

# Workforce Literacy Essential Skills Pilot Project 2009-2011



Literacy Victoria



Reading Document Use Writing Numeracy Oral Communication Thinking Working with Others Computer Use Continuous Learning

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Cover photos include:

- project participants
- volunteer tutor
- employer

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# Acknowledgments

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- Skill Plan—Vancouver, BC
- Thrifty Foods—Victoria, BC
- Victoria Disability Resource Center—Victoria, BC

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# Introduction

Literacy Victoria is a registered, non-profit organization that provides one-to-one and group learning support for adults across Southern Vancouver Island in literacy and essential skills development. For more than 20 years Literacy Victoria has provided no cost services to hundreds of learners.

“Helping adults develop the literacy and essential skills they need to participate effectively at home, in the workforce, and in their community” is the organization’s mandate. Our learner-centered approach is the defining characteristic of all program activities, along with a well trained and dedicated cohort of volunteer tutors and staff as the backbone of our service delivery model.

Through more than two decades of interactions with learners facing persistent and consistent challenges in acquiring, transitioning and sustaining employment, the organization took steps towards creating a solution. Realistically, literacy and essential skills were not the only contributing factors; however, supports for learners during their probationary periods in the workplace were absent. As a result Literacy Victoria in partnership with HRSDC, local businesses, and community organizations moved forward in creating the Workforce Literacy and Essential Skills (WLES) pilot project. From September of 2009 to 2011 the multiple partners worked together to implement a nationally transferable program. For clarification purposes it must be noted our intention was not to function as an employment agency; however, it was to develop a program to support individuals within a system.

“Employment-focused literacy, or workforce literacy, as it is called in this guide, centres on improving the employability and essential skills of learners who have employment goals.”<sup>1</sup> This multi-section guide discusses the intricate details required for the creation of a workforce literacy program. The sections include:

- Section 2 - Program Model – Lessons Learned
- Section 3 - Curriculum Modules Overview
- Section 4 - Example of Group Learning Sessions Programming
- Section 5 - Example of a Group Learning Workshop
- Section 6 - Numeracy Skills
- Section 7 - Resource Lists
- Section 8 - Program Documents

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<sup>1</sup> Geraci, K. AlphaPlus Centre. (June 2004). Guide to Workforce Literacy. ISBN 0-9733278-4-7. Retrieved from <http://www.nald.ca/library/learning/skillswork/workforce/workforce.pdf>



# Project Overview

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The Workforce Literacy & Essential Skills (WLES) project model is the result of a two year pilot project. The project model is best suited to delivery in a community-based adult literacy organization; with corporate, knowledge and community partners; and where services are offered at no cost to participants. Its purpose is to support individuals at International Adult Literacy Skills Survey (IALSS) level 1 and 2 prepare for employment and successfully integrate into the workplace.

## Is this the right project model for your organization?

Participants entering a WLES program will follow a structured learning pathway that is designed using the principles of adult education. Learning is primarily delivered in group workshops, with self-directed learning support by a learner-tutor (one-to-one) partnership. Participants will typically be referred to a WLES program by another community organization or agency, or may self-refer. The program is designed to support individuals facing barriers to employment because of lower level literacy and essential skills.

In considering the WLES project model a host organization will need to examine:

- Its collaborative links with local employers, knowledge specialists and community organizations,
- All four phases of programming:
  - Initiation
  - Preparation
  - Transition
  - Integration
- Its resources in terms of staff and volunteers,
- Its understanding of principles of adult education,
- Its criteria for accepting participants.

To gain a clear understanding of the commitments required for a host organization, WLES program partners, participants, and tutors throughout each phase of the project, please refer to the following revised project model and the project master plan.



# Project Phases

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The original project model consisted of three distinct phases. Following consultations with learners, volunteer tutors and project staff the revised model was expanded to consist of four unique stages.

## **Initiation Phase (added in the revised model)**

The initiation phase is a time for the organization to create relationships and partnerships with organizations and businesses who will be stakeholders in the training. This is an appropriate time for dialogue to be initiated and an advisory committee created. The advisory committee provides an opportunity for the strength of the group-think to occur, the exchanging of ideas, and setting the stage for the next phase and future activities. During this time frame, it is also necessary to develop recruitment and entry strategies and criteria for participants and tutors. It is recommended that skills assessments be conducted prior to the commencement of group learning. Numerous skills assessment resources may be found in modules 2 – 6. Tutors attend information and training sessions during this time.

## **Preparation Phase**

During the preparation phase, the participants become actively involved in the learning process through goal setting, skills assessments, and literacy and essential skills activities.

Tutors become actively engaged with the participant they are matched with and the learning process.

## **Transition Phase**

The transition phase is a time for participants and tutors to begin moving towards employment. Resumes and application forms are completed, mock job interviews are conducted, and participants are coached through the process of acquiring employment by their tutors and project staff.

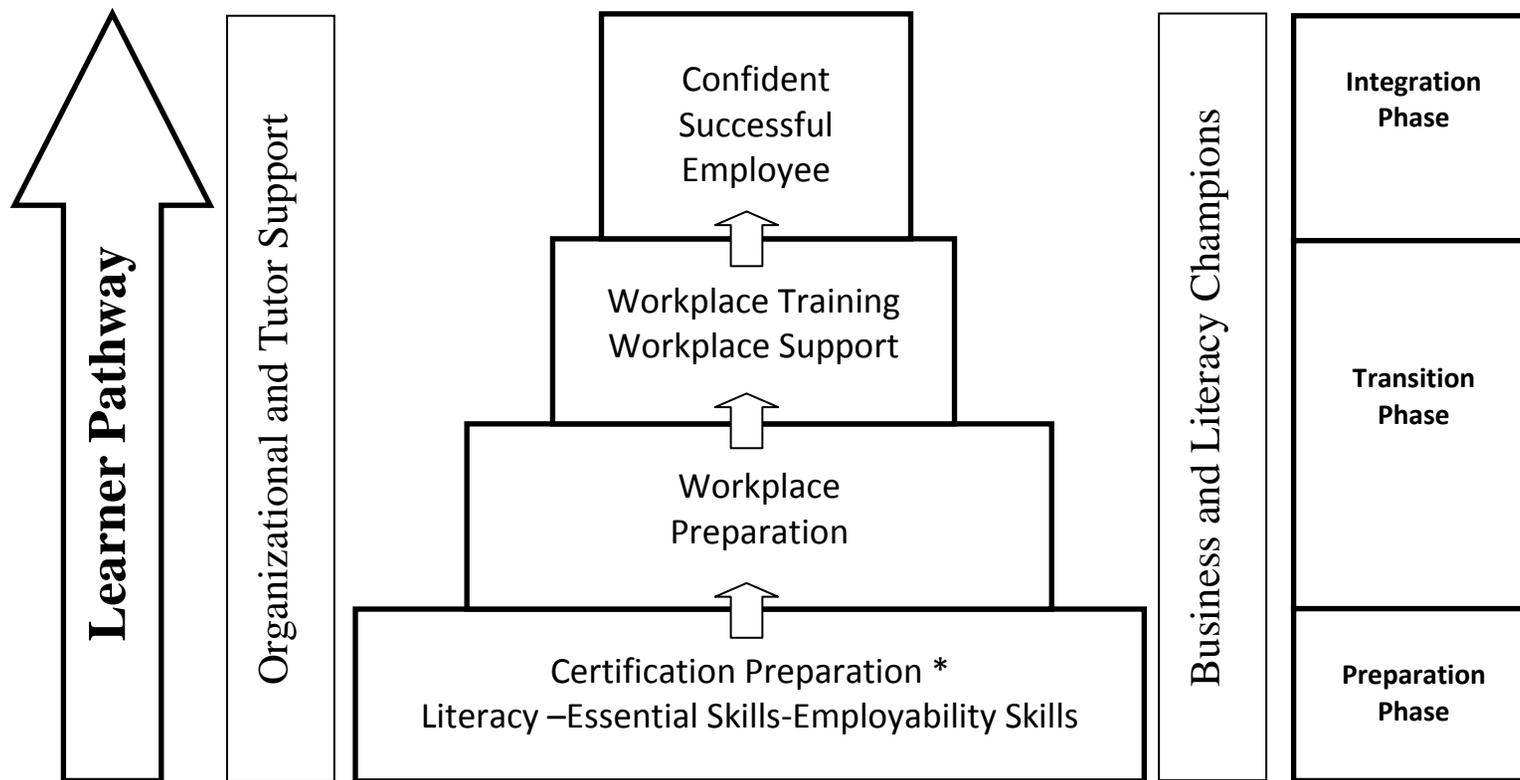
## **Integration Phase**

Once employment has been secured, the participants move into the integration phase. During this time the participant, now employee, continues to receive support from the tutor and a workplace champion if one is in place. Should the participant choose, dialogue opportunities are created between the employee, employer, tutor and host organization. This activity develops a solid support network during the probationary period. There is a caution however; new employees may not wish their employer to know they are engaged in a literacy and essential skills program.



# Original Project Model

A comprehensive project model was created prior to the start of the project. This model included three phases which saw individuals move from Literacy, Essential Skills and Employability Skills training, through required certification processes, and upward to becoming a confident successful employee. Through the life of the pilot project recommendations of learners, project staff and tutors were reviewed and adaptations were made to develop a revised project model.

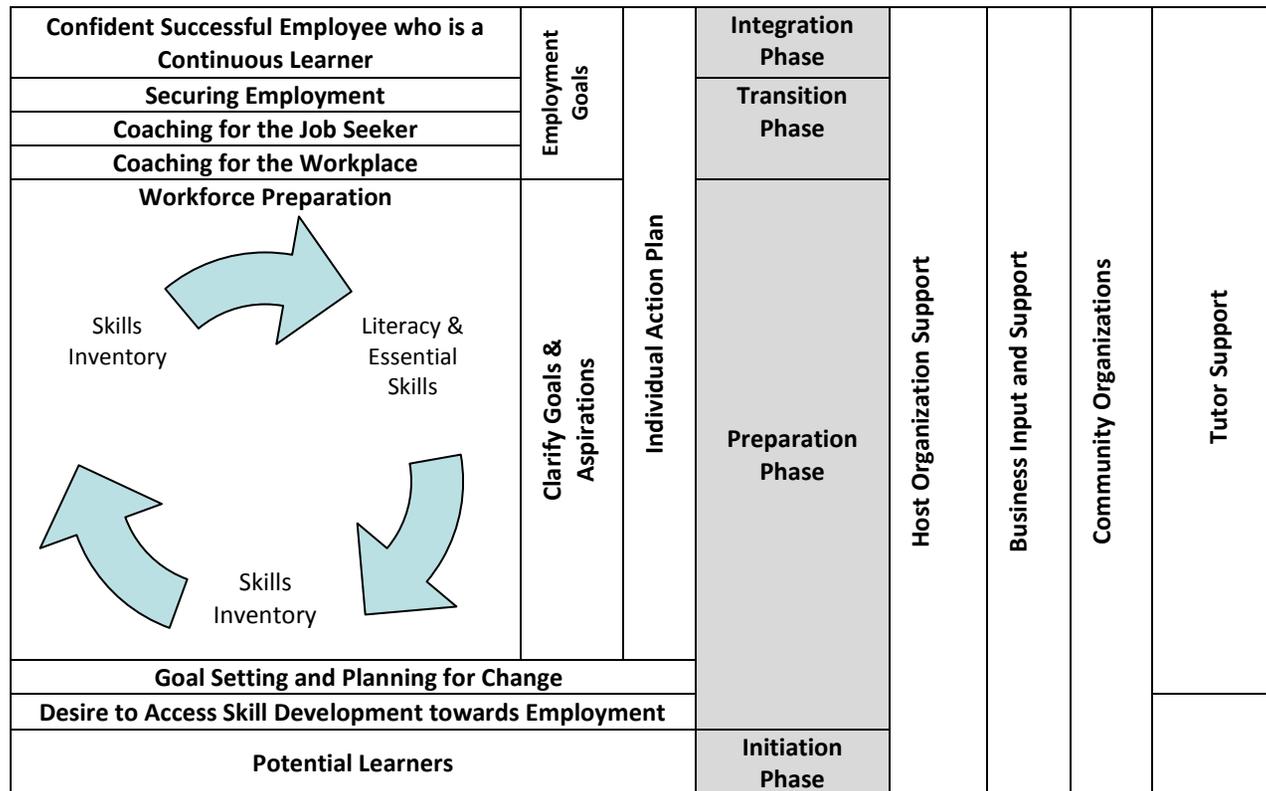


\*Certification such as WHMIS/Food Safe/First Aid



# Revised Project Model

The revised project model was derived from the many experiences and activities that occurred within the project. Through observing what worked well and what could work even better, a new model was created which reflects many intricate components of the project.



# Project Master Plan

The project master plan provides a comprehensive overview of the multitude of activities which occurred, or that we suggest should occur, during the development and implementation of the Workforce Literacy and Essential Skills pilot project. This master plan is comparable to a road map, and provides a way to reach an aspired destination. With each organization and community that implements a similar project a variation of activities will occur.

Phase	Activities	Areas of Responsibility						Documents
		Host Organization	Businesses	Community Organizations	Knowledge Partners	Learners	Tutors	
Initiation	1	Initiate Project, Hire Staff, Develop Project Plan, Create Information Packages.						
	2	Begin dialogue with businesses, community organizations, & knowledge partners.	Involved in dialogue.	Involved in dialogue.	Involved in dialogue.			Information Packages.
	3	Creation of advisory committee. Prepare meetings and newsletters.	Participation in Advisory Committee.	Participation in Advisory Committee.	Participation in Advisory Committee.			Terms of Reference.



	Activities	Areas of Responsibility						Documents
		Host Organization	Businesses	Community Organizations	Knowledge Partners	Learners	Tutors	
<b>Initiation</b>	<b>5</b>	Develop curriculum and learning outcomes.	Review curriculum and learning outcomes.		Dialogue with knowledge partners regarding various materials and adapting materials.			Various learning materials.
	<b>6</b>	Develop program specifics and timeline.						
	<b>7</b>	Prepare recruitment materials for learners and tutors (posters, ads and information packages).		Share information about WLES with clients.		Receive information about WLES.		Posters, information packages and brochures.
	<b>8</b>	Prepare application forms and process for learners and tutors.		Receive information and application forms.		Receive information and application forms.	Receive information and application forms.	Application Forms.
	<b>9</b>	Identify learners or tutors from host organization who may be interested in the program.						



		<b>Areas of Responsibility</b>						
	<b>Activities</b>	<b>Host Organization</b>	<b>Businesses</b>	<b>Community Organizations</b>	<b>Knowledge Partners</b>	<b>Learners</b>	<b>Tutors</b>	<b>Documents</b>
<b>Initiation</b>	<b>10</b>	Respond to questions regarding the program.		Ask questions regarding program and application process.		Ask questions regarding program and application process.	Ask questions regarding program and application process.	Application Form Criminal Record Check form for tutors.
	<b>11</b>	Develop admission criteria and interview process.	Share employment criteria with host to assist with development of admission criteria. Establish literacy champions to mentor new hires, and provide host with opportunities to job shadow.	Assist clients in the completion of application forms and refer to host organization.		Complete and submit application forms.	Complete and submit application forms.	Application Form Criminal Record Check form for tutors.
	<b>12</b>	Set up interview appointments.		Assist clients in organizing interview appointments.		Organize interview appointments.	Organize interview appointments.	Interview Form.
	<b>13</b>	Conduct interviews and initial assessments.		Confirm interview date and bring client to interview if required.		Attend interview and complete assessment.	Attend interview and complete assessment.	CAMERA or other assessment tools.



	Activities	Areas of Responsibility						Documents
		Host Organization	Businesses	Community Organizations	Knowledge Partners	Learners	Tutors	
<b>Initiation</b>	<b>14</b>	Accept learners and complete required paper work.				Decide if they wish to attend the program. If so complete necessary paper work.		Behaviour and technology agreements.
	<b>15</b>	Accept tutors and invite to tutor training.					Attend core tutor training and confirm interest in WLES.	Outline of core tutor training.
	<b>16</b>	Develop WLES tutor information and training.						Outline of WLES tutor information session.
	<b>17</b>	WLES tutor information and training session.					Attend WLES tutor information and training session.	Handouts.
<b>Preparation</b>	<b>18</b>	Implement sessions 1 – 7 and modify to learners’ needs and skill sets.				Attend sessions 1 – 7. Completing goals, employability checklist, skills and vocabulary assessment.		Curriculum and materials.



		Areas of Responsibility						
	Activities	Host Organization	Businesses	Community Organizations	Knowledge Partners	Learners	Tutors	Documents
<b>Preparation</b>	19	Review learner skill sets and gaps.				Complete a skills self assessment and develop individual learning goals.		Appropriate forms.
	20	Creation of the match preference form for tutors aligning with the skill sets and personalities of the learners.					Tutors complete the match preference form.	Match preference form.
	21	Review match preferences and create tutor learner pairs. Invite pairs to meet and complete paper work.				Receive information about tutor and meet tutor and complete paper work.	Receive information about learner and meet learner and complete paper work.	Learner/Tutor Agreement.
	22	Check in with learner and tutor that they feel match is appropriate.				Confirm with host that match is appropriate for learner.	Confirm with host that match is appropriate for tutor.	
	23	Invite tutors and learners to attend a group learning session.				Attend group learning session.	Attend group learning session.	



		<b>Areas of Responsibility</b>						
	<b>Activities</b>	<b>Host Organization</b>	<b>Businesses</b>	<b>Community Organizations</b>	<b>Knowledge Partners</b>	<b>Learners</b>	<b>Tutors</b>	<b>Documents</b>
<b>Preparation</b>	<b>24</b>	Create individual Action Plans (IAP).				Share results from sessions 1 – 7 with tutor and create an IAP.	Review results from sessions 1-7 with learner and assist learner in creating an Individual Action Plan.	IAP form.
	<b>25</b>	Implement Sessions 8 – 16.	Provide presentations of employer’s perspective on the application and interview process.	Provide presentations regarding community support for employment seekers.		Attend sessions and meet with tutors on a weekly basis. Continue to work on and update IAP targets.	Meet with learner on a weekly basis to work on and amend IAP targets. Tutors are also encouraged to attend sessions 8 – 25 as their schedules permit.	Curriculum and materials.



		Areas of Responsibility						
	Activities	Host Organization	Businesses	Community Organizations	Knowledge Partners	Learners	Tutors	Documents
Preparation	26	Send out Employability Skills checklist to tutors.					Complete Employability Skills checklist prior to first review appointment.	Employability Skills checklist (online Survey Monkey)
	27	Individual review appointment to discuss learner’s IAP progress. This activity occurs 3 times during the program and contains skills assessments.				Attend review appointment.	Attend review appointment.	Individual Action Plan form.
Transition	28	Create authentic learning opportunities regarding job interview procedures. Implement sessions 17 – 25.	Provide guidance regarding interview process.			Practice and attend mock job interview.	Coach learner in preparing for mock job interview.	Interview feedback form.
	29	Provide feedback to the learner and an opportunity to participate in a second mock interview.				Receive feedback and determine if they would like to attend a second mock interview.	Support learner through the feedback and develop strategies for future interviews.	Interview feedback form.



		Areas of Responsibility						
	Activities	Host Organization	Businesses	Community Organizations	Knowledge Partners	Learners	Tutors	Documents
<b>Transition</b>	<b>30</b>	Plan end of group learning celebration event.				Participate in planning of end of group learning celebration event.		
	<b>31</b>	End of group learning session celebration opportunity.				Attend celebration if you choose.	Attend celebration if you choose.	Certificates.
	<b>32</b>		Accept learners' application forms.			Job search, complete application form and submit.	Support learner in completing application form.	
	<b>33</b>	Provide financial support and guidance to dress appropriately for job interview.	Provide guidance as to appropriate clothing and grooming for an interview.			Go shopping with staff or volunteer for appropriate clothing.	Stay informed of what is occurring with the learner.	
	<b>34</b>		Schedule and conduct interviews.			Attend interview.	Coach learner prior to the interview.	
	<b>35</b>	Dialogue with business regarding the interview	Make hiring decisions and provide learner with feedback.			Dialogue with tutor and project staff regarding interview feedback.	Dialogue with learner and project staff regarding interview feedback.	



		Areas of Responsibility						
	Activities	Host Organization	Businesses	Community Organizations	Knowledge Partners	Learners	Tutors	Documents
<b>Integration</b>	<b>36</b>	If the learner is hired and gives permission to host. Then make a connection between tutor and business.	Hire learner and connect with business literacy champion if present.			If hired prepare for the workplace.	Connect with business with host's assistance. Continue working with other skills and additional essential skills as they transition to the workplace.	
	<b>37</b>	If the learner is not hired the host continues to provide job search support through internal or external strategies, or transition to additional training opportunities.		Provide additional job search support if learners are eligible for community supports.		Adapt and review IAP.	Assist learner in adapting and revising their IAP.	
	<b>38</b>	Conclusion of programming.	Provide feedback regarding the process and ideas of adaptations in future offerings.	Provide and receive feedback regarding the program and improvements and changes which may be made to create an improved program.	Receive feedback regarding the materials used during the training program.	Decide to end, continue or change the learner/tutor relationship. Provide feedback regarding experience with project.	Decide to end, continue or change the learner/tutor relationship. Provide feedback regarding experience with project.	Paper and online feedback and questionnaire.



# Curriculum Content

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The Workforce Literacy & Essential Skills (WLES) curriculum developed by Literacy Victoria has eight learning modules that focus on building skills for work. The curriculum is learner-centered, and uses authentic documents and plain language; it focuses on enhancing skills through activities and tasks in the context of work and everyday life; it focuses on building skills for local entry level employment opportunities and specific job sector roles targeted by participants.

Suggested resources and learning materials for the WLES curriculum can be found in Sections 7 and 8 of this manual and on the Literacy Victoria website.

## IS THIS THE RIGHT CURRICULUM CONTENT FOR YOUR ORGANIZATION?

Participants will bring a variety of life experiences to the program. The curriculum content has been developed to provide support to participants with a range of skills, knowledge and abilities. Participants will also have personal ideas about what kind of learning they require in order to attain their employment goals. The curriculum incorporates participants' personal goals into the program and allows

individuals to select specific learning activities that will target skill areas identified as priorities.

The curriculum has been developed to meet the needs of learners at IALSS Levels 1 and 2. Participants are expected to be:

- motivated to learn and prepared to take responsibility for their learning pathway choices,
- willing to focus on learning that targets employment related skills,
- willing to participate in assessment activities that examine essential skills and employability skills.

Suggested assessment activities for the WLES program model can be found in Section 7 of this resource manual and on the Literacy Victoria website. It is recommended that a standardized assessment tool is used throughout the program to record the distance travelled by participants along their learning pathway. It should be noted that some of the recommended assessments have an associated cost that may be prohibitive to smaller host organizations.



In considering the WLES Program Model, a host organization will need to examine its:

- depository of learning materials in relation to the WLES curriculum modules,
- competencies in relation to creating plain language documents and learning materials,
- readiness of facilitators to adopt a learner-centered curriculum,
- competencies of facilitators to adapt curriculum content to meet the needs of participants,
- ability to carry out standardized participant assessments ,
- criteria for accepting participants.

To gain a clear understanding of the WLES curriculum and module contents, please refer to Section 3 of this manual.

Finally, delivery of all activities in the eight modules of the WLES program model will require approximately 75 hours of group learning workshops to complete every activity. Delivery of group sessions in both daytime and evening time slots is recommended in order to maximize opportunities for all participants to attend. Participants are encouraged to attend all group sessions; to obtain appreciable benefits from the program a minimum attendance of 30 hours should be anticipated. Learner-tutor engagement is a key factor as learning is most successful when participants work with

support outside group sessions; a minimum of two additional hours per week spent on personal learning targets is recommended.

In the final stages of the program, curriculum content is heavily influenced by local employment opportunities. Regional differences, economic considerations and participant job role objectives will define the final curriculum content of a WLES program.

In considering the WLES curriculum, a host organization will need to examine its:

- ability to deliver group learning workshops in varied time slots,
- ability to track learner-tutor engagement outside group sessions,
- understanding of the local employment market,
- ability to incorporate authentic documents and application procedures into curriculum delivery.

To gain a clear understanding of the WLES curriculum in terms of delivery, organization, content and time frame expectations for group learning sessions, please refer to the lessons learned in Section 2 and to the example session plan in Section 4 of this manual.



# Participants

Participants entering the Workforce Literacy and Essential Skills pilot project brought a variety of skills, experiences and perceptions regarding life, work and learning. It is important in creating a learner-center program to pay keen attention to the individuals and what motivates them to attend a workforce literacy program. During the two year project more than 30 learners expressed interest in participating in the project. Prospective participants found their way to the project through self-referral, referral from an external agency or organization, or as current clients of Literacy Victoria. By the conclusion of the project 15 unique individuals had fulfilled the program requirements. The current status of participants is:

- 7 working in new full-time employment
- 2 transitioning to new careers through part-time employment
- 2 continuing with existing employment
- 2 seeking employment
- 2 status unknown

In addition, 5 participants are undertaking further education or training courses, and 4 have completed certification or on the job training programs.

During the initial interview, some prospective learners determined that they were either not ready or not at a place in their lives to make the level of commitment required to create a positive, safe and productive learning environment for all

attending. Understanding participants' level of readiness and where they are in relation to *Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs* is paramount in developing a successful workforce literacy and essential skills project and knowing the participant's ability to comply with Literacy Victoria's Behavioural Conduct Agreement.

Another factor that weighs heavily in the creation of positive learning opportunities is attention to how previous trauma has impacted prior learning experiences for participants. Trauma may include physical violence, bullying, verbal assaults and emotional abuse to name a few. These experiences all add to stress within the learning forum, and create a foundation for future triggers, lack of confidence and negative self-talk regarding their ability to learn and achieve.

Acknowledging the many challenges that participants bring with them allows for the development of a collaborative, respectful and safe learning environment. The values, thoughts and ideas brought forward by each learner are honoured as is each individual for their unique self. Celebrating the smallest to largest of successes is probably the most powerful activity within a workforce literacy and essential skills program, as it builds personal confidence, value and validation.

An adult education philosophy is a fundamental program requirement and is the guiding lens through which the entire project, from initiation to integration, must be viewed.



# Tutors

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Literacy Victoria was privileged that more than 30 individuals came forward to offer their time, skills and experiences in assisting with the delivery of the Workforce Literacy and Essential Skills pilot project. For more than 20 years, Literacy Victoria has been training volunteer literacy tutors; this was the organization's first venture into the world of essential skills and programming specifically to prepare individuals for the workforce. As volunteer tutors are the backbone of the organizations service delivery model, it was only prudent to expand the model.

In the name of due diligence Literacy Victoria requires all tutors to provide personal references, complete a vulnerable person criminal record check, attend a personal interview, and participate in core and program specific training. Only when all of these requirements have been achieved will an individual be invited to act as a Literacy Victoria tutor. Tutors for the Workforce Literacy and Essential Skills pilot project attended specific tutor training that introduced essential skills

profiles, use of authentic documents, goal setting, and the development of Individual Action Plans. Discussions in the core training include the philosophy supporting adult education, the creation of tutoring sessions, the impacts of trauma in learning, and the variety of barriers to learning that participants may present.

During the first pilot some tutors removed themselves from the project, others were recommended to different program areas, and matches were changed because of incompatibilities. These events did not occur during the second pilot as a more in-depth and comprehensive matching process was implemented.

In future offerings, we would recommend a tutor training program specifically designed for job seeker support including a technology component. This addition should reduce frustrations experienced by both tutors and learners.



# Partners

Partnerships with businesses, community organizations and knowledge partners are the necessary collaboration required to see the Workforce Literacy and Essential Skills project come to life for the participants.

Establishing a business' level of readiness is integral to the development of any project. The New Zealand Centre for Workforce Literacy has defined the following four phases through the work of Dr. Ruth Schick in 2005<sup>2</sup>.

Her study loosely grouped businesses according to the following stages of readiness:

**Unaware and unfavourable:** Employers did not see literacy as a business issue or consider it their problem to address.

**Phase 1 – Unaware and favourable:** Companies have conditions and attitudes that highlight their need to address issues and invest in training.

**Phase 2 – Aware:** Companies recognized that some of their needs and issues can be addressed by focusing on literacy and numeracy.

**Phase 3 – Doing it:** Companies take action, usually because of at least one committed manager who drives the program.

Additionally, the researchers found that no single factor drove a company's readiness. Readiness was therefore defined as the balance between factors that encourage versus those that discourage. Some of the factors included:

- Management attitudes and commitment to training and to employees
- Job skill requirements and labour supply
- Workplace organization
- Rate and type of industry and workplace change, decline or growth
- Changing markets and customer requirements
- Regulatory pressures
- Industry condition and training culture.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Schick, R. (2005). Employer investment in workplace literacy programmes, 10. Retrieved from <http://www.workbase.org.nz/media/15785/employerinvestmentinworkplaceliteracyprogrammes.pdf>



At the onset of the project four businesses were engaged as partners. However, due to the changing and fluctuating economic climate, one business was sold and another's employee capacity was drastically reduced.

The remaining two business partners were engaged in the project to varying degrees. Thrifty Foods provided outstanding information sessions regarding positions available, employer expectations, navigating job interviews and skills for sustaining employment. The Fairmont Empress was highly engaged in the project offering interviews to all project participants, providing information sessions, a tour and job shadowing opportunities for project staff.

At the conclusion of the project Glen Merx, Human Resources representative for The Fairmont Empress, shared the following thoughts and observations.

- *The training was developed to provide seamless integration into the workplace.*
- *I think it is wonderful how the program is set up now.*
- *We were able to be ambassadors to our community as well as hire a great employee.*
- *My literacy awareness tripled. My largest awareness increase occurred during our first meeting when I learned about the different levels of literacy and the required level for functional employment.<sup>3</sup>*

Community organizations and agencies worked actively in the recruitment of participants, supporting participants with life tasks as they moved through the program and providing job search assistance.

Knowledge partners willingly shared their experiences and resources to assist the project in developing curriculum with activities that were grounded in previously successful work.

Developing solid partnerships and working relations is one of the highest priorities for a workforce literacy and essential skills program.

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<sup>3</sup> G. Merx, personal communication, November 28, 2011



# Results - Outputs

Through the agreement with Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, the following outputs and outcomes were expectations of the project:

Outputs	Results
A nationally transferable practice model centered on sector-specific literacy and essential skills learning for adult learners at levels 1 and 2 on the IALSS scale	The model was initially developed to be sector-specific; however, over time and due to the economic climate the narrowness of the model became a limiting factor in the engagement of participants. Thus, a broader more learner-centered model was created and implemented with great success.
Learning tools tailored to the needs of low-skill learners in the form of learning modules and pathways (both new and adapted)	The learning tools and pathways utilized during the project were both existing tools and adaptations of tools used by other organizations. The major challenge was the lack of existing tools or pathways that are specifically designed for a learner with skills at a low level one on the IALSS scale.
A resource manual (both print and online)	A Workplace Literacy and Essential Skills guide, resource manual and other complimentary resources will be found in pdf format at <a href="http://www.literacyvictoria.ca">www.literacyvictoria.ca</a> and are downloadable.
Partnerships in place which promote ongoing collaboration between the various organizations (four corporate, two community, and three knowledge specialist organizations).	The partnerships initiated by the project have created ongoing collaboration in various ways. Businesses, organizations and knowledge partners had the opportunity to meet each other and learn about the work they are each involved in. Although these partnerships continue to exist at different levels of relationship, they are present and accessible to any partner. The door continues to be open.
On-line and print repository of tools, learning resources, lessons learned etc.	The repository of tools, learning resources and lessons learned is all accessible on the Literacy Victoria website at <a href="http://www.literacyvictoria.ca">www.literacyvictoria.ca</a> under the <i>Skills for Work</i> tab.



# Results - Outcomes

Outcomes	Results
Integration of literacy and essential skills programming into employer policies and practices.	A project partner and employer provided their organization's Colleague Handbook during the project to be adapted into a plain language format. They also took the initiative to create visual plain language diagrams for various activities required for a specific employment position within their organization.
Enhance recognition and support of employees with low levels of literacy and essential skills.	One employer has initiated this activity, and others are very aware of its importance and impact. These results are to be anticipated as recent research by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce indicated that, "In 2005-2006, Canadian firms spent 1.88 percent of their payroll on training, compared to the US average of 2.25 percent". <sup>4</sup> It will continue to take time and many more successful implementations of workforce and workplace literacy and essential skills initiatives before employers are able to develop an association with return on investment.
Improved knowledge exchange and cooperation between employer, knowledge specialists and community organizations.	This has been achieved with varying degrees of success. As previously mentioned all partners are now aware of each other's roles and in one case, a potential horizontal collaboration was explored.
Increased access to literacy and essential skills training for adult learners at levels 1 and 2 on the IALSS scale, facing persistent barriers to education and career opportunities.	During the life of the project, the access for individuals exploring skill development for the purposes of employment was increased dramatically. However, now that the project has concluded, those facing persistent barriers to education and career opportunities are left with limited ongoing service availability. Literacy Victoria is seeking funds from other funding sources to create longer term options for this type of service delivery.

<sup>4</sup> Ontario Chamber of Commerce ( June 2011), Protecting Our Most Valuable Resource, 6. ISBN 978-0-9868179-2-2. Retrieved from [http://www.nald.ca/library/research/ont\\_commerce/protecting\\_resource/protecting\\_resource.pdf](http://www.nald.ca/library/research/ont_commerce/protecting_resource/protecting_resource.pdf)



# Dissemination and Communication

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The results of the Workforce Literacy and Essential Skills project are being shared through a variety of media. The resource manual is available in pdf format at [www.literacyvictoria.ca](http://www.literacyvictoria.ca).

Links to the WLES Program resources will be established with the National Adult Literacy Database, Decoda Literacy Solutions and other appropriate organizations across the country. In January of 2012 Literacy Victoria will be sharing the results of the project with the Government of British Columbia, the business community of Victoria and other interested organizations through a variety of presentations.

We invite organizations seeking more information about the project to contact us.

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# Conclusion

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This pilot project has been a tremendously rewarding experience for all involved – learners, tutors, community partners, and Literacy Victoria itself.

A strong sense of accomplishment, discovery, growth, and lasting friendship, was experienced by all its participants.

Most importantly though, the project enabled us to develop a truly learner-centered, accessible pre-employment model for adults who have low essential and employability skills who are seeking work.

Community-based, it also has built-in supports for a participant from the beginning group sessions, extending through to, and including, his/her probationary period after entering a new job. This is a unique approach for workforce literacy and essential skills learning in our country. The continuity and consistency of support is therefore an integral component of the model we have created, and vital to its success if replicated.

We sincerely thank the Office of Literacy and Essential Skills, HRSDC, Ottawa for their wise and supportive counsel throughout the development and implementation of this project. As well, we greatly appreciate their confidence in Literacy Victoria demonstrated through the provision of two-year project funding. We are proud to have successfully met our project goals in that timeframe.

In sharing this Guide, we hope that colleagues at literacy organizations across Canada will see an opportunity to provide a similar program for lower-skilled learners in their cities and regions. It works, and it makes a difference.

We are happy to provide whatever support and assistance you may need!

Literacy Victoria  
November 2011

