



Now and Tomorrow
Excellence in Everything We Do

Making the Tools Work for You:

A Guide to Using the Essential Skills Tools and Resources Available Through HRSDC



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SECTION 1: UNDERSTANDING AND USING THIS GUIDE

The purpose of this guide

This user guide will help you understand and use the essential skills tools and resources available through Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC). The guide is designed *mainly* for those who support skills development in and/or for the workplace such as career counsellors, adult educators, trainers and facilitators. It can also be used by anyone interested in learning more about literacy and essential skills and how to use the tools.

What to expect

In this guide you will find:

- information on how to find the tools online and choose those most relevant to a particular person or organization;
- examples to help learn how to put the tools into practice and customize them to meet different needs and target groups;
- answers to a number of frequently asked questions; and
- descriptions of all of the tools currently available.

SECTION 2: UNDERSTANDING THE TOOLS

Getting to know the essential skills tools and resources

What are the tools?

The tools are free and easy-to-use resources available through HRSDC. They can help increase awareness and support essential skills development in the workplace.

Key features of the tools

The tools...

- are easily accessible in a variety of formats;
- target different learning styles and skill levels; and
- can be adapted and customized to meet the needs of different individuals and organizations.

Who can use the tools?

The tools serve the needs of four types of users:

Apprentices and Tradespersons:

Tools that help you develop your essential skills so you can be more successful in the skilled trades. The tools can also help you prepare for your training and examination for certification. Examples include tools to help individuals understand the essential skills needed in particular trades such as carpentry and plumbing.

Entrepreneurs, Employers and HR Professionals:

Tools that support essential skills development in the workplace. Examples include tools to help you implement on-the-job learning and training, and tools for integrating essential skills into hiring and recruitment practices.

Job Seekers and Workers:

Tools that help you develop your essential skills, prepare for and get a job, succeed at work and adapt to change. Examples include tools to identify strengths and areas that may need some improvement in computer use and numeracy.

Trainers and Career Counsellors:

Tools that support trainers and career counsellors to improve the essential skills of job seekers and workers. Examples include tools to help integrate essential skills into training and professional development programs.

How are the tools organized?

The tools are organized into categories that follow three simple steps to help maintain and develop skills for the workplace. Additional information and application of these steps can be found in Section 3.

Step 1: Get Informed / Build Awareness:

Use awareness tools to help you understand and communicate why essential skills are important to job success and show how they are used in nearly every job in Canada. Note: The Essential Skills Profiles can also be used in this step.

Step 2: Assess Essential Skills Needs:

Use needs assessments to help identify essential skills strengths and areas for improvement.

Step 3: Support Skills Development:

Use learning and training supports to help develop essential skills and integrate these skills into training programs and HR practices.

Finding the tools online

Where can I find the tools?

You can view, download and order the tools by visiting the essential skills **Tools and Resources** section of the HRSDC website at www.hrsdc.gc.ca/essentialskills. This section has been organized to help you find and select the tools that are most relevant to your needs.

There are two ways to view the tools: By audience and by type.

Tools by Audience

One way of viewing the tools is by target audience. For example, if you are a career counsellor, you can click on “Trainers and Career Counsellors” and a series of essential skills tools will appear.

Tools by Type

If you have a specific purpose in mind such as conducting an informal essential skills needs assessment, you can choose to view the tools by type. In this case, you would click on “Needs Assessments” and all related tools will be displayed.

Other resources and information

Essential Skills Profiles

Over 350 profiles are currently available and describe how each essential skill is used by workers in a particular occupation. The profiles can be used in many different ways, including finding out what careers a person’s skills may be best suited for, writing a resume, preparing for a job interview, or creating job postings.

Resources

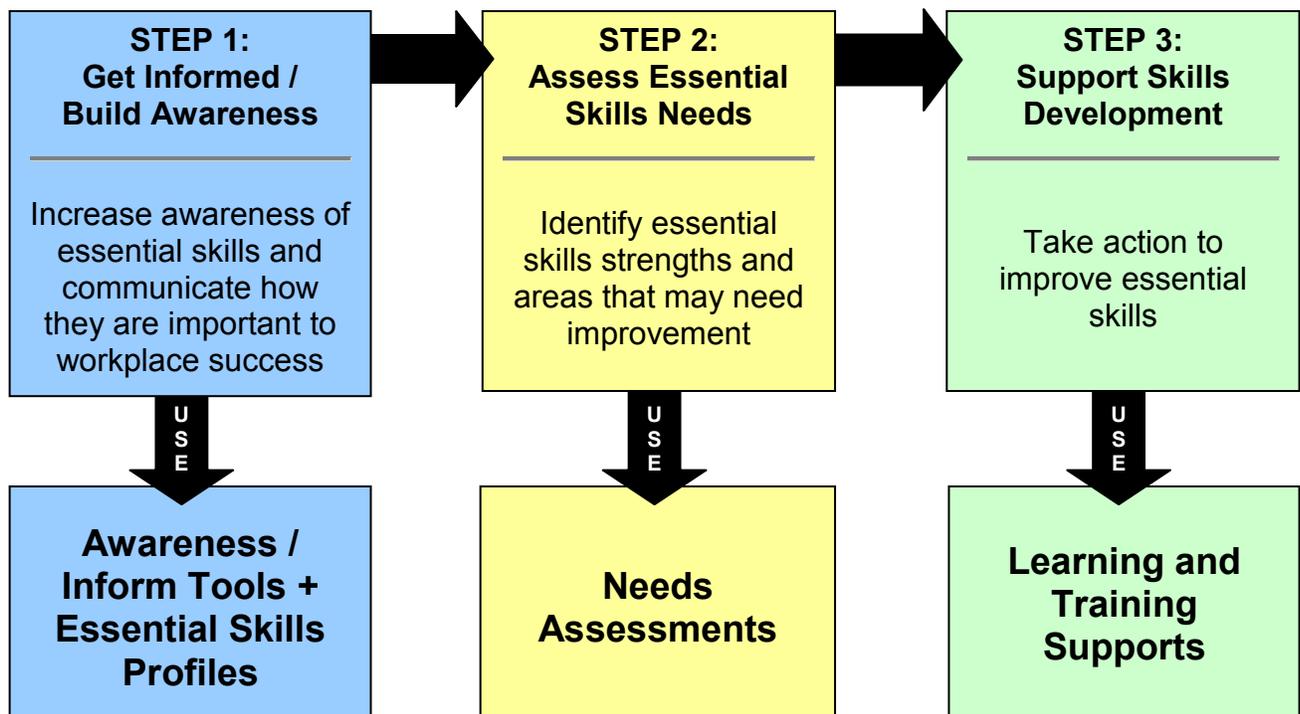
In this section, you can find useful statistics and trends on essential skills in Canada. You can additionally search through projects funded by the Office of Literacy and Essential Skills and also look through other literacy and essential skills tools developed by different organizations via the National Adult Literacy Database (NALD).

SECTION 3: SELECTING AND USING THE TOOLS

Three simple steps

If you know or suspect that an individual or organization may be facing an essential skills challenge, these three easy steps can help you to choose the most appropriate tools to address identified needs.

Follow these three simple steps to integrate the tools at each stage of an essential skills intervention:



Please Note:

- These steps match the categories of tools by type on the “Tools and Resources” Web section discussed in Section 2 of this guide.
- You can look through the tools by audience and follow the above steps to further help you select the most relevant tools to meet particular needs.
- You may wish to consult the catalogue at the end of this guide for brief descriptions of each tool, as well as their category and intended audience.

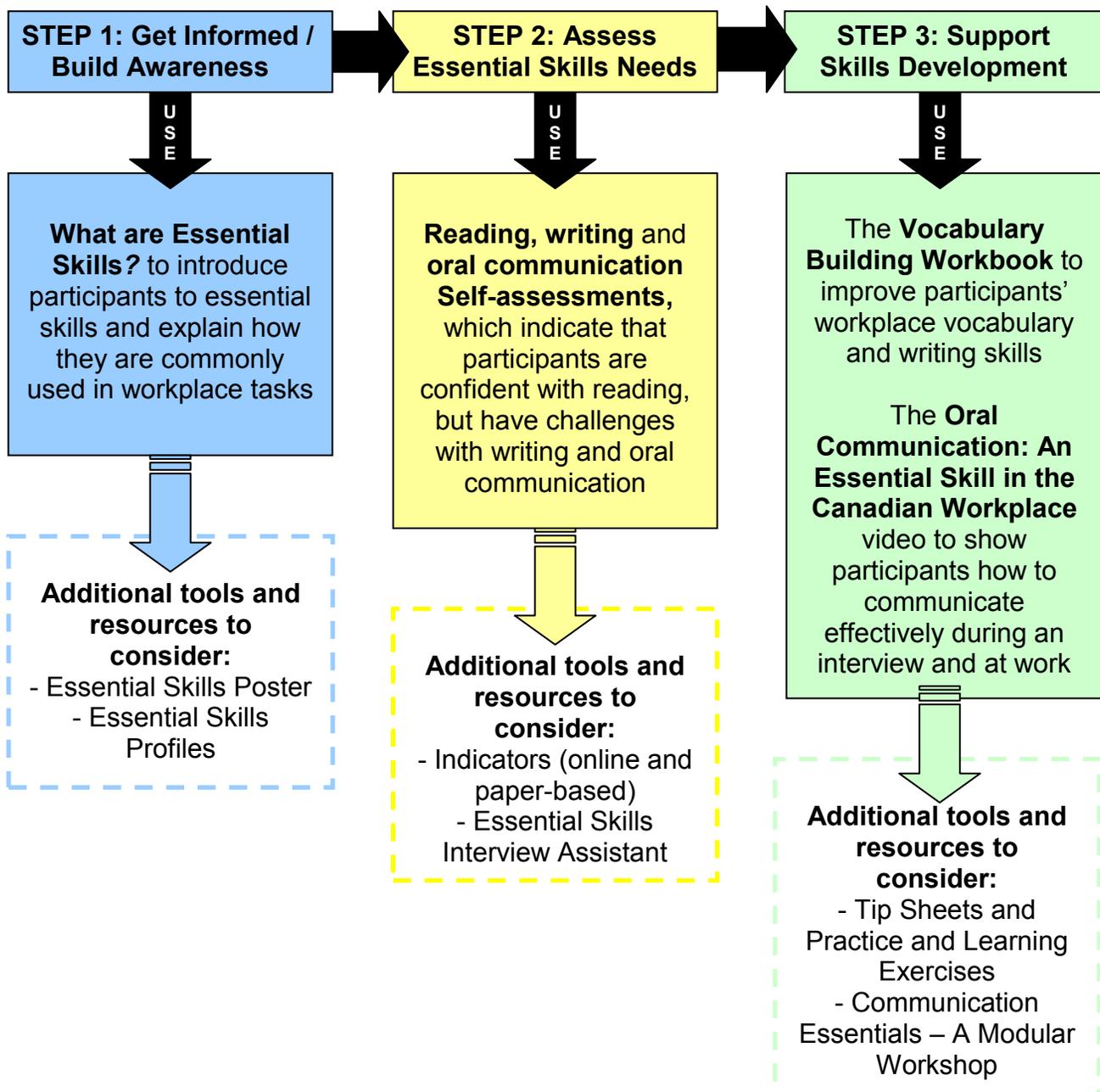
To demonstrate how these steps can be easily put into practice, four different scenarios are presented on the pages that follow. These scenarios can help you think about how to identify the tools that might be most appropriate for a particular individual or organizational need and put them into use. Suggestions of additional tools that could prove useful are provided for each scenario.

Putting the tools into practice: scenarios

Scenario #1: Working with Newcomers to Canada

As a trainer at an Adult Literacy Centre you are asked to develop and deliver a small group workshop for adult newcomers to Canada to help them prepare for employment. You are told that many of the participants are having a difficult time communicating in English (both orally and in writing).

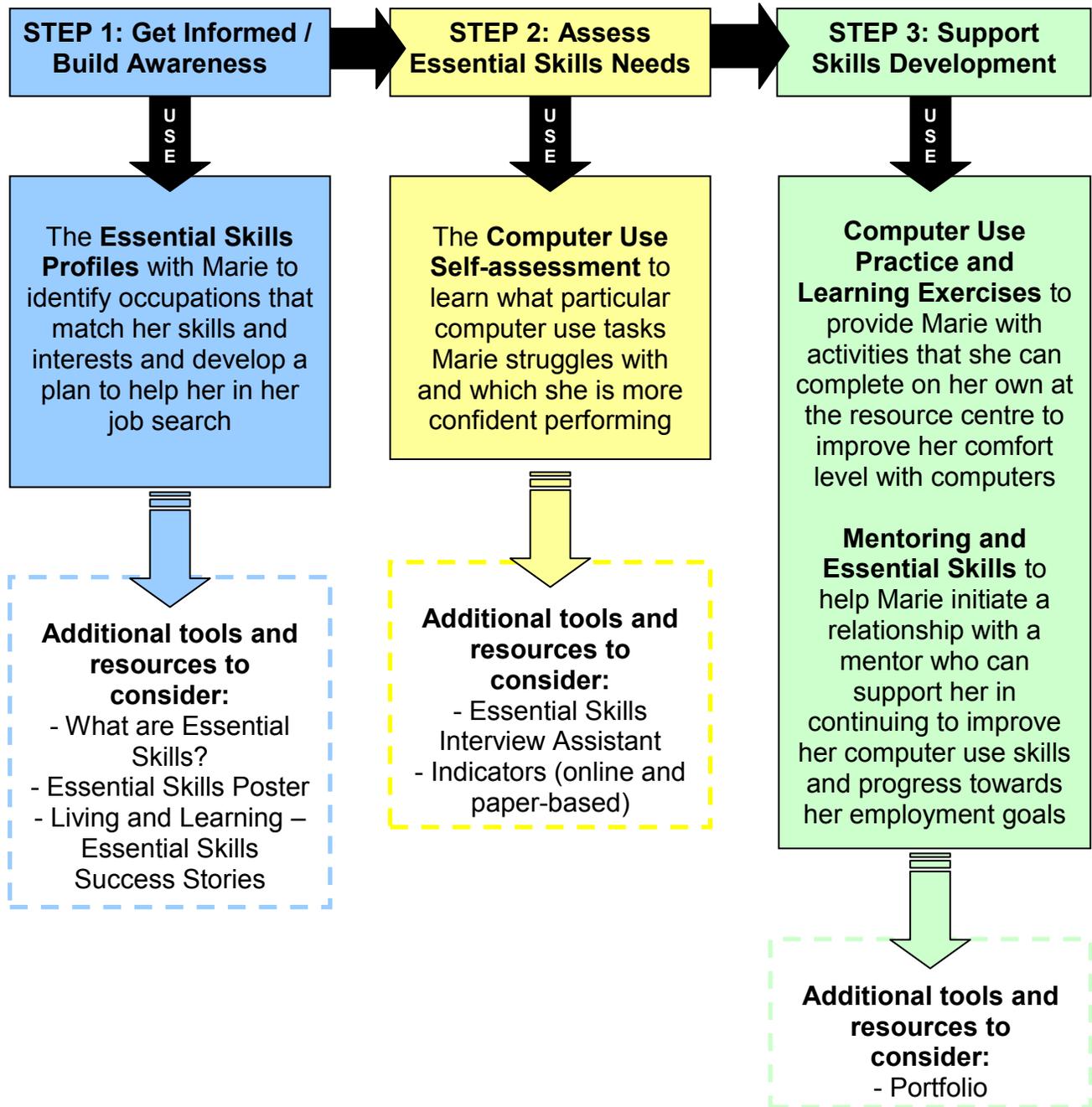
By following the steps in the model below, you identify the following tools and resources as most relevant for the participants' needs.



Scenario #2: Helping Older Workers in Transition Adapt to New Technology

As a client service specialist at an adult employment centre, you are assigned a client named Marie. She is in her mid-50s and looking for employment. Marie has not had a job since her late twenties. She fears her poor computer skills will affect her ability to get a job.

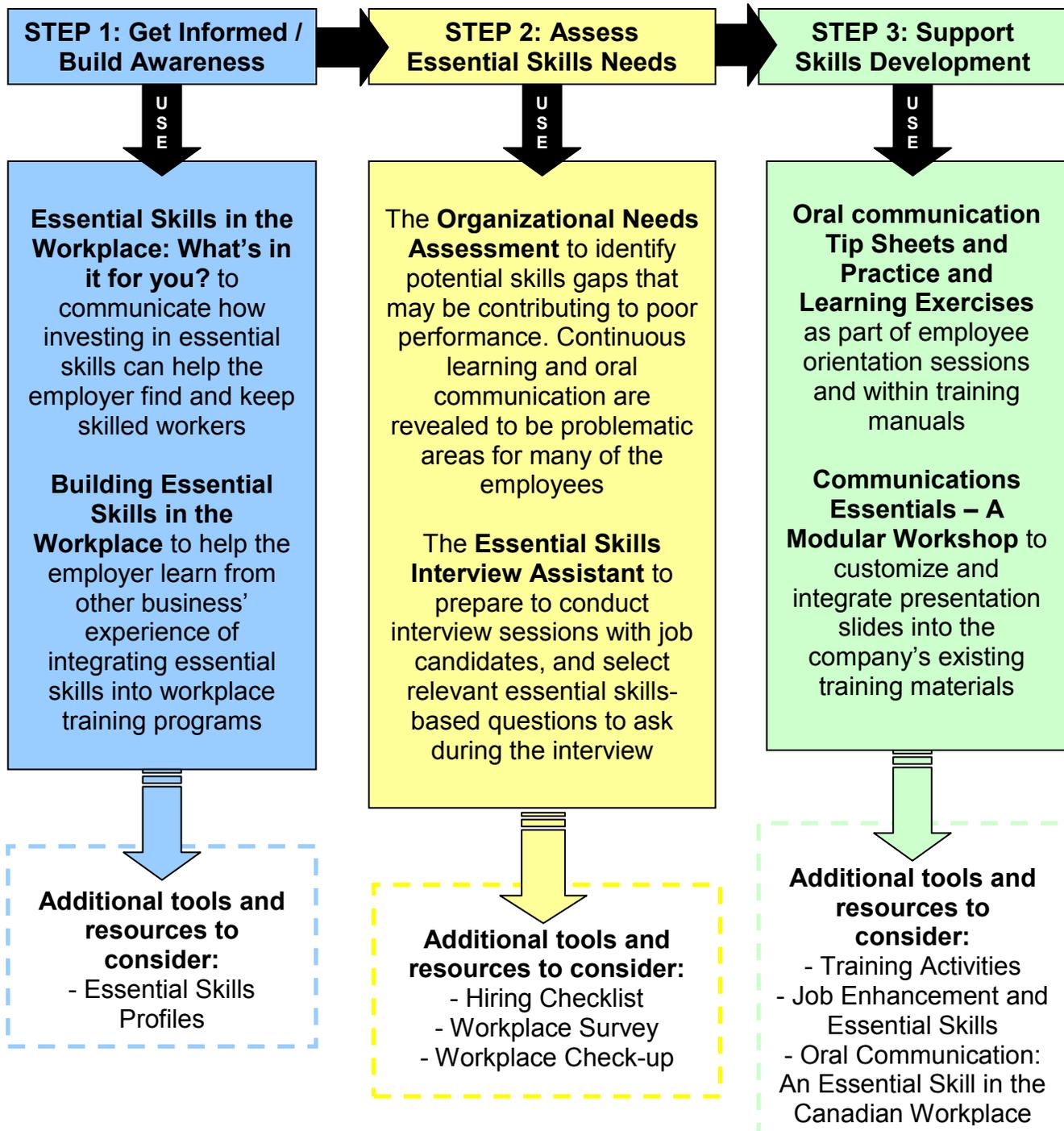
By following the steps in the model below, you identify the following tools and resources as most relevant for Marie's needs.



Scenario # 3: Improving Employers' HR Practices

As an essential skills coordinator at a community resource centre, you are approached by an employer from a local bank who is requesting help in hiring and training new bank tellers. She explains that many of her employees have a difficult time communicating bank policies to customers.

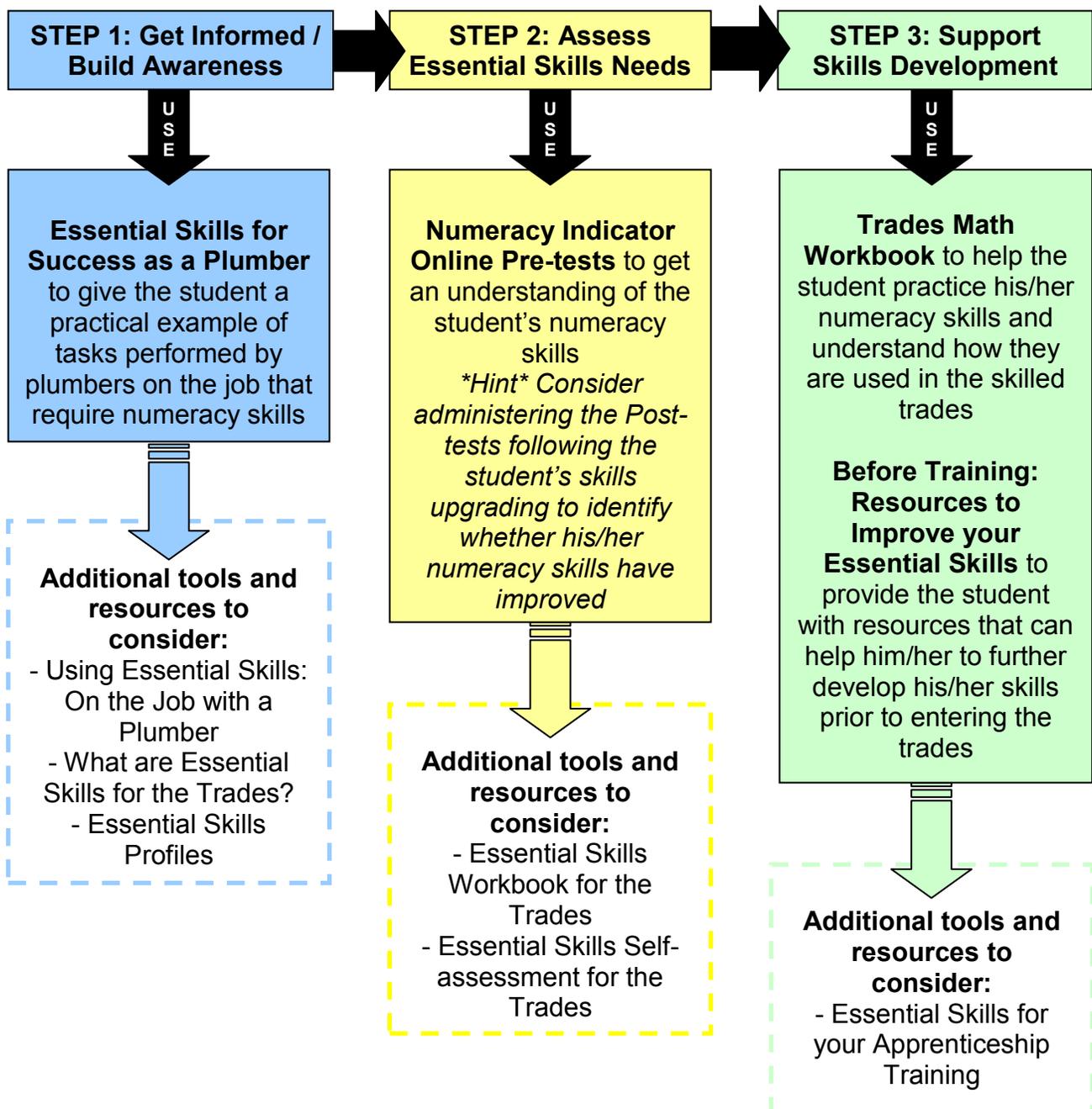
Following the steps in the model below, you identify the following tools and resources as most relevant for the organization's needs.



Scenario #4: Preparing Clients for a Career in the Trades

As a career counsellor working at a local college, a student comes to you seeking advice on the types of skills needed to pursue a career as a plumber. The student mentions concern about whether his/her math skills are strong enough and wants to know how plumbers use math on the job. The student also asks if you have any supporting resources that could help him/her prepare for an apprenticeship program.

Following the steps in the model below, you identify the following tools and resources as most relevant for the individual's needs.



SECTION 4: CUSTOMIZING THE TOOLS

The tools were developed to help meet the needs of a variety of users. They reflect typical workplace tasks that are found in many different Canadian jobs/occupations. You can adapt any of the tools to make them more specific to your interests, your organization or industry.

Copyright Clearance

To customize the tools, you may need to obtain copyright clearance. To determine if copyright clearance is required, visit:

www.publications.gc.ca/site/eng/ccl/copyrightClearance/apply.html.

Our copyright process helps to ensure that the customization of our tools meets Government of Canada guidelines for use of copyrighted material.

Helpful Tips

Here are some useful tips to help you to customize:

- ❖ ***Think about your client's needs.***
 - Be sure the level of language used is appropriate for the individual(s) with whom you are working.
 - Ensure that content is relevant and respectful.

- ❖ ***Make sure the tools meet client needs.***
 - Consider different learning preferences or styles when adapting the tools. For example, visual learners may prefer tools containing illustrations as opposed to strictly text. In comparison, people that learn by doing may perform best with tools that are more interactive and that allow them to carry out tasks such as finding a location on a map.
 - Consider adding specific images relevant to your client(s) to help them better understand and relate to the material.
 - Think about creating an automated version of the tool if you plan to use this resource with those who prefer using a computer.

- ❖ ***Decide if new content is needed.***
 - Use the Essential Skills Profiles to create additional content for a tool.
 - You may wish to add new statements to a needs assessment or tip sheet, or create a new one altogether. For example, you could create a customized Oral Communication needs assessment specifically for cashiers by using statements found in the example tasks of the profile listed under “Oral Communication”.

SECTION 5: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

In this section you will find answers to some of the most commonly asked questions about the tools. In particular:

1. In what formats are the tools available?
2. Do I have to pay for print copies of the tools?
3. How do I order the tools?
4. How long will it take to receive the tools after I place my order?
5. What can I do if I still have questions about the tools after reading this guide?

1. **In what formats are the tools available?**

Print – Most tools are available in print format.

Online – Most tools can also be accessed online, both in HTML and PDF format. Some tools such as the Online Indicators and Checklists are available in an online interactive format.

DVD – In addition to housing Word and PDF copies of many of the tools, the Tools DVD is also the place to find videos, software, and materials for delivering a customizable workshop.

Alternative formats – Publications are also available on demand in alternative formats (large print, Braille, audio cassette, audio CD, e-text diskette, e-text CD, or DAISY), by contacting 1 800 O-Canada (1-800-622-6232). If you use a teletypewriter (TTY), call 1-800-926-9105.

Did you know? Since most of the tools are designed and intended to be used in print format, you are encouraged to print off the tools from either the DVD or online and make your own copies for distribution. Our guidelines state that you do not need to seek [Crown Copyright Clearance](#) to print and reproduce Government of Canada works in part or in whole, and by any means, for personal or public non-commercial purposes, or for cost-recovery purposes, unless otherwise specified in the material you wish to reproduce.

2. **Do I have to pay for print copies of the tools?**

All the essential skills tools made available by HRSDC are currently free and available to be shipped to you at no charge.

3. **How do I order the tools?**

Online – You can place an order online using the Publications shopping cart at www12.hrsdc.gc.ca.

*Note: this system houses publications for all of HRSDC and not just essential skills resources. This means you should be specific when searching the tools (e.g. If searching by title, enter the **exact** title of the publication)*

Helpful Tip: When ordering online, the easiest way to search for a tool using the Publications Shopping Cart (“Publicentre”) is by its departmental catalogue number. For essential skills tools this number is listed beside each tool name under its appropriate category on the Tools and Resources web section, or can be found at the bottom of each publication. When searching, it is only necessary to enter the letters and first 3 numbers after the hyphen (i.e. WP-XXX). Be sure to also include the departmental catalogue number in your request if you decide to place an order by mail or by fax.

By Mail – You may mail your request to:
Publications/Distribution Unit
HRSDC Communications Branch
140 Promenade du Portage
Place du Portage, Phase IV, Level 10
Gatineau, Québec
K1A 0J9

By Fax – You may fax your request to: (819) 953-7260.

4. **How long will it take to receive the tools after I place my order?**

Generally, tools are delivered within 10 business days after the order is placed. However, multiple factors can affect the delivery time of an order and, as such, we cannot guarantee that tools will arrive within this timeframe. Therefore, we encourage you to place your order as far in advance as possible. If you have a question about an order, please contact es-ce@hrsdc-rhdsc.gc.ca.

5. **What can I do if I still have questions about the tools after reading this guide?**

If you require more information, we encourage you to send an email to es-ce@hrsdc-rhdsc.gc.ca. We make it a priority to respond to all emails we receive within 5 business days.

ANNEX: ESSENTIAL SKILLS TOOLS CATALOGUE

Below you will find a short description of each of the essential skills tools available from HRSDC organized by tool and user type as they appear on our site. For ease of use, the tools are listed alphabetically. **Please visit the HRSDC website (www.hrsdc.gc.ca/essentialskills) regularly for the most up-to-date information on all of the tools available.**

Tool	Description	Tool Type			User Type			
		Awareness/ Inform	Needs Assessments	Learning and Training Supports	Apprentices and Trades- persons	Employers and HR Profes- sionals	Job Seekers and Workers	Trainers and Career Counsellors
Before Training: Resources to Improve Your Essential Skills (WP-138)	This booklet includes tips and activities that help apprentices identify ways to improve their essential skills and be better prepared for training.			✓	✓		✓	✓
Building Essential Skills in the Workplace (WP-044)	A set of case studies that offers examples of how to develop essential skills in the workplace. The case studies provide an overview of the benefits, outcomes and impacts of essential skills training.	✓				✓		
Communications Essentials – A Modular Workshop (Available on the DVD: WP-122)	A collection of resources to help intermediaries effectively deliver a customized workshop. It includes information and exercises to help individuals practice and strengthen their oral communication skills.			✓		✓		✓
Developing Partnerships to Support Literacy and Essential Skills (online only)	An online resource containing tips and activities to help employers develop effective partnerships to support essential skills in the workplace.			✓		✓		
Essential Skills for Success as a...	This resource provides sample tasks that demonstrate how each of the nine essential skills is used in specific trades. It is currently available for the following 15	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓

Tool	Description	Tool Type			User Type			
		Awareness/ Inform	Needs Assessments	Learning and Training Supports	Apprentices and Trades- persons	Employers and HR Profes- sionals	Job Seekers and Workers	Trainers and Career Counsellors
	trades: - Automotive service technician (WP-125) - Carpenter (WP-126) - Construction electrician (WP-127) - Cook (WP-128) - Hairstylist (WP-129) - Industrial electrician (WP-162) - Industrial mechanic (millwright) (WP-130) - Ironworker (WP-161) - Machinist (WP-131) - Plumber (WP-132) - Refrigeration and air conditioning mechanic (WP-165) - Sheet metal worker (WP-133) - Steamfitter-pipefitter (WP-164) - Truck and transport mechanic (WP-163) - Welder (WP-134)							
Essential Skills for Your Apprenticeship Training (WP-136)	A booklet that includes tips and tricks to help apprentices prepare for in-class training, take effective notes and understand and remember lessons.			✓	✓		✓	✓
Essential Skills in the Workplace: What's in it for you? (WP-160)	A fact sheet for employers that describes the many benefits of investing in essential skills.	✓				✓		

Tool	Description	Tool Type			User Type			
		Awareness/ Inform	Needs Assessments	Learning and Training Supports	Apprentices and Trades- persons	Employers and HR Profes- sionals	Job Seekers and Workers	Trainers and Career Counsellors
Essential Skills Interview Assistant (Available on the DVD: WP-122)	A computer program that helps employers integrate job-specific, essential skills questions into their interview processes to ensure new hires are work ready. The software can also be used to prepare learning plans and sessions with employees.		✓			✓		
Essential Skills Poster (WP-158)	A poster to communicate how essential skills contribute to job success. It lists the nine essential skills and provides the web address for accessing additional information, including the tools.	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
Essential Skills Profiles	A collection of profiles that describe how workers in various occupations use each of the essential skills.	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
Essential Skills Self-Assessment for the Trades (WP-135)	A checklist to help you identify your essential skills strengths and areas for improvement. It includes statements that describe common trades-related tasks for the nine essential skills.		✓		✓		✓	✓
Essential Skills Tools for the Skilled Trades – Postcard (WP-166)	A short reference sheet that explains the essential skills for the skilled trades tools as well as how to use and order them.	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
Essential Skills Workbook for the Trades (WP-167)	A workbook with practical exercises to help learners practice their reading, writing, numeracy and document use skills. A full answer guide is included to help learners understand the steps to reach the right answer.		✓		✓		✓	✓

Tool	Description	Tool Type			User Type			
		Awareness/ Inform	Needs Assessments	Learning and Training Supports	Apprentices and Trades- persons	Employers and HR Profes- sionals	Job Seekers and Workers	Trainers and Career Counsellors
Hiring Checklist (WP-031)	An interview guide and template to help employers collect information about the essential skills of job candidates. It can help employers find new workers who can complement the skills of their existing teams.		✓			✓		
Indicators <i>* Also available in online format</i>	A guide and informal assessment that asks learners to solve questions to get an indication of their essential skills ability. Indicators are available for the following essential skills: - Document Use (WP-040) - Numeracy (WP-038) - Reading (WP-039)		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Job Enhancement and Essential Skills (WP-091)	A guide to help managers and supervisors support workers in improving their essential skills by giving them new responsibilities and opportunities for development.			✓		✓		✓
Literacy and Essential Skills Tools – Postcard (WP-094)	A short reference sheet that outlines the categories of the tools, and their intended users. Note: this postcard does <u>not</u> include information about the apprenticeship tools.	✓				✓	✓	✓
Living and Learning: Essential Skills Success Stories (HIP-031)	A collection of real stories about Canadians who have experienced success in work and life after improving their essential skills. Told from the learners' point of view, these stories can help inspire others to deal with their own essential skills challenges.	✓					✓	✓

Tool	Description	Tool Type			User Type			
		Awareness/ Inform	Needs Assessments	Learning and Training Supports	Apprentices and Trades- persons	Employers and HR Profes- sionals	Job Seekers and Workers	Trainers and Career Counsellors
Mentoring and Essential Skills (WP-092)	A guide with tips and activities to support essential skills development in the workplace through mentoring relationships.			✓		✓		✓
Oral Communication Video – An Essential Skill in the Canadian Workplace (Available on the DVD: WP-122)	A video that explores typical Canadian work situations, and what makes oral communication effective in each setting. Newcomers to Canada may find the information and tips offered in this video particularly useful. It includes two segments: 1. The Job Interview 2. Workplace Conflict			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Organizational Needs Assessment (WP-060)	A guide and checklist that helps employers determine whether essential skills gaps are affecting their organizations' performance.		✓			✓		
Passport (WP-037)	A tracking resource that lets learners record their skill strengths and identify areas that may need improvement. It is intended to be updated and reviewed regularly.			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Portfolio (WP-036)	A collection of binder inserts that helps you to keep a record of knowledge gained and skills developed through essential skills training and learning activities. Use it to build a collection of learning materials (e.g. tips sheets, practice exercises) and samples from on-the-job experiences (e.g. email, time sheet, a safety information sheet).			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Tool	Description	Tool Type			User Type			
		Awareness/ Inform	Needs Assessments	Learning and Training Supports	Apprentices and Trades- persons	Employers and HR Profes- sionals	Job Seekers and Workers	Trainers and Career Counsellors
<p>Problem Solved!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - For Employees and Learners (WP-064) - For Employers and Practitioners (WP-063) 	<p>A guide that includes various techniques, activities and worksheets to help learners practice and improve their thinking skills.</p> <p>The version for employers and practitioners provides instructions for how to integrate this tool into training and development programs.</p>			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<p>Self- Assessments & Checklists</p>	<p>These informal assessments guide learners through a series of statements to help them identify their essential skills strengths and areas for improvement. Self-assessments are available for each of the nine essential skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Computer use (WP-084) - Continuous learning (WP-089) - Document use (WP-087) - Numeracy (WP-088) - Oral communication (WP-083) - Reading (WP-086) - Thinking (WP-169) - Working with others (WP-090) - Writing (WP-085) <p>Online versions (checklists) that are similar to the self-assessments are available for the following essential skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continuous learning - Working with others 		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓

Tool	Description	Tool Type			User Type			
		Awareness/ Inform	Needs Assessments	Learning and Training Supports	Apprentices and Trades- persons	Employers and HR Profes- sionals	Job Seekers and Workers	Trainers and Career Counsellors
Taking Action - <i>A Guide</i> (WP-059) - <i>An Introduction</i> (WP-062)	A guide that introduces a 7-step process for developing and integrating essential skills training in the workplace. The <i>Introduction</i> is a condensed version of this guide.			✓		✓		
Tip Sheets and Practice and Learning Exercises	A booklet that provides learners with practical tips and activities to improve their essential skills. This tool is available for the following essential skills: - Computer Use (WP-070) - Document Use (WP-071) - Oral Communication (WP-072) - Reading (WP-101) - Thinking (WP-172) - Working with Others (WP-093) - Writing (WP-109)			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Trades Math Workbook (WP-145)	A workbook with practical exercises to help learners practice their numeracy skills and increase their success in an apprenticeship program.			✓	✓		✓	✓
Training Activities (WP-030)	A reference sheet that outlines a series of suggested activities to help employers incorporate essential skills upgrading into workplace training.			✓		✓		✓
Using Essential Skills - On the Job with a...	A resource that describes a typical workday for a tradesperson and provides practical activities that use essential skills. This tool is currently available for the following 10 trades: - Automotive service technician (WP-146)	✓			✓		✓	✓

Tool	Description	Tool Type			User Type			
		Awareness/ Inform	Needs Assessments	Learning and Training Supports	Apprentices and Trades- persons	Employers and HR Profes- sionals	Job Seekers and Workers	Trainers and Career Counsellors
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Carpenter (WP-147) - Construction electrician (WP-153) - Cook (WP-148) - Hairstylist (WP-150) - Machinist (WP-151) - Industrial mechanic (millwright) (WP-149) - Plumber (WP-124) - Sheet metal worker (WP-152) - Welder (WP-154) 							
Using Essential Skills: Preparing for Your Interprovincial Red Seal Exam (WP-137)	This guide provides learners with tips and tricks to study and prepare for the Interprovincial Red Seal Exam.			✓	✓		✓	✓
Vocabulary Building Workbook (WP-102)	A workbook with various exercises to help learners improve their vocabulary and learn words commonly used in the Canadian workplace.			✓	✓		✓	✓
What Are Essential Skills for the Trades? (WP-123)	A fact sheet that outlines how the nine essential skills are used in the trades. It includes definitions, common tasks and examples of how each skill is used in various trades.	✓			✓	✓	✓	
What are Essential Skills? (WP-077)	A fact sheet that explains the nine essential skills that people need for work, learning and life. It includes examples of how essential skills are used in the community and the workplace.	✓				✓	✓	✓

Tool	Description	Tool Type			User Type			
		Awareness/ Inform	Needs Assessments	Learning and Training Supports	Apprentices and Trades- persons	Employers and HR Profes- sionals	Job Seekers and Workers	Trainers and Career Counsellors
Workplace Check-up (WP-029)	A guide and checklist to help employers gather information from their workers about essential skills needs within an organization.		✓			✓		
Workplace Survey (WP-028)	A questionnaire to help employers identify potential essential skills issues and/or areas of strength in the workplace.		✓			✓		

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