Human Resources and
Skills Development Canada

Ressources humaines et
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Literacy and Essential Skills Guide

For Service Providers Assisting

Homeless or At-risk Clients

Part 1:
Understanding and
Using the Tools

Developed by
Human Resources and Skills Development Canada

Canada

TABLE OF CONTENTS

About this Guide

This guide was developed to help you learn about the many essential skills tools available through Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC). These are tools that you can use to help your clients learn about the skills they will need to enter the work force.

Although the guide was created primarily for service providers who help people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, it may also be helpful to anyone who wants to learn more about literacy and essential skills.

The *Literacy and Essential Skills Guide for Service Providers Assisting Homeless or At-risk Clients* consists of three separate documents:

■ **Part 1:** Understanding and Using the Tools

Part 1 of the guide includes information on how to find and select the most appropriate HRSDC literacy and essential skills tools for a particular type of individual or organization. It also includes a definition of the nine essential skills, an overview of the different types of tools available and information on how to access them.

For the best results, it is recommended that you read this document first.

■ **Part 2:** Three Simple Steps to Selecting and Using the Tools — Scenarios for Service Providers

This document includes examples and scenarios to help you use and customize the various tools to meet the needs of different types of clients.

■ **Part 3:** Literacy and Essential Skills Tools Catalogue

This detailed catalogue includes descriptions and explanations of all the HRSDC essential skills tools currently available.

The *Literacy and Essential Skills Guide for Service Providers Assisting Homeless or At-risk Clients* was produced by the Homelessness Partnering Secretariat and the Office of Literacy and Essential Skills, which are part of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada.

Understanding Essential Skills

The Government of Canada, in collaboration with national and international agencies, has identified and validated nine key skills that are used in nearly every job.

Reading	This refers to reading text that is in the form of sentences or paragraphs.
Writing	This includes writing texts, filling in forms and non-paper-based writing (e.g. typing on a computer).
Document use	This refers to tasks that involve information where words, numbers, icons or other visual elements are given meaning by their spatial arrangement (e.g. graphs, tables, drawings).
Numeracy	Numeracy refers to a person's use of numbers and their ability to think in quantitative terms.
Computer use (also called digital skills)	Computer use looks at the variety and complexity of computer use required within a particular occupational group.
Thinking	This skill involves six different types of cognitive functions: problem solving, decision making, critical thinking, job task planning and organizing, significant use of memory and finding information.
Oral communication	Oral communication pertains primarily to the ability of workers in an occupational group to use speech to give and exchange thoughts and information.
Working with others	This examines the extent to which employees work with others to carry out their tasks. For example, some jobs may require them to work co-operatively with others or to have the self-discipline to work alone.
Continuous learning	This skill pertains to the requirement for workers in an occupational group to participate in an ongoing process of acquiring skills and knowledge.

For more information on the nine essential skills, visit
www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/workplaceskills/LES/definitions/definitions.shtml.

About the Tools

HRSDC's literacy and essential skills tools are free, easy-to-use resources designed to help build awareness about, and support the development of, essential skills.

Available in a variety of formats, the tools target different learning styles and skills levels, and can be adapted to meet the needs of different types of individuals and organizations.

Who Can Benefit from Using the Tools

Service providers—Service providers and trainers can use the tools to improve the essential skills of job seekers and workers. For example, there are specific tools that assist with integrating essential skills into training and development programs.

Job seekers and workers—The tools also serve the needs of job seekers and workers looking to develop their own essential skills, prepare for interviews or create strategies for success in the workplace. For example, there are tools to help individuals identify their strengths and weaknesses, and resources to help them improve their computer use and numeracy skills.

Apprentices, tradespeople, entrepreneurs and human resources (HR) professionals may also benefit from using these tools.

How the Tools Are Organized

The tools are grouped into three categories that can also be viewed as steps.

■ **Step 1:** Get informed/build awareness

Tools in this category are designed to increase your understanding of essential skills and help you to communicate to clients why these skills are important to job success.

■ **Step 2:** Assess essential skills requirements

Use these tools to assess an individual's essential skills and identify their strengths as well as areas that need improvement.

■ **Step 3:** Support skills development

These learning and training tools can help you develop a person's essential skills. They can also assist you to integrate skills into training programs. For entrepreneurs and HR professionals, these tools can be used to help recruit and retain employees.

Additional information about the categories and the purpose of each of the tools can be found in *Part 3: Literacy and Essential Skills Tools Catalogue*.

Essential Skills Success Story

The Sequel to Tree Cutting: Mel Lively's Story

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There's not much in the lumber business that I haven't seen or done. As a young boy, I decided to become a woodsman. Sadly, a major accident forced me to leave the woods and look for other work. This is the story of how essential skills helped me cope with this sudden change and make my life better.

Continuous learning has always been a part of my life. When I was very young, I went to work in the woods to help support my family. My brother and I learned how to cut fence posts and firewood. I learned all there was to know about the logging business, from building a brow at the side of the road to the science of tree cutting.

At 43, my life changed completely. I had a major accident that forced me to get a job indoors. That's when I learned about essential skills. With the support of my employer and the Nova Scotia Department of Education, I learned how to read and write. Now, I can read documents and graphs at work, and contribute to the company newsletter.

I have even written a book about my life in the woods, which is very popular with the local Grade 3 students. They love to read about how I chopped down trees. I'm even planning a sequel—something my grandchildren are really looking forward to.

Improving my essential skills has given me more than I had ever dreamed of. Even though I can no longer work as a woodsman, I have a new way of sharing my passion and love for life in the woods with others.

You can read more success stories at http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/workplaceskills/LES/tools_resources/tools_audience/living_and_learning.shtml.

Essential Skills Success Story

The Journey from After-school Job to Successful Career: Nicole Linde's Story

When I was 16, I got a part-time job answering phones at a call centre. Now, at 22, I lead the Information and Communications Technology operations at the same place. This is the story of how I worked my way up by improving my essential skills.

When I started working at the call centre, one of my first tasks was to learn how the company's high-tech phone and computer system worked. I began by improving my "computer use" skills. The tools were always changing, and I needed to keep up.

This was a challenge. Many long-time employees were leaving the call centre, and important information was not being passed on to newer employees. My manager saw the problem and decided the team needed training to develop our "working with others" skills.

Continuous learning on the job and through courses helped us work better together. We saw the value of sharing information and best practices. Our thinking skills improved. It was easier to solve problems and make decisions, and we learned how to deal with conflict at work. Within a couple of years, people were happier at their jobs and less likely to leave. I used all these skills to eventually become a team leader and manager.

Now, I'm in charge of system and client care, account set-up and sales. I find that every day leads to new challenges. I know there is a lot to learn in the high-tech industry. But I feel that my essential skills have given me the confidence and ability to do well in this exciting, fast-paced setting.

You can read more success stories at **http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/workplaceskills/LES/tools_resources/ tools_audience/living_and_learning.shtml**.

Finding the Tools You Need

You can view or download any of the tools by visiting the essential skills Tools and Resources page on the HRSDC website at **www.hrsdc.gc.ca/essentialskills**.

The Tools and Resources page has been organized to help you find tools that are relevant to your individual needs. There are two ways to view the tools available:

By audience — Sort tools by target audience if you are looking for tools relevant to you. For example, if you are a service provider or career counsellor, click on the Trainers and Career Counsellors link to view all literacy and essential skills tools that may be of interest to anyone who helps train or assist others.

By type — If you have a specific purpose in mind, such as conducting an informal assessment of essential skills needs, you can choose to view the tools by type.

Skills Profiles and Other Resources

The Tools and Resources page also includes tabs linking to additional information:

Essential Skills Profiles

In this section you'll find over 350 profiles describing how each essential skill is used by workers in a particular occupation.

These profiles can be used in many different ways. For example, they can help determine, based on skill set, which career may best suit a particular individual. They can also assist job seekers to write a résumé or prepare for a job interview, and can help employers to create a job posting.

Resources

Here, you'll find useful statistics and trends on essential skills in Canada. You can search through projects funded by HRSDC's Office of Literacy and Essential Skills, and browse the National Adult Literacy Database, which lists literacy and essential skills tools developed by different organizations.

Customizing the Tools

The tools were developed to help meet the needs of a variety of users. They reflect typical workplace tasks carried out in various jobs and occupations. You may find that you want to adapt a tool to make it more specific to the needs of your clients.

Copyright Requirements

To customize a tool, you may need to obtain permission to ensure it meets Government of Canada guidelines for use of copyrighted material. To determine if copyright clearance is required, visit **www.publications.gc.ca/site/eng/ccl/copyrightclearance/apply.html**.

Helpful Tips

When customizing any of the literacy and essential skills tools, remember to **think about your clients' potential needs** and try to ensure the tool meets these needs. Here are some tips to help you:

- Make sure the level of language is appropriate. Consider adding images relevant to the end user to help them better understand and relate to the material.

- Think about creating an electronic template for the tool if you plan to use it repeatedly, or if you are working with clients who prefer using a computer.

- Ensure your content is relevant and respectful.

- When adapting the tools, take into account that people have different learning styles. For example, visual learners may prefer tools containing illustrations rather than a lot of text. In comparison, people who learn by doing may perform best with tools that are more interactive.

- If you want to adapt your tools for particular professions, you can augment your content using the information found in any of the essential skills profiles. Alternatively, you may choose to create new tools based on other resources.

Available Formats and Ordering

Online — Most of HRSDC's essential skills tools are available online in both HTML and PDF format. Some tools, such as the online indicators and checklists, are available in interactive formats.

DVD — Ideal for those who want to deliver a customized workshop, the Literacy and Essential Skills Tools DVD is the place to find videos and software as well as materials in PDF and Microsoft Word format.

Alternative formats — HRSDC publications are also available in alternative formats (large print, Braille, audio cassette, audio CD, e-text diskette, e-text CD and DAISY). To order, call 1 800 O-Canada (1-800-622-6232). If you use a teletypewriter (TTY), call 1-800-926-9105.

Print — Paper-based versions of most tools are available.

> **Printing your own copies** — Since the tools are intended primarily to be used in print format, you are encouraged to use either the DVD or online version of the tools to print your own copies for distribution. (You do not need to seek copyright clearance to print or photocopy these tools if they are being used for personal or public non-commercial purposes, or for cost-recovery purposes.)

> **Ordering printed copies** — All HRSDC essential skills tools are free and shipped to you at no charge.

Ordering Information

Orders can be placed online, or by mail or fax.

Online

The fastest way to place your order is to use HRSDC's online shopping cart, Publicentre, at **www12.hrsdc.gc.ca**.

Note: Because Publicentre houses all HRSDC publications, you will need to be specific when searching for the tools you want to order. For example, it is best to enter the exact title or catalogue number of the publication. (When searching by catalogue number, it is only necessary to enter "WP-" plus the first three numbers after the hyphen, e.g. WP-138.)

A complete list of titles and catalogue numbers is available on the Tools and Resources page at **www.hrsdc.gc.ca/essentialskills**. In addition, you can find the tool catalogue in part three of the *Literacy and Essential Skills Guide For Service Providers Assisting Homeless or At-risk Clients*. The catalogue number is also printed at the bottom of each tool.

By mail or fax

Note: When placing an order by mail or fax, be sure to provide your complete name and mailing address and include the catalogue number for each tool you are ordering.

You may fax your request to **819-953-7260**.

You can also submit your request by mail to:

>Publications/Distribution Unit
>HRSDC Communications Branch
>140 Promenade du Portage
>Place du Portage, Phase IV, Level 10
>Gatineau, QC K1A 0J9

Delivery time

Generally, tools are delivered within 10 business days after the order is placed, although this is not guaranteed. If you need to receive your tools by a particular date, we encourage you to place your order as far in advance as possible.

Questions?

If you have a question about an order, please send it by email to **es-ce@hrsdc-rhdsc.gc.ca**.

About Us

The Homelessness Partnering Secretariat (HPS) works to achieve longer-term stability and self-sufficiency for those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness by providing opportunities through skills development and work experience, with the intent of supporting their integration into the labour market.

This guide is one of many HPS initiatives aimed at preventing and reducing homelessness across Canada. For more information, visit **www.hrsdc.gc.ca/homelessness**.

The Office of Literacy and Essential Skills (OLES) works to integrate literacy and essential skills into existing workplace training and skills upgrading activities. To learn more about OLES and its activities, and to access helpful guides, checklists and worksheets, visit us online at **www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/workplaceskills/LES**.

Additional Resources

Making the Tools Work for You: A Guide to Using the Literacy and Essential Skills Tools and Resources Available Through HRSDC

This guide provides information on how to find literacy and essential skills tools online and how to choose the tools most relevant to a particular person or organization. It also includes examples of how to put the tools into practice or customize them to meet the needs of different target groups.

For more information, contact us by email at **es-ce2@hrsdc-rhdcc.gc.cae**.