also critical for effective ES solutions. Partnerships with not-for-profit organizations that offer bridging pathways into college programs can increase effectiveness and efficiency of ES solutions.

Effective partnerships are founded on the following ingredients:

- A shared vision of the challenge to correct objectives and expected outcomes.
- Commitment by key stakeholders to making the partnership work.
- An equitable sharing of the workload, risks and rewards.
- Transparency and open communication, from project plans to implementation.
- Roles and responsibilities are clearly understood and take advantage of complementary assets.

ES upskilling may require different types and levels of collaborative arrangements:

- Strategic partnerships with senior levels and key stakeholders to generate a formal agreement to undertake ES testing and upskilling, for example with unions in the workplace, and/or with faculty or career counsellors.
- An informal agreement to jointly contribute to an ES intervention, with employers paying for release time, holding an acknowledgment ceremony, etc. and colleges providing training materials and resources.
- More formal contractual and financial agreements, including MOUs between employers, governments, colleges and not-for-profit partners to jointly resource ES solutions for given priority groups.
- Collaborative relationships inside the college or the workplace to secure resources, for example: access to training, laboratory space and documents, holding a completion ceremony, etc.

For example, an initiative to develop the ES of workers in a particular sector could be driven by a multi-stakeholders partnership where the local Chamber of Commerce mobilizes members for needs analysis and distributes program promotion, one employer provides authentic documents to scaffold new curriculum, the college provides the skilled labour to administer TOWES and deliver training, a second employer provides central space for that training, while the learners contribute their own time as an investment in their skill development.
Joint financing of ES solutions is an increasingly critical element of many effective partnerships. In the scenario described above, each of the roles different partners filled by is associated with a contribution either in cash or in kind. While government funding may be available to offset costs in some jurisdictions, as government moves “to complement community efforts by encouraging the development of government/community partnerships, enabling communities to tackle local challenges and test new approaches to improve performance” (Federal Budget 2011), private, not-for-profit – and creative – investment from other sectors is increasingly needed. This may include looking at things such as pay-for-performance agreements, which tie funding to measurable results where full funding is paid out when targets are met, and higher payouts are provided when targets are exceeded.¹⁷

The time and attention needed to form and maintain an effective partnership are often more than was anticipated, and are almost always driven by other stakeholders’ time and priorities. It is therefore critical to build in time for the transaction costs required to nurture collaborative relationships for effective ES solutions.

GUIDELINES FOR EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIPS

1. IDENTIFY KEY STAKEHOLDERS – THOSE WITH A STAKE IN THE SUCCESS OF ES INTERVENTIONS.
2. ENGAGE STAKEHOLDERS IN DEFINING A SHARED VISION, VALUES, AND MUTUAL CONTRIBUTIONS.
3. MANAGE AND NURTURE THE PARTNERSHIP.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

CASE STUDIES

- Douglas College case study: faculty liaison helped to secure faculty support for ES testing of college students.
- Bow Valley College case study: Worley Parsons offered materials, released time and paid for graduation ceremony.

VIRTUAL LIBRARY


AWARENESS AND ENGAGEMENT

“Essential Skills Training is all about making more effective use of our talent. Any opportunity to help people be more successful makes us all more successful.”
— Sandra Siemens, HR Manager WorleyParsons

OVERVIEW

College and workplace decision-makers are aware of the critical need for their organizations to attract, retain, and develop skilled individuals able to perform in their chosen occupations. However, as they look for effective and efficient solutions, they may be less aware of the benefits associated with increasing the Essential Skill (ES) levels of these individuals.

In the absence of a national skills strategy, different jurisdictions have used different strategies for ensuring the availability of skilled workers. Some, but not all, have chosen to invest in developing ES in the workplace. Even where government investments in ES have been significant, employers and college decision makers are either not aware of the potential contribution of ES to achievement of their organizations’ performance goals or hesitant to integrate development of ES in their training programs.

Central to raising their awareness and securing engagement of decision makers and learners alike is establishing a clear link between ES learning gains, potential impact on key performance indicators, and the return on investment they may expect.

As one example, research conducted by Canadian Trucking Human Resources Council (CTHRC) confirms a correlation between ES proficiency and the likelihood of safety incidents that has the industry rethinking its training protocols and how it designs workplace documents. Drivers who did not meet or exceed the upper end of ES standards established for the occupations were almost twice as likely to experience a safety incident as those who did meet the standard. Drivers with higher ES scores were less likely to have had a spill incident, to have had an incident when returning from a delivery, to have had an incident at the customer’s location and less likely to have had any type of incident at any location. Additional case studies demonstrating similar direct benefit to the increase of ES in the workplace can be found on the Human Resources and Skills Development Canada website for each of the following sectors:


• The Canadian Automotive Repair and Service Council  
  http://www.cars-council.ca/
• The Canadian Council of Professional Fish Harvesters  
  http://www.fishharvesterspecheurs.ca/

Introducing ES in the language of employers is critical. Learning to talk their talk and making clear connections between the employer's world and the college training world is especially useful in the early stages of ES promotion. When they understand and support the concepts, they are your best advocates to create awareness with the wider business community.

While ES learning and business activities are typically found in Adult Basic Education and Contract Training divisions of a college, there is mounting evidence of the close correlation between ES levels and students' success in all streams of college applied technical training programs. Initiating and developing a common language among college personnel as to what ES training means and what benefits can be realized is critical.

Given the current increases in adult enrolment and the culture of tailor-made workplace training in colleges, cégeps, and institutes, a momentum has already been created. Tapping into this upskilling culture and embedding ES into existing apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs, and indeed in all college programs is timely.

Many college instructors are industry professionals who can be made aware of the direct benefit of ES solutions. As with employers, engaging the larger college community takes time but is necessary to ensure all college students graduate with the levels of ES they will need to be employable, and to meet occupational requirements.

Arguably the most critical stakeholders that must be engaged are the individual learner or worker in the learning process. Unique populations of learners (for example, Aboriginal and immigrant populations, older workers, and college students) may engage more when the approach to partnering is consistent with their own cultural behaviours and expectations. It is generally accepted that many ES solutions, in an effort to present a “workplace culture,” may inadvertently use a western or Euro-centric approach which can constitute an unintended barrier to skill development. Recognition of any such bias can assist ES practitioners in developing solutions that are inclusive of other world views, themes, and experiences.20

20 An Aboriginal Essential Skills Journey... Planting the Seeds for Growth (Douglas College, BC) is an excellent example of an Essential Skills workshop designed to be specifically relevant to Aboriginal Peoples and is available for download at www.douglas.bc.ca/training-community-education/essentialskills.html [Accessed November 14, 2012].
ESSENTIAL SKILLS SOLUTIONS

The term is intentionally chosen to highlight the fact that ES solutions include but are not limited strictly to training. Solutions can be grouped in broad areas: assessment, training, and other activities aimed at supporting individuals to achieve greater employability. The latter may include identifying and developing effective pathways to acquiring ES and advanced technical skills for employment.

PATHWAYS TO ACQUIRE ES FOR SUCCESS

OVERVIEW

The traditional pathway to employability used to be one way: from acquisition of skills in school to the workplace, or on the job apprenticeship in the trades. Employers and post-secondary institutions generally assume and expect that foundational ES are acquired in secondary school.

However, findings from the ACCC national action-research project indicate that 67% of the 882 learners enrolled in a range of college programs did not have the foundational ES at the level of mastery needed to acquire the technical skills they need to get a job. The same percentage of individuals currently employed did not have the level of foundational ES they need to perform in an information and technology rich environment. Advances in information communication and technology now require that workers continuously update their knowledge and skills to perform effectively, to keep their job or to get a better job.

Colleges offer multiple pathways to employability for youth and adults. Integrating development of ES into training programs along these pathways can serve to enhance employability.

- One pathway is the more traditional one: a learner enrols in a post-secondary program with a view to getting their first job or a new occupation. Assessment of their ES, followed by some upgrading where necessary early on in their program ensures they are well equipped to succeed in obtaining the technical qualifications they need to get a job.

- Another pathway is where a learner has identified a realistic work and/or career goal. They may wish to acquire skills to improve their performance on the current job and to increase their potential for promotion. The ES solution may be integrated in an occupational training program (e.g. ES for Hospitality and Tourism) and last several weeks.

- A related pathway is where a worker who is already employed in a company or organization requires some type of work-based training. For example, this worker may have been updating safety requirements for certain machinery, or learning to work better within a team approach, or preparing for a supervisory promotion. The solution may be as short as a 3-hour Document Use workshop to familiarize participants with table structure. In such a case, the individual has completed the ES workplace training and now returns to the employment with enhanced skills and a new perspective on the job.
• Another transition pathway is to **apprenticeship**, pre-apprenticeship or technical training. This pathway can take place within the college system or outside of it. In either case, the individual has successfully completed relevant ES training which has opened a door into the trades.

• For those without high school or college credentials there is the pathway to **upgrading and bridging programs** to achieve some type of high school knowledge equivalency. Here the individual seeks out additional short term training in preparation for employment, apprenticeship or further post-secondary credits and certification.

• For newcomers to Canada, **transition to work programs**, including working in a practice firm provides opportunity to acquire some technical and some essential skills required to be employable in a given occupation.

• For those without high school or college credentials there is the pathway to upgrading and **bridging programs** to achieve some type of high school graduation equivalency. Here the individual seeks out additional short term training in preparation for employment, apprenticeship, or further post-secondary credits and certification.

• Lastly there is a personal pathway to enhanced social and **civic participation**. In this case, individuals decide that their immediate ES goals have been met and they return to the community ready to make an enhanced contribution in their various life roles as parent, volunteer, and citizen.

These various pathways constitute opportunities for developing ES of individuals at different times in their life and careers, in order to support their continued employability. ES solutions that are integrated into acquisition of technical skills at any given point in someone’s career can enhance their success at work and in life.
ES ASSESSMENT

“Because of their results in the Essential Skills Assessment, I do know that they have the ability to learn and that’s what will convince any employer.”

— Melissa Glover, Technical Skills Development Coordinator, Canadian Homebuilders Association - Saskatchewan

OVERVIEW

Effective ES interventions focus on meeting specific needs of learners, in the shortest possible amount of time. Systematic diagnosing of individual learners’ ES strengths and areas for development helps to focus attention on the specific needs that need addressing, and to inform design of the training. Assessing learners’ ES skills upon completion of training provide valuable feedback and a measure of the effectiveness of that training.

A variety of ES assessment tools and approaches may be used throughout the design and delivery of an ES upskilling program. They include formal and informal, norm-referenced tests (e.g., TOWES and CLE21), self or peer assessment, and Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR).

When making decisions on which assessment tools to select:

• Consider the time available for assessment, cost of testing, fit with the organizational culture, and how “high stakes” the assessment results are.

• Be clear on the purpose of the assessment and on who will and will not have access to the results. In workplaces where labour unions are active partners in training preliminary discussion on this topic is essential.

• Balance the types and length of diagnostic assessments and post-test with the potential benefit of information that can be obtained through detailed assessment.

Ideally, assessments results should not be a sentence, but a source of information to support development. Assessment results used to determine admission to or exclusion from an opportunity may be more high stakes and may therefore require more rigour than a lower stakes assessments where the results are used primarily to inform instruction.

Feedback on test results requires tact and understanding:

• Work to reduce the stigma around “low” results by making ES assessment integral to development programs aimed at improving potential for achieving individual career goals.

ES ASSESSMENT SNAPSHOT

• Secure a commitment to rigorously assessing learners’ ES pre and post training

• Ensure compatibility between the form and type of assessment used and the culture of the organization

• Prepare for and address challenges related to lower than expected assessment results

• Assess regularly and adapt based on results to ensure program design is still relevant to meeting performance objectives

21 TOWES stands for the Test of Workplace Essential Skills (see www.towes.ca); CLE stands for the Canadian Literacy Evaluation.
• Discuss and agree on a learning plan to achieve the individuals’ goals.
• Manage expectations: small but significant and sustainable gains are of the greatest value.

Other activities that support the identification of ES needs and the introduction of a strategy to meet those needs include:
• Occupational profiling: updating or redesigning job descriptions, taking in account changing occupational requirements re: ES levels.
• Organizational ES assessments tied to operational changes such as incorporation of ES as key performance indicators.
• Benchmarking.

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**GUIDELINES TO ENSURE EFFECTIVE ES ASSESSMENTS**

1. PLAN THOROUGHLY
2. MANAGE IMPLEMENTATION
3. DEBRIEF ON TEST RESULTS

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**ES TRAINING / LEARNING**

**OVERVIEW**

Effective ES training interventions are learner-centered and focused on meeting learners’ needs. They draw upon ES profiles, job classifications, and occupational profiles. They connect acquisition and application of ES to the performance of workplace and/or study tasks. Where possible, they draw upon ‘authentic’ documents that are used in the course of performing those tasks.

The ability to adapt the ES training content and format quickly in sync with learner needs is key to program success. In practice, this means:

• Ensuring the content is relevant and customized to address identified socio-economic and occupational needs, and taking into consideration culture and language.
• Adjusting different components of an ES intervention during delivery as required, while keeping the focus firmly on achieving learning objectives and expected outcomes.
• Encouraging the development of ES competencies that are transferable from one context to another. This can be done by focusing on acquisition of learning strategies that are applicable in the workplace, in college, and in life, such as locating and integrating information, reading charts and lists, etc.

It also means matching the best training format or formats to the particular learning contexts drawing on any or all of the below:

• **Classroom and cohort-based training:** This is appropriate for small groups pursuing the same learning objectives e.g., health students developing strategies for efficiently reading text books or workers reviewing technical guides for the introduction of new machinery. Training is participatory and interactive and provides the opportunity to practice cooperation and develop skills in teamwork.

• **One-on-one coaching:** This format is indicated to support implementation of individualized learning plans, when customized attention to meet specific performance objective of the individual is required or to address particular challenges the learner may face.

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**CASE STUDIES TO PATHWAYS**

Details on many of the Essential Skills assessments tools currently available have been compiled and made available as a practitioner reference by Douglas College, British Columbia.22

Past projects have included assessments tools such as TOWES, CLE and Versant (Oral Communication Test).

An on-line version of TOWES is expected to be available in 2014.

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22 www.douglas.bc.ca/__shared/assets/Resource_Guide67654.pdf
• **Online learning:** This format is the most flexible, and can provide access 24/7 practice on the learner’s own schedule. It is most appropriate for motivated learners with developed technology skills. It is most effective when accompanied by a facilitator or coach, or in conjunction with other classroom-blended activities that allow for practice.

• **Blended delivery:** The use of asynchronous online learning, classroom training, and individual work at home makes efficient use of limited training time and accommodates a range of learning styles.

Within the pilots of the National Framework project, **consistent predictors** of training success included the following:

• Integrating acquisition of ES within training programs focused on acquisition of technical/specialized competencies.

• Content focused on enhancing ES required for performance of occupational task: making a direct link between the training and the current work tasks and assignments whenever possible.

• Using of authentic workplace documents into the curriculum.

• Individual learning plans that focus on specific performance objectives derived from the learner’s career path.

• Engagement of expert practitioners: use professional tutors and skills coaches with deep workplace knowledge and a broad range of instructional skills.

• Program and practitioner flexibility. Work demands will typically take precedence over training. Ways of addressing this very real challenge include:
  - “Chunking” content into small modules that can be scheduled and rescheduled, as time permits.
  - Avoiding scheduling at peak activity times and around holidays.
  - Adjusting training and program completion dates when necessary.

**GUIDELINES TO DESIGN AND DELIVER EFFECTIVE ES TRAINING...**

1. PROPOSE EFFECTIVE ES TRAINING SOLUTIONS.
2. PRESENT ES AS AN ADDED VALUE TO PROGRAMS.

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

**CASE STUDIES: REFER TO SPECIFIC MODELS**

Bow Valley College Case Study:
View Appendix D.

Camosun College Case Study:
View Appendix B.

Conestoga College Case Study:
Appendix A.

Douglas College Case Study:
View Appendix C.

**VIRTUAL LIBRARY**

The Virtual Library provides resources and tools on the specific subject of Training. Over the past projects, colleges have developed expertise on different training approaches and have developed specific material. Users can browse through the ACCC website or search by key words on the new data base of resources. First time readers will also appreciate the names of college contact persons who have developed the material or have been responsible for the integration of ES in their respective colleges.


ES staff at ACCC can also relay readers or users with colleges for information or special requests.

For more information please contact André Beaudry, Vice President Canadian Partnerships at abeaudry@accc.ca
FEEDBACK AND FOLLOW UP

OVERVIEW

Having invested time, energy, and funds in ES upskilling, employers, college decision makers and faculty, learners, and funders will want to know whether the ES intervention has:

• Equipped individuals with ES skills they need to perform and succeed.
• Addressed meaningful goals and objectives, for ex. increased retention, performance, etc.

If the goal of ES upgrading is to improve performance and employability, it is incumbent on ES practitioners to go beyond design and delivery of ES training solutions, to take stock of progress, assess goal achievement, and to identify and implement follow-up actions to accompany learners until they achieve their goals.

Feedback and follow up is a critical part of ensuring quality outcomes from ES interventions. It requires:

• Learning outcomes that are meaningful to all key stakeholders.
• Clearly specified outcomes measures and recognized assessment tools.
• A rigorous commitment to pre and post assessments, systematically integrated in learning programs.
• Capacity and systems to collect, analyze, and use quantitative and qualitative data to improve ES programs and learning outcomes.
• A culture of continuous improvement, supported by systematic reflection on practice.

Feedback data is only helpful if it is used to improve ES programs and learning outcomes. ES practitioners can use feedback information to assess the extent to which they have achieved outcomes, and to understand factors that have contributed to ES outcomes of learning interventions. Data sources can include:

• Quantitative information: training completion and dropout rates, skills gains, impact on key performance indicators (e.g. retention in the workplace, increased marks and persistence in college programs).
• Qualitative data: learner satisfaction and self-reported and/or observed application of skills to tasks and outcomes (e.g. gathered through stories, observation grids, interviews, etc.).

Evidence from multiple sources of information provides a more solid base from which to assess outcomes of ES interventions, contributing factors, and imperatives for follow up.

FEEDBACK AND FOLLOW UP SNAPSHOT

• Learners perform better when they get regular feedback.
• ES practitioners need to take stock of progress and where needed, accompany learners beyond any given learning activities, until they have mastered the ES needed to achieve their goals.
• This requires a culture and mechanisms to collect, analyze and use data to improve ES programs and learning outcomes.

GUIDELINES TO ENSURE EFFECTIVE FEEDBACK AND FOLLOW UP

1. BUILD IN REGULAR ASSESSMENTS
2. TAP INTO AVAILABLE SUPPORT SERVICES
3. USE DATA TO DEMONSTRATE ROI

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

CASE STUDIES:

VIRTUAL LIBRARY
CRITICAL CONDITIONS FOR EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE APPROACH

The ACCC National Framework for Developing Essential Skills action research pilot projects highlighted the importance of some critical conditions for high quality and sustained outcomes of ES interventions. They include:

- Organizational readiness and capacity to deliver effective ES services. This includes consideration of level commitment from decision makers and key stakeholders, supportive organizational policies and practices, adequate financial and material resources, systems for data collection and tracking, etc.
- Skilled ES practitioners.

When embarking on a project or program to develop ES, assessing whether these critical conditions are present helps to identify what capacity can be leveraged and what organizational development interventions may need to be considered if the initiative is to be successful.

ORGANIZATIONAL / INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY

OVERVIEW

Prior to engaging in ES upskilling, an assessment of institutional readiness and capacity will help with planning and decision-making. It will also inform the types of interventions – both training and organization development – that will be required to ensure ES upskilling is successful.

Dimensions of organizational capacity that are needed for effective ES solutions include:

- Senior management support.
- Competent ES practitioners.
- Effective administrative, data collection and information management system.
- Adequate funding and material resources.
- Logistical support.

Organizational/institutional policies and practices are indicators of institutional readiness and predictors of success in delivering effective ES solutions. Organizational capacity is also the result of intentional acts that reinforce the relevance and integration of ES in an organization’s learning culture.

In the absence of a supportive infrastructure, training solutions are unlikely to succeed beyond the short term and rarely become part of an organization’s culture in the long term. Beyond ES solutions focused on increasing outcomes for learners, interventions to strengthen
organizational capacity can create conditions for ensuring ES assessment and training interventions lead to sustained outcomes.

The ACCC National Framework for developing ES action-research project identified concrete policies and practices that create conditions for effective delivery of ES interventions and for sustaining desired outcomes. In some cases, these policies and practices were in place and facilitated achievement of outcomes. In other cases, ES practitioners consciously build into their goals and plans, activities to strengthen capacity of the organization/institution. A few examples of these policies and practices are provided below.

Organizational policies and practices as critical conditions for effective ES in within colleges and institutes.

- Securing commitment to ES development within the institution’s strategic plan and educational plan and then holding individual departments and divisions accountable for the realization of that commitment.
- ES assessment results accepted in admissions and prior learning and assessment recognition (PLAR) policies.
- Institutionalization of ES assessments in all first year applied technical training programs, to ensure early identification of skill gaps and provision of upgrading to reduce the likelihood of dropping out. E.g. Cégep de l’Outaouais.
- Implementing a accredited course in all first year programs that frames ES as learning strategies required for academic success. E.g. Cégep Lionel-Groulx.
- Integration of ES assessment and upskilling in the design and renewal of all credit and continuing courses.
- Requiring that the identification of ES learning outcomes be included on all course outlines college wide.
- Establishing support services built on the ES framework and tied to academic task performance, such as exam preparation, study skills, oral and digital presentations (e.g. Douglas College).
- Providing ES awareness workshops to all instructional faculty (e.g. La Cité et Collège Mathieu).

Within workplaces, supportive organizational policies and practices:

- Using ES skill assessments to identify skilled candidates when recruiting and post-employment to identify those best suited to promotion or retraining.
- Using skill assessments to ensure the best placement of new hires.
- Embedding ES in all occupational safety training to increase the likelihood of retention of the content and accompanying reduction in time lost to accident and injury.

**GUIDELINES TO EFFECTIVELY STRENGTHEN INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY FOR ES OUTCOMES**

1. EMBED ES IN STRATEGIC PLANNING, POLICIES, AND PRACTICE.
2. RECRUIT AND RETAIN EFFECTIVE ES PRACTITIONERS.
3. ENSURE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF ES PRACTITIONERS.

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

**CASE STUDIES**

In most of the Case Studies, readers will find material to initiate discussions around viable means of addressing ES. However, Cégep de l’Outaouais is the only one who has integrated ES in the College Strategic Plan and in the Student Success Plan.

This initiative included in its Case Study encouraged other colleges and some of them are now looking at similar actions to anchor ES in the Institutional Policies.

Impacts of the NF Project are still undergoing as colleges are initiating actions to find more sustainable ways of embedding ES in their institutions.

**VIRTUAL LIBRARY**

PRACTITIONERS’ SKILLS

OVERVIEW

Fundamental to the discussion of Essential Skills (ES) practitioners is the recognition that they are educators and that there are a variety of professions and contexts where educating adults is the focus.

Included under the umbrella of ES practitioners are teachers with experience in education, facilitators, employment and career counsellors, trainers, HR professionals, workplace coaches, etc. There are also ES professionals that may not work directly with learners. These include curriculum and assessment developers, and business coordinators. The common link is an appreciation for the performance benefits that are achieved through raising ES levels.

Throughout the 17 pilot projects of the ACCC National Framework for developing ES project, the identification and support of the right practitioner in the right program was a critical factor in the effectiveness of ES training solutions. Supporting on-going professional development for all staff engaged in ES work is a proven investment.

As much as assessment and training solutions are at the heart of the Integrated Approach, it is adult education principles that guide skilled practitioners in designing and delivering those solutions.

Understanding core principles related to adult learning is essential for instructors to build from as they plan, implement, and assess programs for adult learners.

This understanding of how adults learn informs the decisions made by practitioners and the managers they work with when implementing strategies and practices related to all stages of ES skill development including:

• Learner engagement
• Program approach
• Pre-assessment
• Training
• Post-assessment
• Transition to employment

Learners need to be fully engaged in their training; to own their process and their progress. Practitioners have a role to help identify their goals, and ensure that assessments and learning materials are relevant to their long-term employment goals as well as their shorter-term goals such as passing a course or getting good grades.

Effective ES practitioners understand that there are multiple pathways to employment. Similarly, there are multiple paths to becoming an ES practitioner. It is critical to recognize these professions to ensure their inclusion when defining standards and training pathways for ES Practitioners.
It is important to guard against any tendency of formal education systems (including colleges, cégeps and institutes) to exclude groups based on the need for formal education. Experience suggests that the majority of practitioners delivering ES instruction fall outside of the traditionally academic schools of public colleges (e.g. in Continuing Education and Contract Training divisions) and often outside of the college system resting in community organizations, or directly in business and industry.

**Competency Profile of effective ES practitioners**

Effective ES practitioners are deeply familiar with HRSDC’s Essential Skills research and taxonomy of skills. They are able to apply the research to working and learning contexts that includes job profiling, recruiting, selecting, evaluating, developing and retaining personnel. This knowledge may be acquired by different means including research (consulting websites such as HRSDC’s), informal peer learning (discussion with more experienced ES practitioners), and formal training (participating in workshops or courses offered by various organizations).

Ideally, ES practitioners have the experience needed to develop contextually relevant ES solutions, and to apply or adapt workplace materials, training tools or programs and occupational profiling. Practitioners from a background of workplace training are likely to have developed approaches focused on acquisition of technical knowledge and skills. Some ES practitioners have business development skills, networking abilities and experience in business representation, job profiling and need analysis. These characteristics are typical of many practitioners working within the colleges’ Continuing Education and Contract Training divisions.

Since all these characteristics may not exist in a single educator, colleges are encouraged to build a multidisciplinary team of ES practitioners with complementary knowledge and experience. This will cover all the fields of expertise required and also enable practitioners to improve and widen their skills through each other’s expertise thereby increasing college capacity in ES programming through business opportunities.

While it is generally recognized that the practitioner is critical to the success of any ES solution, at this time there are no national set of professional standards for ES practitioners. There is however a growing consensus in Canada on the need to increase and assure the quality of ES interventions. This requires:

- A shared understanding of what an “ES practitioner” is, what their competency profile is and what tasks they are expected to carry out. This could assist employers and funders in recognizing quality instruction.
- Professional development to maintain quality and to expand the community of practice.

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ADULT PRINCIPLES

- Adults need to know why they should learn something before they are ready to learn. They need to see the learning in a meaningful context and understand how it will be helpful to them.
- Adults need to be dealt with as self-directed learners. They resist being dealt with as children and being told what they need to learn.
- Adults bring many diverse experiences with them. They can provide their own, rich source of learning. They also bring assumptions and biases that may make them resist new ideas.
- Adults must be ready to learn. That readiness to learn comes from an understanding of how the learning will help them in the real world.
- Adults respond to some external motivations. These include promotions, better jobs, and more money. Many, though not all, are motivated by the intrinsic need to keep growing and developing.

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• A blend of formal training, apprenticeship, portfolio development, mentorship, and/or prior learning assessment as desirable paths in developing knowledge and skills to practice as an ES instructor.
• A practitioner certification based on both knowledge and demonstrated competence.
• Validated standards of practice would encourage a better practice.

**Increasing competencies of ES practitioners**

“For us it really comes down to ensuring that there is quality attached to this work. Ensuring that people delivering it are well trained, understand ES frameworks, assess learners, and can evolve them up the scale. The quality of practitioners is something that directly affects the results at the backend. There need to be some recognized standards of practice for practitioners, with certain competencies attached to a certification.”

— Valerie Lockyer, Associate Director, Douglas College

During the course of the *ACCC National framework for developing ES project*, practitioners agreed that a first step toward certification would be to identify a set of core competencies that would be common for all ES practitioners no matter which area they worked in: in essence, competencies for a generic ES practitioner. These competencies could be further developed into an Essential Skills profile for the occupation. Such a system of credentialing for practitioners was identified as a critical component in quality assurance for both practitioners and the programs they work in.24

The diagram below, developed through consultation in the National Framework project, sets out one such possible model.

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24 National Framework project, Debriefing meeting, Calgary 2012.
The model presents a common core of competencies applicable to all practitioners following which practitioners could engage in one or more related streams or specializations. The model is consistent with McKeown and Derrick’s recommendation that:

“If it is agreed that in principle it would be desirable for Canadian LES practitioners to have access to professional training and development, perhaps a useful model would be for a relatively short initial teaching qualification providing an introduction to teaching, with professional development modules in greater depth and with greater subject specific application that teachers could choose from and follow on an in-service basis according to their special interests and contexts... a pre-service entry qualification, following by on-going continuing professional development, in an accredited framework.”25

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ANNEX A

DETAILED TIPS ON GUIDELINES

What follows is a compendium of effective practices that support application of the Integrated Approach to Developing ES. These practices have been identified by practitioners and managers as effective in achieving ES outcomes, and applicable in diverse contexts and with diverse priority groups.
GUIDELINES

TO CONDUCT EFFECTIVE NEEDS ANALYSES

1. **DO YOUR HOMEWORK: UNDERSTAND THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONTEXT**
   - Keep informed of labour market, economic and social trends at national, regional, sectorial and local level. Be curious about their implications for increased levels of ES.
   - Update your information on a regular basis, so you have it available when you have to respond to a training opportunity with a tight deadline.
   - Develop a deep understanding of available ES research and its application to skill development in adult learning settings. Become familiar with the literature on ES (e.g. ES profiles, National occupational codes and standards, etc.).
   - Maintain regular contact with sector, employer and industry organizations to ensure you are using current Labour Market Information (LMI) related to demands and skill shortages of relevant and specific sectors, locations, and populations.

2. **IDENTIFY PERFORMANCE ISSUES AND GOALS**
   - Invest time to really understand the client’s business and what it entails, job processes and required tasks, etc.

3. **IDENTIFY HOW ENHANCED ES CAN MEET THE NEEDS**
   - Establish a clear connection between mastery of higher levels of ES and achievement of key performance indicators that organizations and learners care about. For example, health and safety, productivity, and retention in the workplace, and retention, success and graduation rates in colleges.
   - Use positive language when discussing returns on skill investment; think skills for Silicon Valley.

4. **ADOPT A LEARNER-CENTERED APPROACH**
   - Focus on addressing learners’ needs and on equipping them to achieve their performance and career goals.
   - Consider language requirements and sensitivities, educational levels, levels of self-confidence, motivation, socio-economic status, and concerns regarding training (e.g., timing, scheduling, flexibility to adjust to needs as they arise, etc.).
   - When analysing the client’s context be sure to include a realistic assessment of your own organization’s capacity to meet the client’s need.

5. **ACCESS CAPACITY OF INSTITUTIONS AND ORGANIZATIONS TO DELIVER ES INTERVENTIONS**
   - Identify resources available: HR, Finances, Communications, etc
   - Evaluate strengths, gaps, challenges and obstacles within institutions or organizations to implement ES
   - Make sure that indefectible support of higher decision makers is known and embedded in a strategic plan: there are no shortcuts to ES project but expertise can be found within the college network
   - Ask the questions and set attainable and realistic targets and goals; e.g. how can we lower dropout rates in the first semester, how can we get to know our students prior to present rules and regulations of college studies, etc.
TO ACHIEVE AND SUSTAIN EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIPS

1. IDENTIFY KEY STAKEHOLDERS – THOSE WITH A STAKE IN THE SUCCESS OF ES INTERVENTIONS
   - Identify key stakeholders whose contribution will be necessary for a successful ES solution: they can include senior management to allocate resources, middle management to release and support participation of employees; labour representatives and/or college faculty to mobilize participation in ES testing and training, etc.
   - If the solution requires collaboration from college faculty and/or career counsellors, include a representative that is credible and has legitimacy in the partnership at every stage.
   - When the solution is meant to address ES and employability needs of priority groups for example First Nations, newcomers to Canada, unemployed or persons with disabilities, etc. include a knowledgeable advisor in the partnership at every stage.
   - Consult ethics review committees early when conducting research on the effects of training solutions in post-secondary institutions.
   - Ensure sector and subject matter expertise is available within the partnership.
   - Consider partners from all sectors: public, private, not-for-profit, and professional associations and from urban and rural municipalities, local Chambers of Commerce and business development associations.
   - Assist all partners to understand the connections between the ES training goal and the realization of their organization’s strategic plan, mission, and values.

2. ENGAGE STAKEHOLDERS IN DEFINING A SHARED VISION, VALUES, AND MUTUAL CONTRIBUTIONS
   - Map out roles and responsibilities of partners for all stages of the solution. In workplaces, this may include training labour representatives to administer TOWES tests and deliver ES training, and having employers provide promotion and shared release for employees for training. In colleges, this may include engaging faculty to develop summary occupational profiles and co-design curriculum.
   - Identify accountabilities and deliverables and clarify mutual expectations early in the partnerships.
   - Have a written commitment and letter of intent as a starting point for discussion or to obtain funding.
   - Identify a liaison or point-person in your organization responsible for identifying ES opportunities for engagement.

3. MANAGE AND NURTURE THE PARTNERSHIP
   - Schedule regular check-ins with partners to avoid both scope creep and unnecessary activity based on false assumptions.
   - Provide for maximum flexibility in timelines to accommodate competing priorities as they emerge, so that partners are better able to stay engaged.
   - Plan for any change in staff, as not to derail your partnership.
   - Invest adequate resources in developing and sustaining partnerships (funds, time and human resources). Budget for these investments in your calculation of program costs.
   - Determine and use the most effective communication channels for maintaining different aspects of the partnership (e.g., face to face, e-bulletin, telephone, newsletter, wiki, webinars, etc.).
   - Do not take partners for granted. Thank them regularly and check in that they are still obtaining benefit from the partnership.
GUIDELINES

TO EFFECTIVELY RAISE ES AWARENESS AND GET ENGAGEMENT

1. USE POSITIVE LANGUAGE AND MESSAGING
   • Anchor discussions on ES in task requirements of occupations, in an information and technology rich world. Use the Essential Skills Profiles and the National Occupational Classification (NOC) profiles to anchor ES in the performance of occupational tasks, and tailor the ES story specific to the sectors you want to work with.
   • Position enhanced ES as a positive solution to addressing performance challenges (“An investment in the ES of your team will generate an increase in productivity”) and/or a means to achieve career goals.
   • Encourage interest in ES by sharing stories of success in comparable organizations.
   • Make a direct connection between return on investment (ROI) of developing ES and the organization’s strategic and performance goals.
   • Use clear, accessible “employer-friendly” language that is commonly used (and reinforced) in ES promotion across the country.
   • Directly address the top reasons adults say they don’t engage in training (lack of time or money) and counter with benefits that the individuals involved care about. For example, increased performance, achieving one’s potential, possibilities of promotion, less time needed to study or prepare for exams with better results, etc.
   • Use professionally-produced materials and compelling stories to market and promote ES benefits (print, video and social media). Target promotional materials differently to potential earners and providers. Clearly answer the question: “What’s in it for me?”
   • Eliminate the stigma of “low skilled” and skill deficit from all language and promotional materials. Shift focus to “Skills for Success!”

2. ACTIVELY ENGAGE DECISION MAKERS, PRACTITIONERS AND LEARNERS
   • Focus on short to medium term gains that are meaningful to the individual and the organization.
   • Position ES assessments and training as development opportunities and good practice for all; different from remedial for some.
   • Identify what will motivate participants and partners and use rewards and incentives to attract learners and maintain their interest (e.g., free tuition, release time, recognition, accreditation, etc.).
   • Offer some level of certification to successful ES training as a means to demonstrate the value of the training to learners and employers.
   • Know and use available research on the benefits of having higher levels of ES (e.g. adults with higher ES levels typically work more, experience less unemployment, earn more, spend less time unemployed and rely less on government transfers). That said, don’t overpromise.
   • Be specific about program requirements and participant commitments.
   • Be flexible to adapt to scheduling pressures due to activity in the organization or sector such as seasonal rush, temporary layoffs or regulatory change.
   • Anticipate arguments from resistant partners and clients (ES solutions are too costly, not enough time, labour and organizational requirements, etc.) and be prepared with acceptable solutions.
   • Consider integration programs within mainstream programs and curricula as an opportunity to integrate ES for the benefit of learners.

3. USE VARIOUS COMMUNICATION CHANNELS AND STRATEGIES
   • Identify and cultivate champions that have credibility and can mobilize support. Mobilize individuals with access to information and further resources (funds, time, facilities) and successful learners as champions to share their stories and testimonials.
   • Seek out opportunities to regularly communicate benefits of ES development to organizational leaders (e.g., boards, stewards, deans, vice-presidents, etc.) and to learners (union meetings, career days, etc.).
   • Engage career counsellors in both secondary and post-secondary organizations as conduits for information.
   • Employ appropriate and various communication channels (posters, flyers and rack cards on bulletin boards, face to face, email, telephone, social wiki, webinars) and traditional media (newspaper and press conferences) and maintain a regular schedule of communication.

[Accessed November 14, 2012]
GUIDELINES

TO ENSURE EFFECTIVE ES ASSESSMENTS

1. PLAN THOROUGHLY
   • Involve program advisors, labour representations and/or faculty liaisons in planning.
   • Research available ES assessments to make an informed choice in selecting the best assessment method and tool for your context. Consider factors such as: learner characteristics; paper vs. online; test length; turnaround time for results; cost to purchase and to administer; high or low stakes implications of test results.
   • Introduce ES assessments as trial or demonstration projects in one division or department of the institution where effects can be measured against control groups of students admitted through conventional assessments.
   • Frame the benefits of assessments positively for test takers: a picture of strengths, a way to identify and focus on what areas to improve in order to succeed.
   • Employ assessments not only at the beginning to establish a training baseline, but throughout delivery to benchmark progress and ensure the solution is still aligned with the learners’ needs.
   • When measuring skill gain in college programs through an applied research protocol, allow sufficient time for ethics review and related processes.
   • Directly link assessment tools to the relevant Essential Skills profiles.
   • Schedule assessments at relatively stress-free times for test-takers; avoid exam periods or high production times in the workplace.
   • Combine both qualitative and quantitative measures to obtain a complete assessment picture.

2. MANAGE IMPLEMENTATION
   • Ensure test administrators are fully trained and have taken the assessment themselves so they can answer detailed process questions.
   • Assure confidentiality of individual test results.
   • Have a Plan B for assessment administration especially when using online assessments; ensure help desk and technology support is available.
   • Minimize stressors in the testing environment by fully explaining processes in advance and allowing sufficient time for questions and preparation.
   • Understand and accommodate generational and individual learning styles and preferences in assessment: paper versions versus online assessment tools.

3. DEBRIEF ON TEST RESULTS
   • Allocate sufficient time and staff resources to debrief assessments with individual test-takers.
   • Answer test takers’ questions fully stressing opportunities for development shown in the results and explaining the difference between intelligence and reported skill levels.
   • Focus not only on skill gaps but also on the skills that already exist.
   • Ensure that assessment results reports are both relevant to and easily understood by test takers.
   • Demonstrate cross cultural sensitivity (potential loss of face or status) when debriefing assessment results.
   • When assessing skill levels post training solutions, work with test-takers to ensure results expectations are realistic.
   • Provide training options at different levels for all test takers according to assessment results.
GUIDELINES

TO DESIGN AND DELIVER EFFECTIVE ES TRAINING

1. OFFER EFFECTIVE SOLUTIONS
   • Customize ES training to meet the specific training context and performance objective(s).
   • Provide direct links between work/study and the ES training. Incorporate ES into acquisition of skills applicable to tasks to be performed at work and at college: e.g. making effective presentations, writing a persuasive report, etc.
   • Embed ES in all course or training outlines used across the college or workplace
   • Include technical subject matter experts on curriculum design teams
   • Focus on acquisition of learning strategies that are transferable from one context to another.
   • Blended learning approaches tend to work best: consider a mix of classroom, individual coaching, group work and on-line learning. Employ peer-teaching and mentoring strategies where appropriate
   • Incorporate authentic documents relevant to the learners and their workplace goals as the foundation of the training materials
   • Design solution with maximum flexibility in order to respond to shifting learner needs. Consider modularization of longer training programs to minimize disruption to work flow.

2. DELIVER EFFECTIVE PROGRAMS
   • Negotiate learning contracts with individuals around attendance, assignments, participation, etc. and hold them accountable
   • When possible, schedule training at varying times and in different locations to minimize any one learner or employee group being disrupted. Avoid learners having to choose between work and training, as training will generally come second.
   • Ensure scheduling allows trainees the opportunity to put the skills to work quickly and regularly so as to realize and consolidate skill gain.
   • Where learners are following a self-study program, schedule regular opportunities for them to connect with instructors as a means to remain motivated and hold themselves accountable
   • Partner to offer community-based ES for those who are unemployed and unable to access employer-based training and/or are unprepared to attend post-secondary programs
   • Celebrate good practice and learner achievement with employer, labour and school partners in attendance
   • Provide certification at completion with senior champions present to communicate organization wide value of the training.
   • Ensure coaching services for teachers/trainers to embed ES in their courses and curricula.
GUIDELINES TO ENSURE EFFECTIVE FEEDBACK AND FOLLOW UP

1. BUILD IN CONTINUOUS CHECKS
   - Take stock periodically of progress towards achievement of learning goals. Assess and fine-tune ES solutions, and seek additional support where needed.
   - Assess goal achievement at the end of training. This can be done through post-testing, gathering of information on learner satisfaction, observation of performance on the job and collection of impact data (questionnaires, surveys, interviews, etc.)
   - Identify and implement follow-up actions that may be needed to support the learner to achieve their learning and performance objectives beyond the ES solutions.
   - Where ongoing development of ES is required (e.g. in a second term, or follow-up training), use the evidence of progress or lack thereof to identify necessary measures to take to move learners towards greater employability.

2. TAP INTO AVAILABLE SUPPORT SERVICES
   - Consider giving additional support and practice time to learners who are still below Level 3.
   - Offer innovative services such as ES help centre to support learners throughout their training programs or improve the service scope in including ES.
   - Ensure coaching services for teachers/trainers to embed ES in their courses and curricula.
   - Seek additional tools to assess transferability of ES in practical contexts (e.g.: use observation grids).

3. USE DATA TO SUPPORT ES INTERVENTIONS
   - Monitor progress, dropout rates, in 1st session, graduation rate in prescribed time, monitor student grades, report data to Academic Committee, Faculty, decision-makers.
GUIDELINES
TO EFFECTIVELY STRENGTHEN INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY FOR ES OUTCOMES

1. EMBED ES IN STRATEGIC PLANNING
   • Build ES into college or company strategic plans and strategies for student success.
   • Ensure adequate funding commitments for ES assessments and training.
   • Invest in instructional design and program review for all ES offerings.
   • Walk the Talk: assess and upgrade ES of staff in your own organization.
   • Introduce ES assessments to complement existing entrance requirements for training programs.
   • Accept ES assessment results as the basis for granting equivalency credit for training.
   • Develop ES assessment and training capacity in house by having trainers certified as a test administrator and/or ES practitioners

2. RECRUIT AND RETAIN EFFECTIVE ES PRACTITIONERS
   • Consider ES knowledge as well as workplace experience and cultural awareness.
   • Consider teams of ES practitioners and technical experts.

3. ENSURE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF ES PRACTITIONERS
   • Develop ES assessment and training capacity in house by having trainers certified as a test administrator and/or ES practitioners.
   • Provide access to training resources to serve as models: the ACCC Virtual library, and publications from Measure Up, TOWES, Workplace Education Manitoba, SkillPlan, etc.
   • Encourage participation in national and provincial initiatives and projects that build ES communities of practice and networks of practitioners that can provide coaching and mentoring.
   • Encourage continuous professional development on new teaching strategies and means.
Core competencies provide the common foundation while specific competencies identify the streams in which these competencies would be more relevant.

### GUIDELINES

#### ESSENTIAL SKILLS PRACTITIONER COMPETENCIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CORE COMPETENCIES</th>
<th>Area of competency</th>
<th>Demonstration of competency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Essential Skills Knowledge | • Demonstrate understanding of the socio-economic context of training for the workplace in Canada through the lens of ES  
• Demonstrate understanding of the ROI of investing in ES levels for all Canadians  
• Demonstrate understanding of the HRSDC ES Research Project, ES profiles, ES skills taxonomy, ES scales of complexity, task analysis and their application in international adult literacy assessments such as IALS and PIACC | |
| Adult Learning Knowledge | • Describe and apply adult learning and facilitation theories, models and approaches  
• Create positive and engaging learning environments that promote respect for the diversity of all learners (Aboriginal, newcomer, persons with disabilities, seniors, etc.) | |
| Assessment Knowledge | • Demonstrate understanding of the range of formal and informal assessment measures available including IRT scores  
• Align effective ES evaluation strategies with learning outcomes/objectives and training activities | |
| Cross-Cultural Competence | • Aware of one’s own cultural biases and norms  
• Ability to interact effectively and appreciatively with persons of different cultures (ethnicity, nationhood, age, gender, learners with disabilities, etc)  
• Knowledge of cultural norms as they impact instruction in a specific context | |
An Integrated Approach to Developing Essential Skills

**SPECIFIC COMPETENCIES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of competency</th>
<th>Demonstration of competency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>STREAM: Instructor</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructional Competence</td>
<td>• Assess, deliver and evaluate adult learning and teaching on a continuum of instructional approaches</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Use instructional strategies and educational technologies appropriately to support and enhance teaching and learning</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>• Align instructional content with the skills identified in NOC and ES profiles</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Customize personalized learning plans to address ES skill gaps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Customize personal learning plans and group interaction to accommodate learners with disabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Demonstrate cultural competence in instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>STREAM: Developer</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curricular Competence</td>
<td>• Demonstrate ability to create learning resources from authentic materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Demonstrate ability to design learning resources that adapt to range of instruction (face-to-face, online, blended, mobile)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Demonstrate ability to create relevant, skill-based assessments using a range of formal and informal measures</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>STREAM: Counselor</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Development Competence</td>
<td>• Demonstrate understanding of career paths and portfolio development</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Demonstrate understanding of employability skills and their interaction with Essential Skills</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Demonstrate understanding of the applicability of ES to HR operations including job profiling, recruitment, and retention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counselling Competence</td>
<td>• Recognize when learner anxiety and stress requires a professional consultation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Knowledge of available community, social and mental health resources and networks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>STREAM: Manager</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Development Competence</td>
<td>• Identify business opportunities and partnerships appropriate to ES solutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Communicate effectively the ROI of investing in employee skill levels</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>• Translate business opportunities to training on the workplace</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All of the above would be supported by a *Code of Practice* that would set common professional standards and behaviour for all competent practitioners such as:

- Act in an ethical and professional manner with colleagues, partners, clients and learners.
- Communicate effectively and work collaboratively in the workplace and in the community.
- Demonstrate a commitment to continuous learning by engaging in on-going professional development to remain current in the field.
- Contribute to the maintenance and development of the profession.
### ANNEX B

**Pilot Projects with STUDENTS: Colleges, Programs and Student Groups**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coordinating College</th>
<th>Programs</th>
<th>Client Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Douglas College, Vancouver</td>
<td>- Business (eg. Accountant)</td>
<td>- Students in mainstream programs:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Health (eg. Health Care Assistant)</td>
<td>- 1-year certificate or 2-year diploma or 4-year degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camosun College, Victoria</td>
<td>- Nursing</td>
<td>- Nursing students in mainstream programs:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- English Language</td>
<td>- 2-year certificate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science &amp; Technology</td>
<td>- Continuing Care Assistant (CCA)</td>
<td>- Aboriginal students in Police Preparation program:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regina</td>
<td>- Practical Nursing (PN)</td>
<td>- Training for less than a year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Early Childhood Education (ECE)</td>
<td>- Students in mainstream programs:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Education Assistant (EA)</td>
<td>- 1-year certificate in business, BCP, ECE, EA, YCW &amp; CCA</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Youth Care Worker (YCW)</td>
<td>- 2-year diploma in PN</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Career Enhancement (CE)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Aboriginal Police Preparation (APP)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conestoga College Institute of Technology and Advanced</td>
<td>- Personal Support Worker (PSW)</td>
<td>- Students in mainstream programs:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kitchener-Waterloo</td>
<td>- Career Development</td>
<td>- 1-year certificate programs in PSW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Practitioner (CDP)</td>
<td>- 1-year post-graduate certificate in CDP &amp; HR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC) Halifax</td>
<td>- Business</td>
<td>- Students in mainstream programs:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Culinary Arts</td>
<td>- 2-year diploma</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Tourism Management</td>
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<tr>
<td>College of the North Atlantic (CNA) St. John’s</td>
<td>- Office Administration (OA)</td>
<td>- Students in mainstream programs:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Business Management (BM)</td>
<td>- 1-year certificate or 2-year diploma in OA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Health Science (HS)</td>
<td>- 1-year certificate or 2-year diploma in BM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- 3-year diploma in HS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collège Lionel-Groulx Ste-Thérèse</td>
<td>- Electronic Finance &amp; Accounting</td>
<td>- Continuing education students</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Logistics Management</td>
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<td>- Network Administration</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Retail Business Supervision</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Early Childhood Education</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Entertainment Rigging</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Cégep de l’Outaouais Gatineau</td>
<td>- Office Automation</td>
<td>- Continuing education students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Networking</td>
<td>- 1 to 2-year training programs (college training certificate)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Programmer Analyst</td>
<td>- Job-seekers (mostly immigrants) in practice firm:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Web Programmer</td>
<td>- Maximum 20 weeks in training</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Accounting &amp; Management</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- General Insurance</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Building Services</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Nursing</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Early Childhood Education</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Practice Firm</td>
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<tr>
<td>La Cité collégiale Ottawa</td>
<td>- French for New Immigrants</td>
<td>- Immigrant Students in French programs</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Pilot Projects with WORKERS: Colleges, Employers and Client Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coordinating College</th>
<th>Employers</th>
<th>Client Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bow Valley College</strong>&lt;br&gt;Calgary</td>
<td>• WorleyParsons, Calgary: Engineering services&lt;br&gt;• City of Calgary: Success in the Workplace program&lt;br&gt;• BVC Corporate Readiness Program</td>
<td>• Foreign-trained professionals&lt;br&gt;• Employed&lt;br&gt;• Job-seekers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science &amp; Technology (SIAST)&lt;br&gt;Saskatoon</td>
<td>• Canadian Homebuilders Association, Saskatoon region</td>
<td>• Underemployed and unemployed carpenters&lt;br&gt;• New Canadians&lt;br&gt;• Aboriginal peoples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sault College of Applied Arts &amp; Technology&lt;br&gt;Sault Ste-Marie</td>
<td>• ESSAR Steel, Sault Sainte Marie Pre-apprenticeships: Cooking and Plumbing&lt;br&gt;• Mechanical and Electrical Engineering training programs&lt;br&gt;• Energy, Construction and Carpentry</td>
<td>• Steel workers&lt;br&gt;• Aboriginal students in pre-apprenticeship programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC)&lt;br&gt;Halifax</td>
<td>• Health: Northwood Home Care</td>
<td>• Personal Care workers&lt;br&gt;• In-house services workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Collège communautaire du Nouveau-Brunswick (CCNB)</strong>&lt;br&gt;Campus de Dieppe</td>
<td>• Contact center: Assomption-Vie</td>
<td>• Client services workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collège communautaire du Nouveau-Brunswick (CCNB)&lt;br&gt;Campus de Bathurst</td>
<td>• Not-applicable: Campus Bathurst worked on developing training programs</td>
<td>• Not applicable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collège Lionel-Groulx&lt;br&gt;Ste-Thérèse</td>
<td>• Contact Centre: Progistix, La Capitale Insurance</td>
<td>• Workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La Cité collégiale&lt;br&gt;Ottawa</td>
<td>• Contact Centre: Canada School of Public Service</td>
<td>• Workers</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
# Annex C

## Advisory Committee Members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Canadian Steel Trade and Employment Congress representative</th>
<th>Canadian Supply Chain Sector Council</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mike Hersh, Senior Coordinator</td>
<td>Mr. Kevin Maynard, Executive Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canadian Steel Trade and Employment Congress</td>
<td>Canadian Supply Chain Sector Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toronto</td>
<td>Mississauga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:mhersh@cstec.ca">mhersh@cstec.ca</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:kmaynard@supplychaincanada.org">kmaynard@supplychaincanada.org</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Worley Parsons Canada</th>
<th>Areva Resources Canada Inc.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sandra Siemens, HR Manager</td>
<td>Ian Pollock, Training Advisor –McLean Lake Operation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worley Parsons Canada (operating assets sector)</td>
<td>Areva Resources Canada Inc. (mining sector)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alberta</td>
<td>Saskatchewan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:Sandra.Siemens@WorleyParsons.com">Sandra.Siemens@WorleyParsons.com</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:Ian.pollock@areva.ca">Ian.pollock@areva.ca</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regroupement québécois des organismes pour le développement de l'employabilité</th>
<th>Ministère de l'Éducation, Division de l'emploi pour la région Restigouche-Chaleur</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nicole Galarneau, Directrice générale</td>
<td>Gaston Richard, directeur régional, Division de l'emploi du MÉPFT pour la région</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regroupement québécois des organismes pour le développement de l'employabilité (RQuODE)</td>
<td>Restigouche-Chaleur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laurentides</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Gaston.A.Richard@gnb.ca">Gaston.A.Richard@gnb.ca</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:ngalarneau@rquode.com">ngalarneau@rquode.com</a></td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emploi-Québec</th>
<th>Literacy Nova Scotia</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Manon Wilscam</td>
<td>Ann-Marie Downie, Executive Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conseillère régionale des services aux entreprises</td>
<td>Literacy Nova Scotia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emploi-Québec</td>
<td>Truro, NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laurentides</td>
<td><a href="mailto:annmarie.downie@ns.sympatico.ca">annmarie.downie@ns.sympatico.ca</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:manon.wilscam@mess.gouv.qc.ca">manon.wilscam@mess.gouv.qc.ca</a></td>
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<tr>
<th>Citizenship and Immigration</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Guy Routhier, Senior Advisor, Integration Programs NHQ</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integration Program Management</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizenship and Immigration Canada</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ottawa</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:Guy.Routhier@cic.gc.ca">Guy.Routhier@cic.gc.ca</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## ANNEX D
### CORE TEAM MEMBERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COLLEGE</th>
<th>ES MAIN PRACTITIONER</th>
<th>PROJECT MANAGER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Camosun College Victoria | Robyn Unwin  
  Project Officer  
  (250) 217-4434  
  r.unwin@shaw.ca | Wendy Magahay  
  Program Coordinator, Continuing Education and Contract Training  
  (250) 370-4786  
  magahay@camosun.bc.ca |
| Douglas College New Westminster | Pam Tetarenko  
  Community & Contract Services Programmer  
  (604) 777-6055  
  tetarenkop@douglas.bc.ca | Bob McConkey  
  Executive Director, The Training Group  
  (604) 777-6102  
  mcconkeyb@douglas.bc.ca |
| Bow Valley College Calgary | Laurel Madro  
  Team Leader, Corporate Readiness Program  
  (403) 410-3459  
  lmadro@bowvalleycollege.ca | Conrad Murphy  
  Director, TOWES/Centre for Career Advancement  
  (403) 410-3195  
  cmurphy@bowvalleycollege.ca |
| SIAST Saskatoon | Joan Patterson  
  Program Head, Continuing Education Consultant, Career Enhancement Programs  
  (306) 775-7479  
  pattersonj@siast.sk.ca | Dan MacKay  
  Dean of Business  
  (306) 691-8252  
  mackay@siast.sk.ca |
| Conestoga College Kitchener | Pamela Jadischke  
  Essential Skills Specialist  
  ES Workforce Development (Waterloo)  
  (519) 885-0300 x5542  
  pjadischke@conestogac.on.ca | Sherri Tryon  
  Manager, Workplace Access Programs & Conestoga Career Centre (Guelph)  
  (519) 824-9590 x 6330  
  stryon@conestogac.on.ca |
| La Cité collégiale Ottawa | Nicole Olivier  
  Gestionnaire des programmes destinés aux nouveaux arrivants  
  (613) 742-2493 x2251  
  nolivi@lacitec.on.ca | Marie-Christine Gill  
  Gestionnaire de projets  
  La Cité des affaires  
  (613) 632-2483 x4051  
  mcgill@lacitec.on.ca |
| Cégep de l’Outaouais Gatineau | Ginette Mercier  
  Consultante  
  Direction de la formation continue  
  (819) 770-4012 x4576  
  ginette.mercier@cegepoutaouais.qc.ca | Joanne Moreau  
  Directrice, Formation continue et développement des affaires  
  (819) 770-4012 x4526  
  charles.nadeau@cegepoutaouais.qc.ca |
| Collège Lionel-Groulx Sainte-Thérèse | Anne-Josée Tessier  
  Conseillère pédagogique  
  Formation continue et services aux entreprises  
  (450) 430-3120 x2325  
  ajtessier@clg.qc.ca | Michel Simard  
  Directeur, Formation continue et services aux entreprises  
  (450) 430-3120 x2226  
  msimard@clg.qc.ca |
| CCNB Dieppe | Serge Duguay  
  Enseignant  
  (506) 869-6425  
  serge.duguay@gnb.ca | Pierrette Melanson  
  Chef de département, Formation continue  
  (506) 856-2639  
  pierrette.melanson@gnb.ca |
| NSCC Halifax | Clarence DeSchiffhart  
  ES Practitioner  
  (902) 491-3531  
  clarence.deschiffhartl@nscc.ca | Laurie Edwards  
  Director, Learning & Workforce Services, Student Success  
  (902) 491-3529  
  laurie.edwards@nscc.ca |
## GLOSSARY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KEY TERM</th>
<th>MEANING</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Action Research</td>
<td>Action Research is a reflective process of progressive problem solving led by individuals working with others in teams or as part of a community of practice to improve the way they address issues and solve problems. Action research can also be undertaken by larger organizations or institutions, assisted or guided by professional researchers, with the aim of improving their strategies, practices, and knowledge of the environments within which they practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC)</td>
<td>The Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC) is the national, voluntary membership organization created in 1972 to represent colleges and institutes to government, business, and industry, both in Canada and internationally. ACCC currently has 150 member colleges and institutes. ACCC's strategic goals include the following: promoting the excellence of members as the prime providers of advanced skills and applied research for social and economic development; mobilizing members around shared objectives; being a catalyst for innovation and collaboration to enhance the success of members and their students; showcasing and sharing members’ innovative capacities and achievements; responding to the diversity of members by recognizing and supporting their unique realities; strengthening members’ capacity through national and international partnerships. For further information visit the ACCC site at <a href="http://www.accc.ca">http://www.accc.ca</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collège d’enseignement général et professionnel (CEGEP)</td>
<td>A Collège d’enseignement général et professionnel (CEGEP) is a public educational institution of college level in Quebec that offers pre-university and technical training programs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complexity</td>
<td>Most of the Essential Skills have a unique complexity rating scale. Four-level or five-level scales are used depending on the Essential Skill. The complexity rating scales for Reading Text and Document Use are compatible with the scales used in the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS). The complexity rating scale for Oral Communication is compatible with the Canadian Language Benchmarks. There is a wide range of complexity within each level and this is particularly important for complexity level 1. (Government of Manitoba)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DACUM</td>
<td>The DACUM (Developing A CurricULUM) method was created in Canada in the 1960s. Originally designed and implemented as a total system for organizing, delivering instruction and management of the learning process, DACUM has evolved into a competency development and management model. Its competency analysis component (DACUM analysis) has become a standard in a large variety of organizations (education, government, business and industry, NFP, etc.) on all continents. (Canadian Vocational Association)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employability Skills</td>
<td>Employability Skills (developed by the Conference Board of Canada) Consult to the critical skills you need in the workplace and include communication, problem solving, positive attitudes and behaviours, adaptability, working with others, and science, technology and mathematics skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESRP</td>
<td>In 1994, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada launched a national research study, the Essential Skills Research Project (ESRP), to examine how the Essential Skills were used in various jobs. More than 3,000 interviews were conducted across Canada with people working in some 180 occupations. The workers interviewed were identified by their employers as performing their job in a fully satisfactory manner. Details at: <a href="http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/workplaceskills/LES/definitions/research.shtml">http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/workplaceskills/LES/definitions/research.shtml</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essential Skills</td>
<td>Essential Skills Consults to the set of core skills identified by the Government of Canada as needed for work, learning and life. They are the foundation for learning all other skills and help people evolve with their jobs and adapt to workplace change (Government of Canada).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essential Skills Profile</td>
<td>Essential Skills Profiles describe how workers in various occupations use each of the key essential skills. They include: A brief description of the occupation; Examples of tasks that illustrate how each essential skill is applied; and, complexity ratings that indicate the level of difficulty of the example tasks. More than 350 profiles have been completed for different occupations (Government of Canada)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ES Solution</td>
<td>Any of a wide range of Essential Skills planned actions supported that are used to assist workers/learners in moving toward employment or enhanced employment. Solutions include assessment and evaluation, training and conditions for success such as HR practices, practitioner training, ES-based admissions/hiring policies, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HRSDC</td>
<td>Human Resources and Skills Development Canada is the Canadian government department funding the project. Within HRSDC, the Office of Literacy and Essential Skills (OLES) is focused on improving the literacy and Essential Skills of adult Canadians. It provides expertise, funding for innovative and dynamic projects and a wide range of learning tools and other resources. Their activities include: 1) Programming; grants and contributions; 2) Building knowledge and expertise: research, analysis and results; 3) Tools: development, adaptation and dissemination; and; 4) Partnerships; with other government departments, provincial and territorial governments, and non-profit organizations. Through these activities, OLES aims to help Canadians have the skills they need to get a job, stay in the job market and contribute to their communities and families. For more information, visit the OLES Website <a href="http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/workplaceskills/oles/olesindex_en.shtml">http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/workplaceskills/oles/olesindex_en.shtml</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IALSS</td>
<td>The International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey (IALSS) was a seven-country initiative conducted in 2003. In every country nationally representative samples of adults aged 16-65 were interviewed and tested at home, using the same psychometric test to measure prose and document literacy as well as numeracy and problem-solving skills. Details at: <a href="http://www23.statcan.gc.ca/81/imdb/p2SV.pl?Function=getSurvey&amp;SurvId=4406&amp;SurvVer=1&amp;SDDS=4406&amp;InstId=15966&amp;InstaVer=2&amp;lang=en&amp;db=imdb&amp;adm=8&amp;dis=2">http://www23.statcan.gc.ca/81/imdb/p2SV.pl?Function=getSurvey&amp;SurvId=4406&amp;SurvVer=1&amp;SDDS=4406&amp;InstId=15966&amp;InstaVer=2&amp;lang=en&amp;db=imdb&amp;adm=8&amp;dis=2</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**IALS**
The International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) was a seven-country initiative first conducted in the fall of 1994. Its goal: to create comparable literacy profiles across national, linguistic and cultural boundaries. Details at: [http://www23.statcan.gc.ca/81/imb/p2SV.pl?Function=getSurvey&SurvId=4406&SurvVer=0&SDSS=4406&InstId=1&lang=en&db=imdb&adm=8&dis=2](http://www23.statcan.gc.ca/81/imb/p2SV.pl?Function=getSurvey&SurvId=4406&SurvVer=0&SDSS=4406&InstId=1&lang=en&db=imdb&adm=8&dis=2)

**Integrated Approach**
The **Integrated Approach** is one component of the National Framework, the other being the Repository of Resources. The Integrated Process will draw on Action Research methodology and exemplary practice on ES, and will provide a participatory, systemic perspective and process to guide and adapt ES solutions to the needs of the target client groups and utilization by the project stakeholders.

**Literacy**
**Literacy** is the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate, compute and use printed and written materials associated with varying contexts. Literacy involves a continuum of learning to enable an individual to achieve his or her goals, to develop his or her knowledge and potential, and to participate fully in the wider society. (UNESCO, CLLN)

**PIAAC**
The **Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC)** is an Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) initiative which aims to collect information on the skills and competencies of residents from 27 countries, including Canada. PIAAC will assess the level and distribution of adult skills in a coherent and consistent way across countries. Details will be released in late 2013.

**Practitioner**
Included under the umbrella “**ES practitioners**” are teachers (with training in education), facilitators, employment and career counsellors, trainers, workplace HR professionals, workplace preceptors, etc. There are also ES professionals that may not work directly with learners. These include curriculum and assessment developers, and business developers. The common link is an appreciation for the performance benefits that are achieved through raising Essential Skills levels.

**Project partners**
Given that this project adopts a participatory Action Research methodology, ACCC considers individuals and organizations that contribute to project activities to be **project partners**. Project partners thus include Canadian colleges and institutes, sector councils, employment service providers, literacy organizations, and representatives from target client groups who will participate in the Working Group and pilot project activities, as well as ES experts and various consultants.

**Quality assurance**
**Quality assurance**, often used interchangeably with **quality management**, Consults to an aggregate of actions and measures taken regularly to assure the quality of educational processes, products and services, and places emphasis on assuring that criteria of quality are met. In this project, quality assurance aims at monitoring the relevance, reliability and adaptability of the process of developing ES, as well as the quality of resources in the Repository to ensure they meet the intended objectives. Criteria of quality will be developed in collaboration with project partners. Follow up and monitoring activities will serve to adjust the Integrated Process and materials and documents in the Repository as needed to assure quality criteria are met.

**Relevance**
**Relevance** is a term used to describe how pertinent, connected, or applicable something is to a given matter. A thing is relevant if it serves as a means to a given purpose. In this project, the National Framework for developing ES – including the Integrated Process and the Repository of Resources - will be deemed relevant if it is pertinent to the needs of the various client groups, is applicable in diverse regional contexts, and it increases the capacity of colleges and institutes and employment service providers to develop ES of target client groups.

**Reliability**
**Reliability** is the ability of a person or system to perform and maintain its functions in routine circumstances, as well as unexpected circumstances. The project will assess the extent to which the National Framework – that is, the Process and Repository - serves to improve development of ES in diverse contexts.

**Sector councils**
**Sector councils** are industry-led partnership organizations that address skills development issues and implement solutions in key sectors of the economy. Sector councils work as a uniting element to engage employers, workers, educators, professional associations and government in a strategic alliance that is focused on implementing solutions to the specific skills and human resource needs that will enable their sector to thrive.

**Stakeholders**
**Stakeholders** are persons, groups or organizations who have a direct or indirect stake in the project because they contribute to the project (funds, expertise, time, materials, etc.) or because they can be affected by the project’s results. Key project stakeholders include ACCC and its members, HRSDC, other federal and provincial government departments, sector councils, employment and literacy service providers – and in particular those who service Aboriginal people, newcomers to Canada, unskilled workers and the unemployed, including displaced workers – and ultimately, a broader range of Canadians from the target groups.

**Target client groups**
The project’s target clients groups are Aboriginal people, newcomers to Canada, unskilled workers and the unemployed, including displaced workers, who are currently marginalized or excluded from the labour market.

**Virtual Library**
The **Virtual Library** is one component of the National Framework, the other being the Integrated Approach. The Repository is a digital and paper based repertoire of Consultence materials and documents for the project stakeholders. This collection of documents will rely on contributions from the community on topics tailored to fit the ES needs of the target client groups and diverse regional contexts. These will include: charts and diagrams representing the Framework; values and orientations that underlie it; guidelines for its application and adaptation; basic activity content and structure; types and examples of activities; information on design, implementation, follow up and evaluation of activities; and modalities for development, adaptation and evaluation of ES.

**Working Group**
The project’s **Working Group** is an interdisciplinary group composed of ES experts / practitioners from colleges and institutes (Core Team) and an Advisory Body comprising representatives from sector councils, employment service providers, literacy organizations, target groups. Together they will actively contribute to the design, validation and dissemination of the National Framework for Development of Essential Skills as well as follow up on its utilization.