

# Pitch Perfect: Engaging employers in the essential skills dialogue



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## Knowledge Sharing Webinar

**David Gyarmati**

*UPSKILL: Essentials to Excel*

Social Research and Demonstration Corporation

**Janet Lane**

*Workup! A Model for Workplace*

*Essential Skills Training*

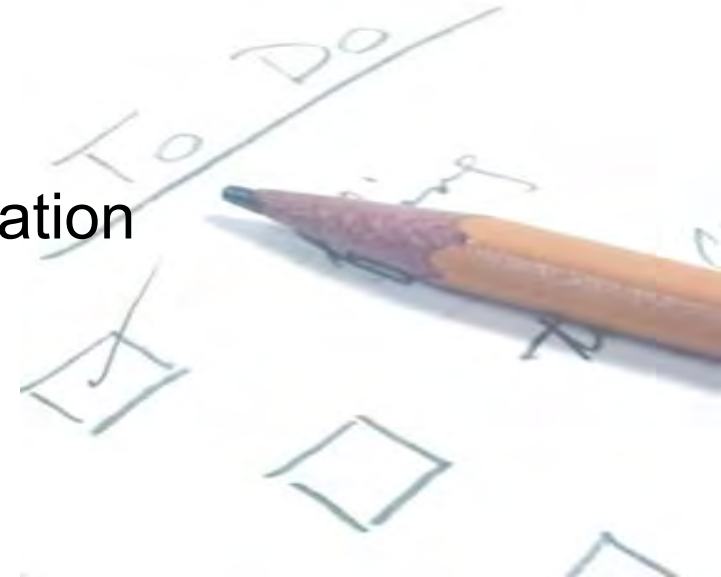
Literacy Alberta Society



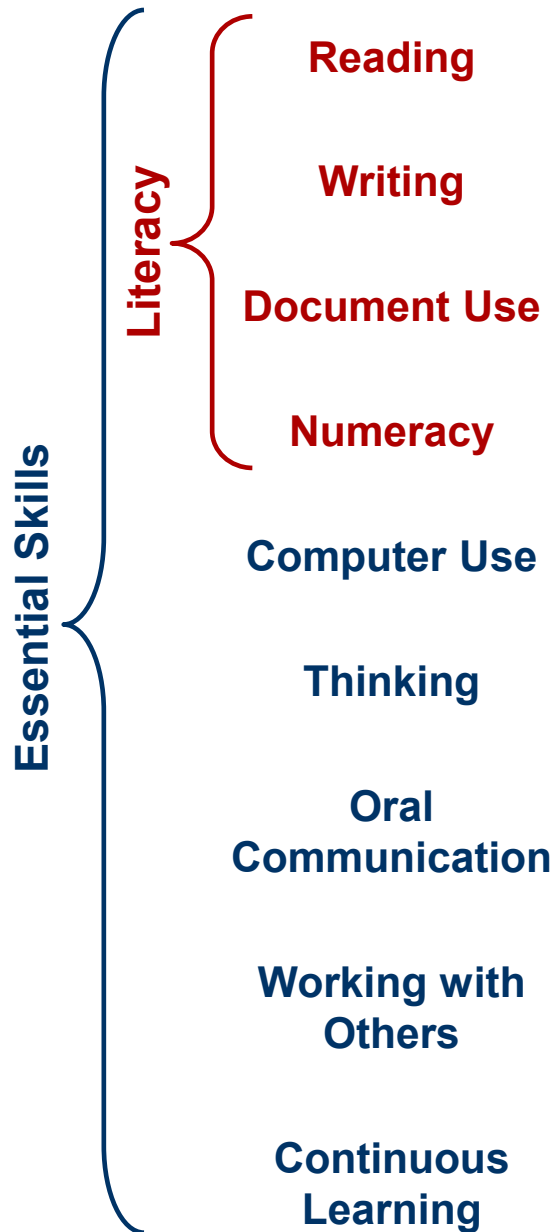
# Webinar Overview

1. Making the Case: Essential Skills in the Workplace
2. Office of Literacy and Essential Skills
3. *Demonstration Project (SRDC)*
4. *Workup! A Model for Workplace Essential Skills (Literacy Alberta)*
5. Discussion

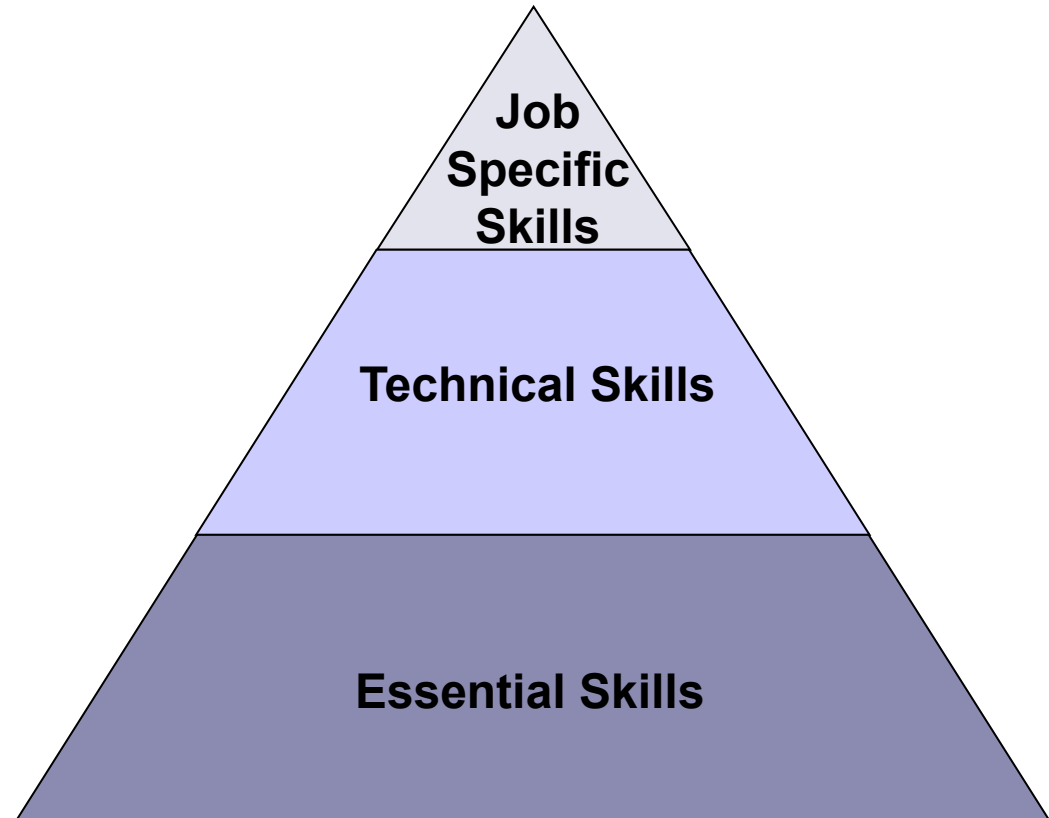
Click below to listen to audio of presentation



# What are Essential Skills?



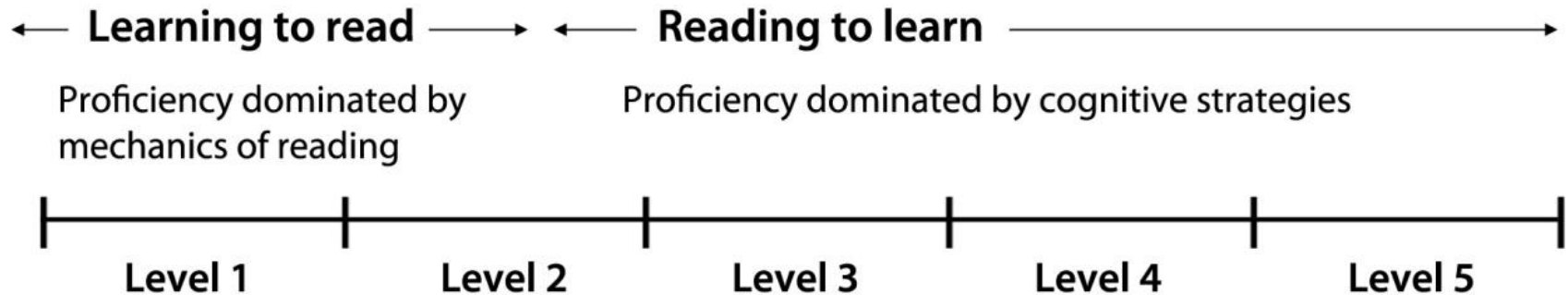
- Foundational skills that make it possible for people to **learn other skills**.



- Help people **grow** with their jobs, **adapt** to workplace change, and **participate fully** in their communities and family life.

# Today's Knowledge-Based Economy

The OECD measures literacy on a 5 point scale and has determined that level 3 is the minimum level required to function well in a knowledge-based economy.



# Literacy and Essential Skills are a Workplace Issue

**9+** million Canadians aged 16-65 have low essential skills.



**5.9** million are currently working.

# Industries with lower literacy and essential skills

<b>Sector/Industry</b>	<b>Percentage of people in sector who are employed by small business (&lt; 100)*</b>	<b>Share of all workers in sector with low essential skills (&lt; level 3)**</b>
Health care	88%	32%
Forestry	77%	47%
Construction	73%	49%
Accommodation & Food	66%	53%
Manufacturing	35%	51%

\*Source: Statistics Canada, Survey of Employment, Payrolls and Hours (SEPH), April 2012, and calculations by Industry Canada.

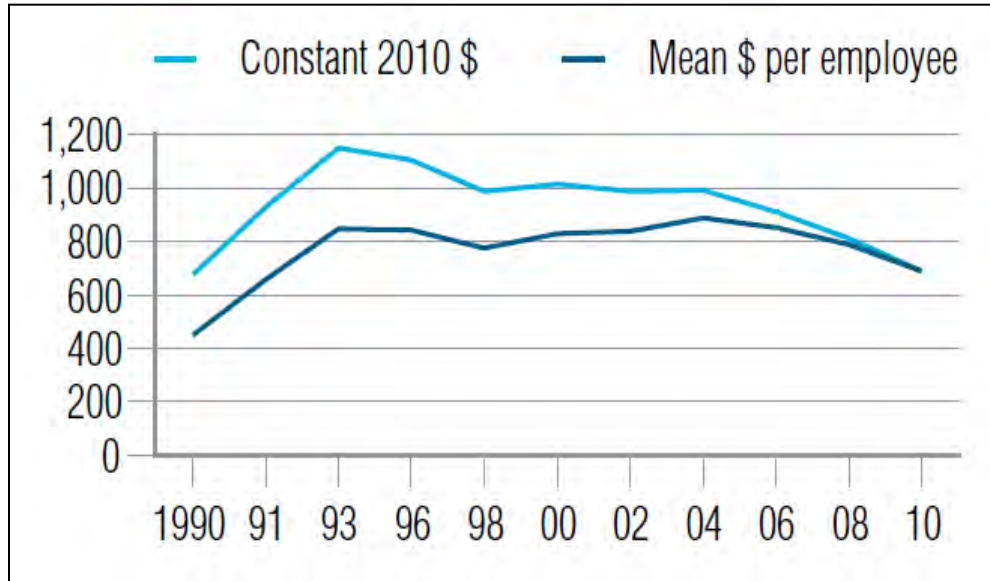
\*\*Source: International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey, 2003

# Employers say skills shortages are barriers to growth

- **Canadian Chamber of Commerce:** The “skills crisis” is one of the top barriers to Canada’s competitiveness. Canada’s economic growth is being held back by a shortage of skilled workers.
- **Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters:** In three to five years Canada will have such a hot economy that we won’t be able to find enough people. In particular, capital projects in every province face skills challenges.
- **Canadian Federation of Independent Business:** Thirty-six per cent of business owners reported shortages of skilled labour as a constraint on their business. This is the first time since the recession that concerns over the shortage of skilled labour have exceeded worries about insufficient customer demand.
- **Canadian Council of Chief Executives:** Canada faces a growing shortage of workers with university degrees in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), in large part because relatively few Canadian high school graduates choose to enrol in such programs.

# Employer investments in employee training and skills development is declining

## Direct learning expenditures per employee



Source: Conference Board of Canada 2011

## Participation rates of all job-related training

Countries	Participation rate job-related non-formal education (%)
Sweden	61
Finland	44
Switzerland	42
Germany	38
Netherlands	36
Denmark	35
United States	33
Canada	31
United Kingdom	31
France	29
OECD average	28
New Zealand	26
Spain	20
Italy	14
Korea	11

Source: OECD, Education at a Glance 2011

**Spending peaked in 1993 at \$1,116 per employee and then dropped by nearly 40% over the next 18 years to \$688.**



**\$32B**

**ANNUALLY**

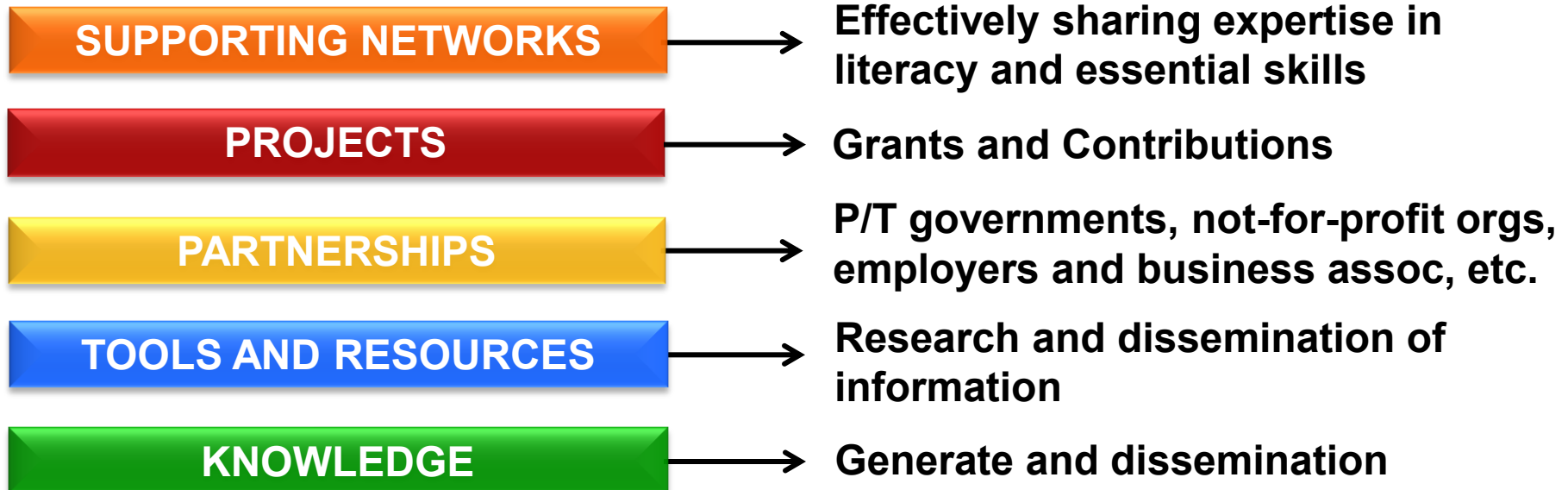
# Benefits of Increased Essential Skills

- **Developing an individual's essential skills can help improve job opportunities, but it can also help boost a business' productivity, innovation and overall competitiveness**
  - **Creates a more vibrant and engaged workforce**
  - **Reduces error rates and waste**
  - **Improves workplace health and safety**
  - **Develops a more highly skilled workforce**

# The Office of Literacy and Essential Skills (OLES)

**Mandate: OLES is a Centre of Expertise with a workplace focus, building awareness and capacity in "what works" in order to improve the literacy and essential skills of adult Canadians.**

## ▪ OLES does this through:



# Example Tool: *What's in it for you?*

The screenshot shows a webpage titled "Essential Skills in the Workplace: What's in it for you?". It is published by the Office of Literacy and Essential Skills, part of the Skills and Employment branch of HRSDC Canada. The page includes a list of workplace challenges, a section on the benefits of investing in essential skills, and a list of specific skills. The "Increased Competitiveness" section is highlighted with a red box.

Human Resources and Development Canada / Ressources humaines et Développement des compétences Canada

Now and Tomorrow  
Excellence in Everything We Do

Skills and Employment  
Office of Literacy and Essential Skills

## Essential Skills in the Workplace: What's in it for you?

Finding and keeping workers with the knowledge and skills to get the job done is critical in today's workplace. Without the right skills, your workplace may suffer. Are you experiencing any of the following challenges in your workplace:

- Recruiting people with the required skills?
- New workers finding it difficult to adapt to the workplace?
- Workers with low morale?
- Low productivity?
- Problems introducing new equipment?
- Workplace accidents and/or injuries?
- Training not leading to expected results?

If you answered "yes" to any of the above questions, you should consider if Essential Skills gaps may be contributing to the problem, and whether an investment in these skills might be the right solution.

### What are the Benefits of Investing in Essential Skills?

Increased Productivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Less time per task</li><li>• Reduced error rates</li><li>• Less Waste</li></ul>
Enhanced Workplace Efficiencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Capacity to understand job requirements and procedures</li><li>• Ability to work independently</li><li>• Ability to apply new knowledge and skills on the job</li></ul>
Increased Competitiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Capacity to adapt to organizational and technological changes</li><li>• Meeting quality standards</li><li>• Improved customer service leading to customer loyalty</li></ul>
More Vibrant and Engaged Workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sense of ownership of work</li><li>• Improved self-esteem, self-confidence and morale</li><li>• Opportunities for career development and promotion</li></ul>
Better Workplace Health and Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Capacity to understand safety instructions</li><li>• Ability to retain and apply information from training sessions</li></ul>
Better Team Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Capacity to understand personal contribution to organizational goals</li><li>• Better communication between workers and management</li><li>• Ability to work effectively as a team</li></ul>
More Highly Skilled Workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Capacity to communicate and use technologies with confidence</li><li>• Ability to keep pace with changes in the workplace</li></ul>

WP-100-03-11

Canada

- Helpful resource in introducing employers to the **concept of essential skills (ES)**
- Includes list of **workplace benefits** to investing in ES
- Provides simple **examples** of how employers can integrate ES into workplace practices

Find this, and other free resources to use with employers, at [hrsdcc.gc.ca/essentialskills](https://hrsdcc.gc.ca/essentialskills)

# UPSKILL

## A Pan-Canadian Demonstration Project

February 2013

David Gyarmati  
dgyarmati@srdc.org



SOCIAL RESEARCH  
AND DEMONSTRATION  
CORPORATION

SOCIÉTÉ  
DE RECHERCHE  
SOCIALE APPLIQUÉE

# UPSKILL – Essentials to Excel

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- ▶ Pan-Canadian demonstration project
- ▶ Measuring the impacts of workplace LES training on workers and firms
- ▶ Large scale Randomized Control Trial (RCT)
- ▶ Allows for a rigorous cost-benefit study and the measurement of return on investment (ROI)
- ▶ Funded by the Office of Literacy and Essential Skills, HRSDC

# Target Groups

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- ✓ **Employed individuals**
- ✓ **Skill level** – Essential Skills that correspond roughly to mid to upper level 2, but who require level 3
- ▶ **Tourism Sector – Accommodations**
- ▶ **Four occupational clusters**
  - Custodial positions (Housekeeping, Maintenance)
  - Food Preparation (Line cooks)
  - Serving positions (Food and beverage servers)
  - Administrative positions (Front desk agents)

# Noteworthy elements of the design

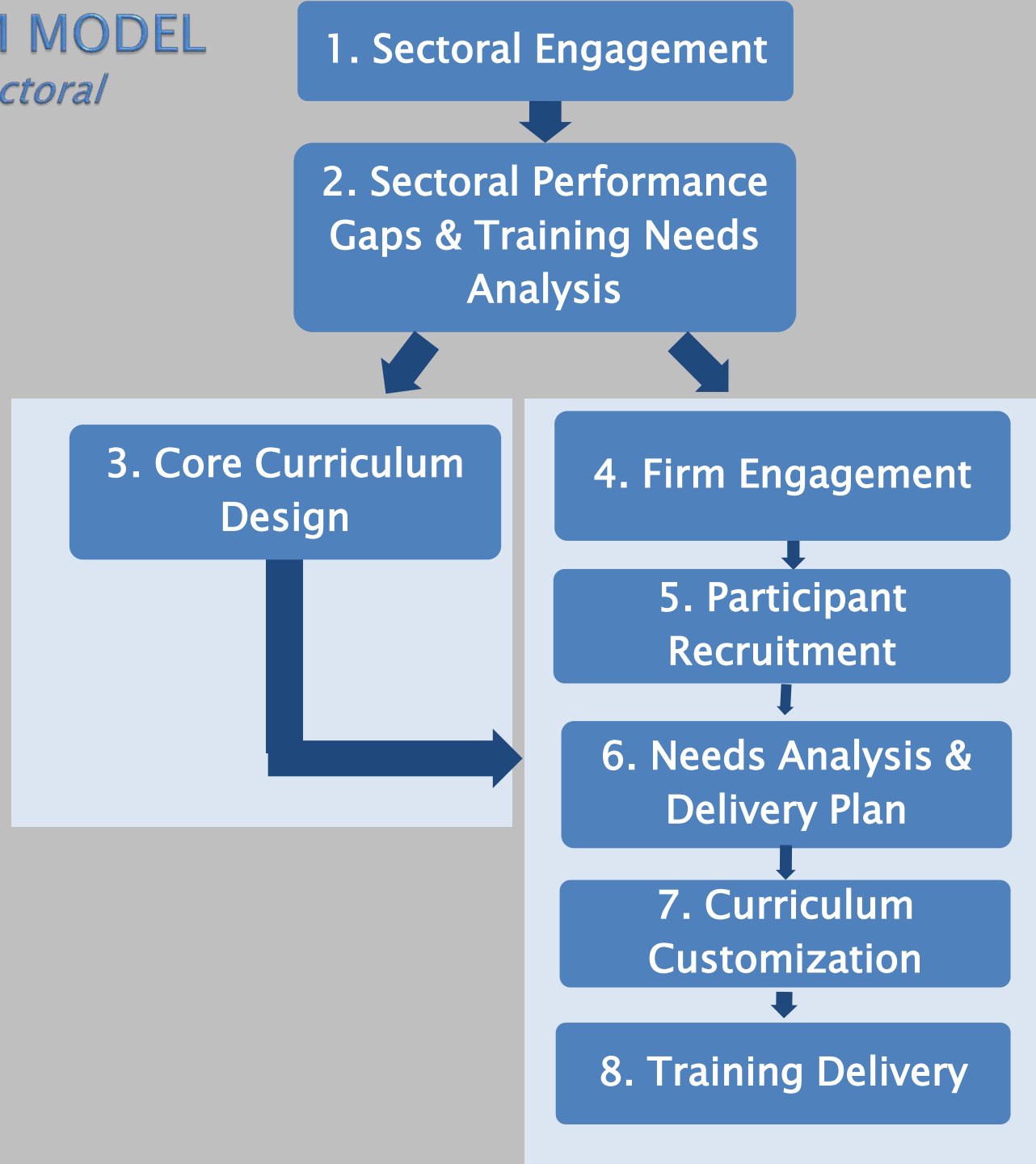
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1. **Program Model** – leveraging an SME training delivery model with sector partnerships to maximize employer engagement
2. **Evaluation Design** – utilizing a randomized control trial (RCT) to estimate unbiased impacts of ES training
3. **Evaluation Framework** – comprehensive set of measures to help understand conditions for success
4. **Performance Metrics** – objective measurement of behaviour change – the “missing link” between Essential Skills and business outcome measures

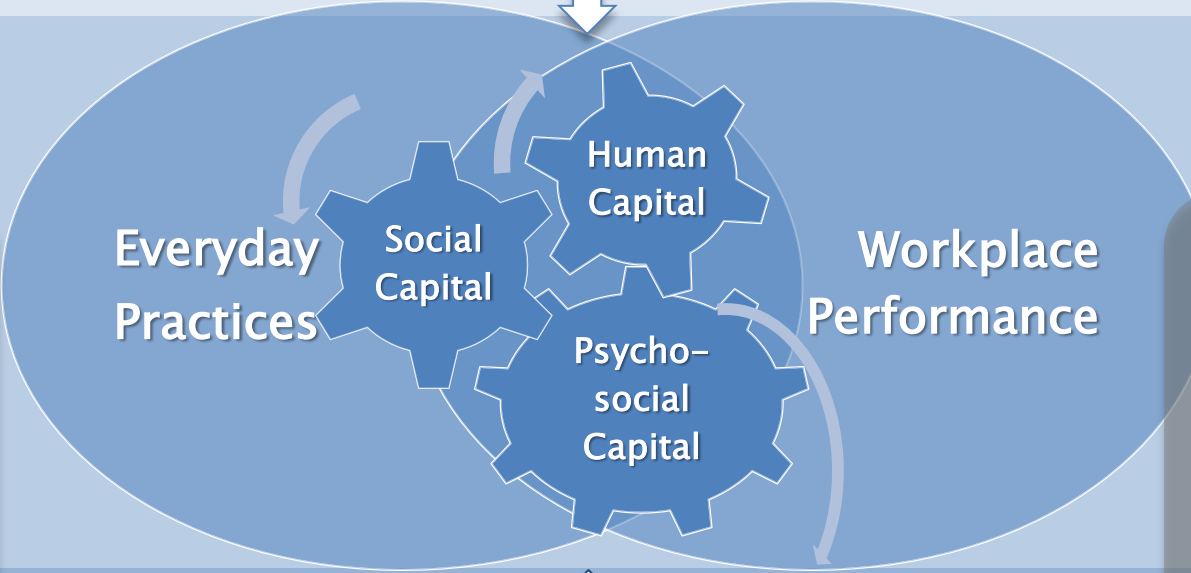


# THE PROGRAM MODEL

*SME model with sectoral leveraging*

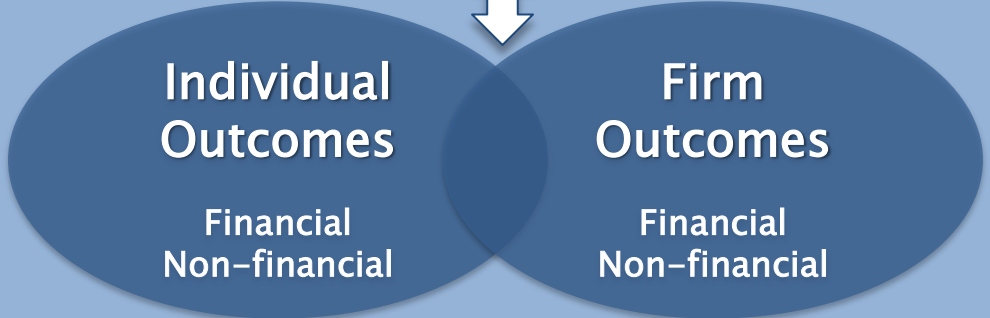


# Workplace LES Training



**Individual Factors**

**Structural Factors**



**Individual ROI**

**Firm ROI**

**Gov't ROI**

Inputs, activity, outputs  
Intermediate Outcomes  
Long-term Outcomes  
Returns

# Early Observations – Implementation

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1. **Partnership Model** – aim to have some industry input into the outreach for employers, as it will raise credibility and help maintain employer engagement
  - ▶ UPSKILL is in eight Provinces – all but Quebec and PEI
  - ▶ 104 firms enrolled...in less than a year
  - ▶ Strengths of industry groups include long-standing relationships with employers – **TRUST**
  - ▶ They also speak the language of business not Essential Skills – **AUTHORITY and RELEVANCE**

# Partners

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- ▶ Sector engagement, recruitment of firms and workers



CANADIAN TOURISM  
HUMAN RESOURCE  
COUNCIL



# Partners

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- ▶ Needs analysis, curriculum design, professional support for instructors

*SkillPlan*

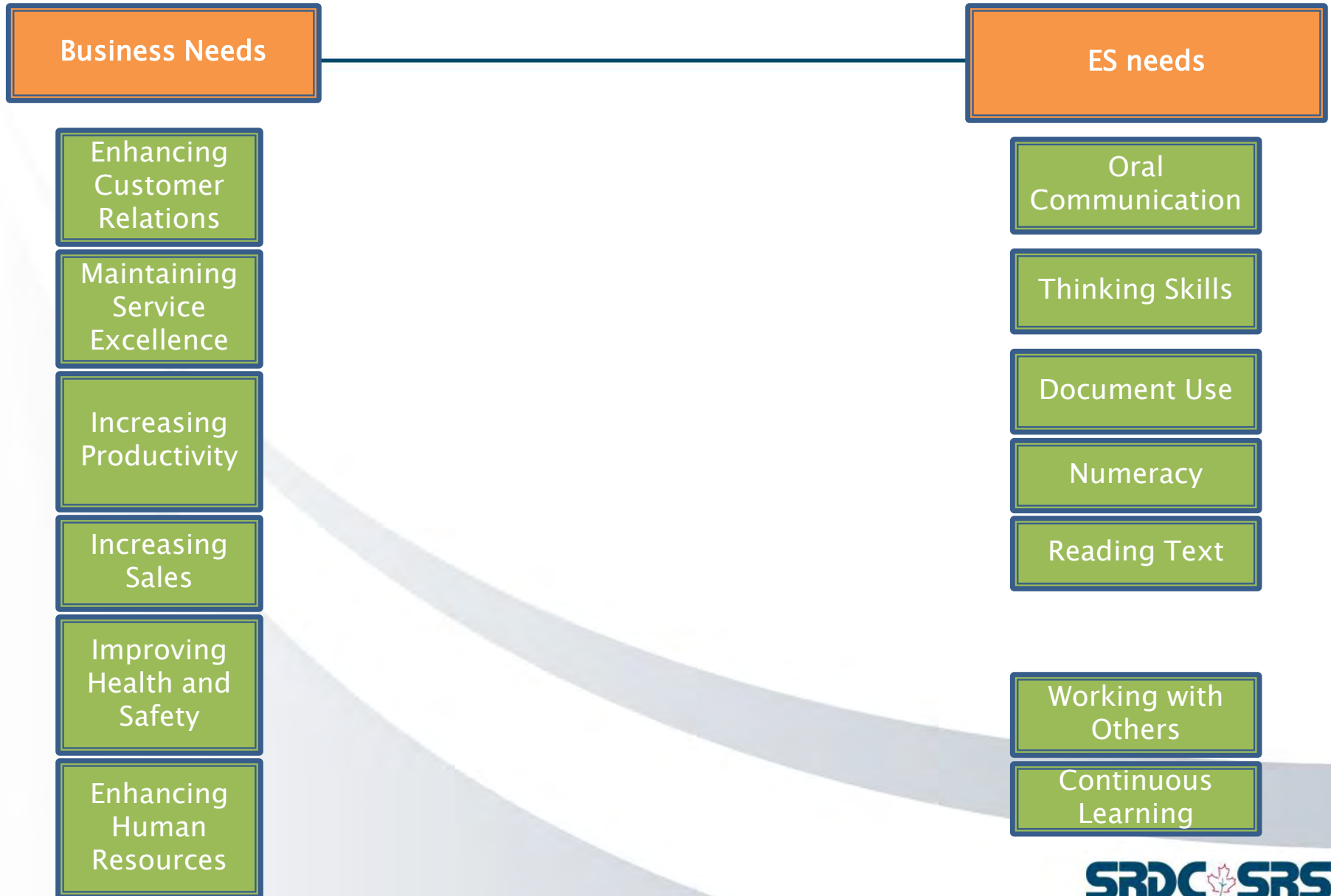
the TRAINING  
group at  
 Douglas College

# Early Observations – Implementation

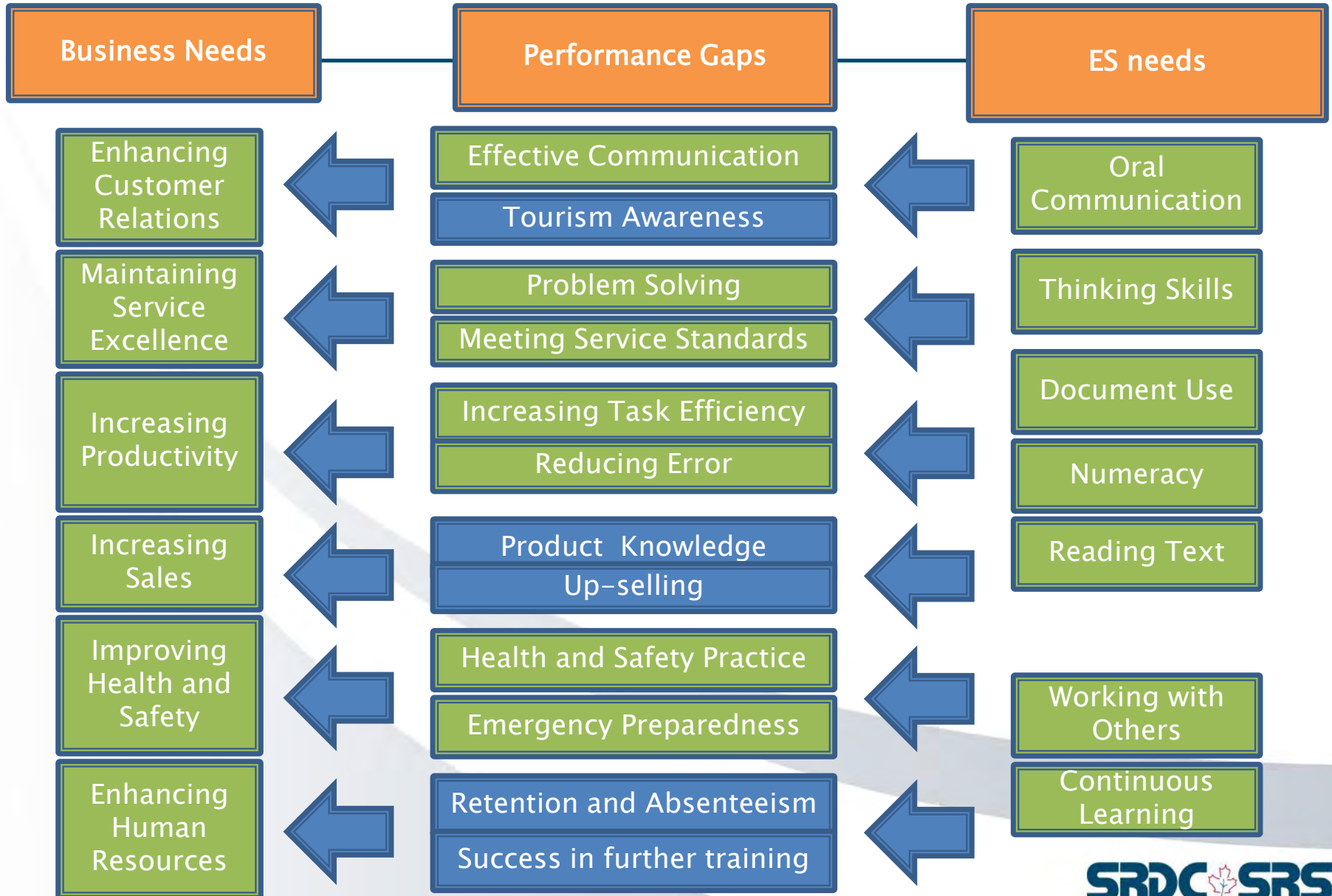
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2. **Alignment**– training should be built on needs analyses that identifies **BOTH Essential Skills** and performance needs of learners and businesses
- ▶ Learning objective is still Essential Skills improvement
  - ▶ However, activities are prepared within a **job task framework** and aligned with business needs
  - ▶ Makes the training **highly relevant to workers and firms** – easier to maintain high engagement
  - ▶ Over 1300 workers participating in UPSKILL – low withdrawals

# Business Needs and Essential Skills addressed...



# The missing link...Key performance metrics





# Early Observations – Implementation

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## 3. Flexible delivery sensitive to context – coordinating workplace training requires significant flexibility and sensitivity to a *dynamic business environment*

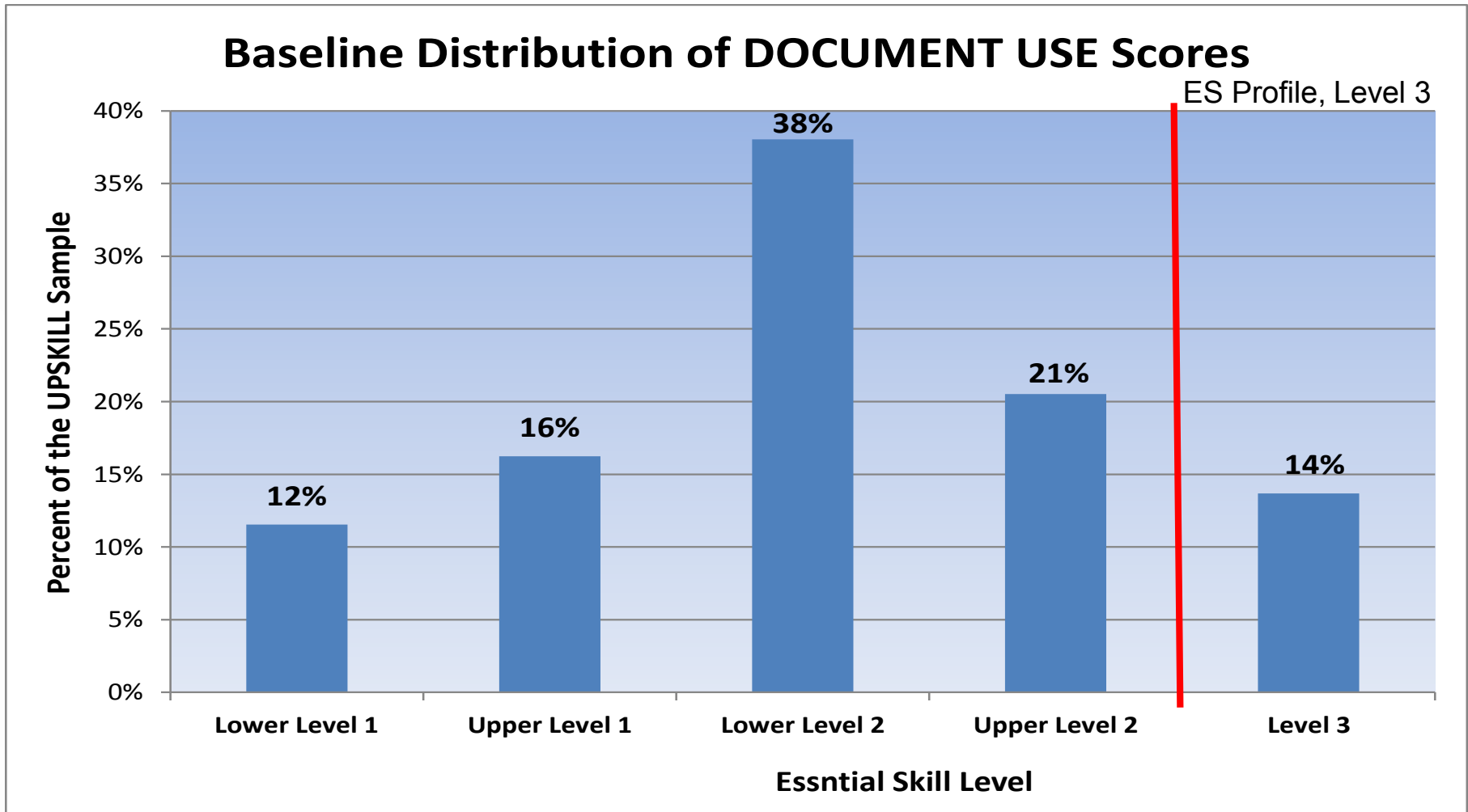
- ▶ Be prepared for frequent delays, starts and stops
- ▶ Business demand (high occupancy) affects worker availability on a day-to-day basis
- ▶ Some employers want a “blitz model” – all in two weeks
- ▶ Others want it spread out over 3–4 months

# Early Observations – Implementation

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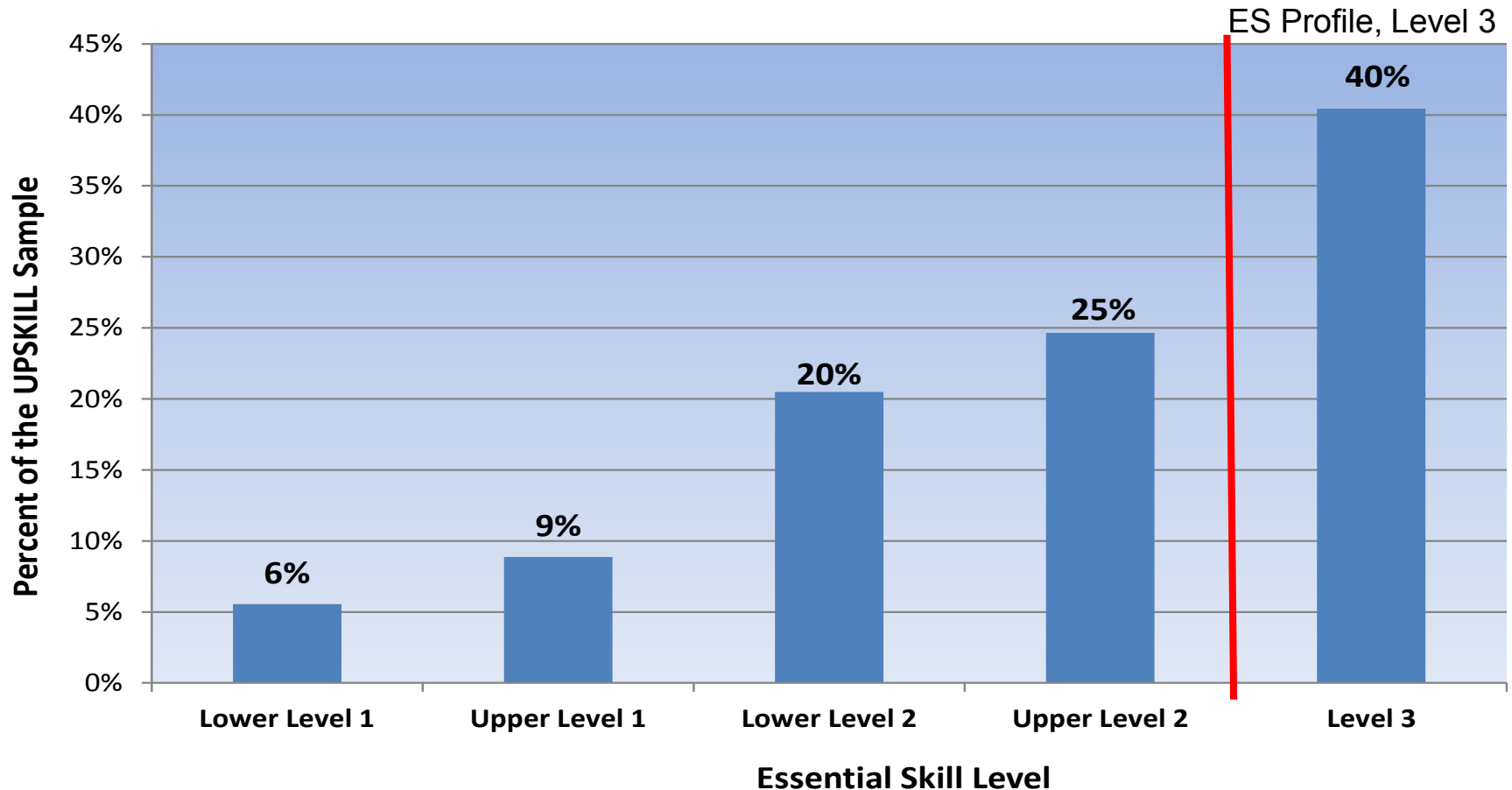
- ▶ **4. Targeting and Customization – Workplace educators must be prepared to accommodate a wide range of learner skills and performance needs**
- ▶ Variance of skills among our sample is much wider than the original target
- ▶ **Recruiting only mid–upper level 2 RT/DU is NOT realistic**
- ▶ Employer involvement is often contingent on training for those with larger needs – **high level 1, low level 2**
- ▶ At same time, some level 3 will want to participate – given training need in **oral communication and problem solving**

# Baseline Profile – Essential Skills



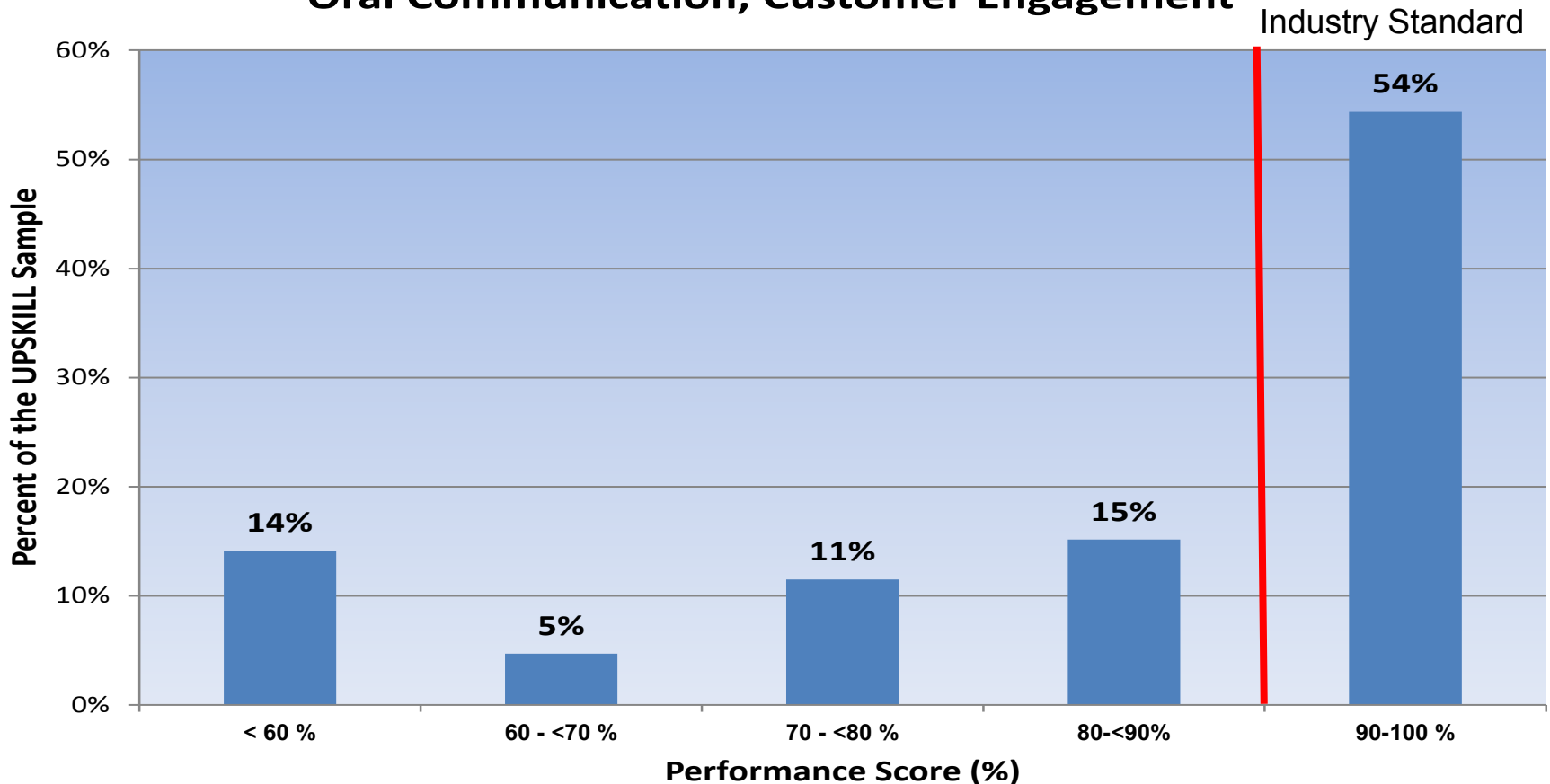
# Baseline Profile – Essential Skills

## Baseline Distribution of NUMERACY Scores



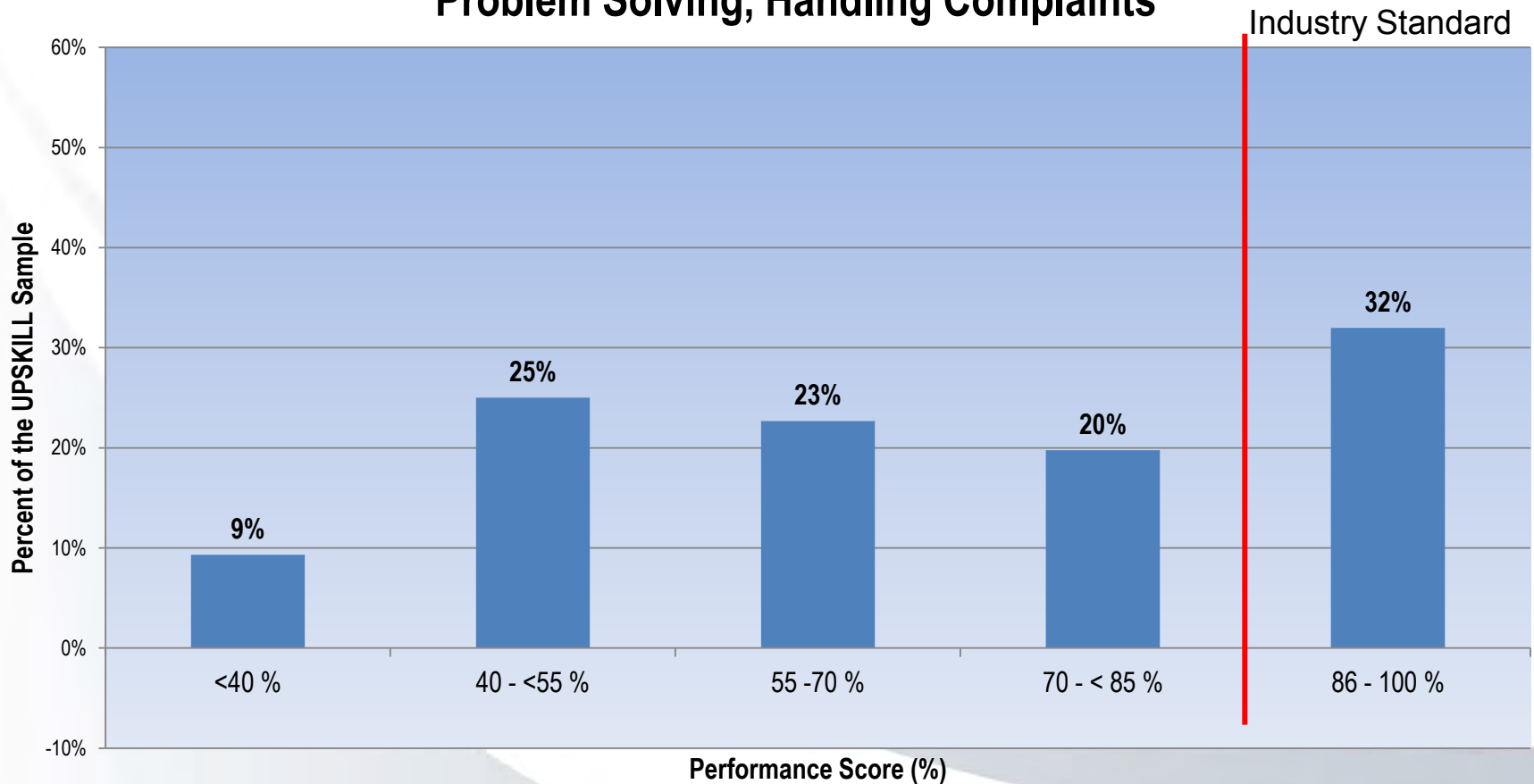
# Baseline Profile – ES/Performance

**Baseline Distribution Of Performance Scores:  
Oral Communication, Customer Engagement**



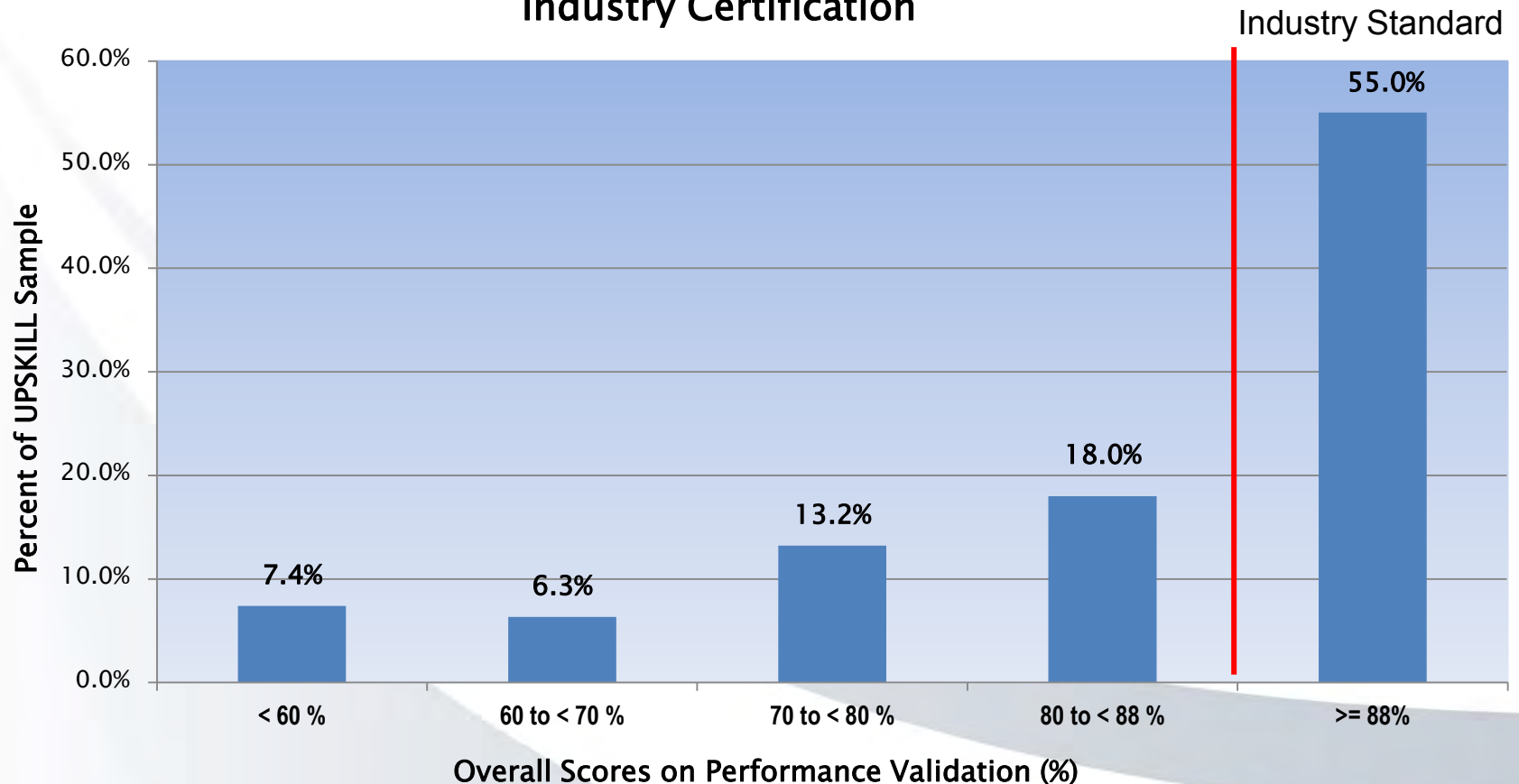
# Baseline Profile – ES/Performance

## Baseline Distribution of Performance Scores: Problem Solving, Handling Complaints



# Baseline Profile – Certification Rates

Baseline Distribution of Performance Scores:  
Industry Certification



# Timelines

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- ▶ **Training Delivery** – ongoing through March 2013
- ▶ **Post-Training Assessments** – through May 2013
- ▶ **Impact Study, CBA** – through Summer 2013
- ▶ **Full Impact Report, Cost-Benefit Results** – Sept 2013



# WorkUp!

A model for Workplace Essential Skills training



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[office@literacyalberta.ca](mailto:office@literacyalberta.ca)



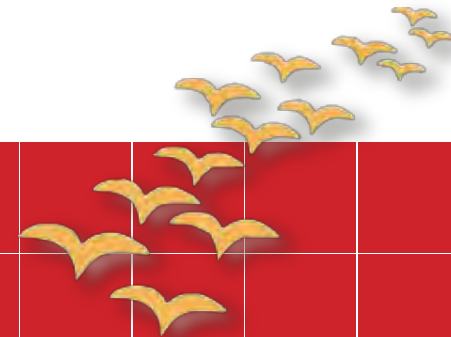
@literacyalberta



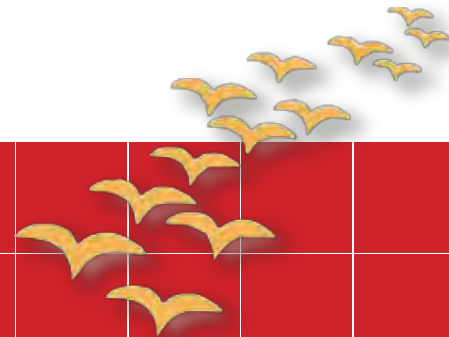
literacyalberta

Literacy Alberta is a membership-based leader in the provision of support and training to literacy and essential skills practitioners in Alberta.

We build networks and partnerships, disseminate tools and resources and raise awareness of, and the capacity to solve, literacy and essentials issues across Alberta.

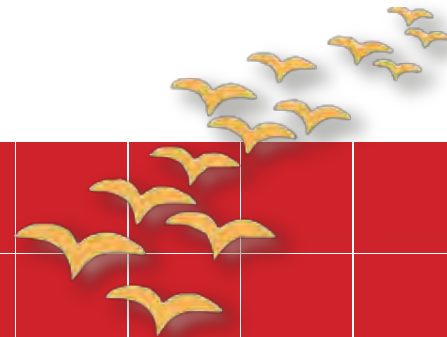


Through Work Up!, an OLES funded project, Literacy Alberta developed a model of Essential Skills Practitioner training, especially designed for community literacy and adult learning practitioners.



Literacy Alberta and AWES partnered on the project, developing the model as we progressed – like building a bridge as you walk on it.

6 experienced facilitators completed the Work Up! training – and loved it.

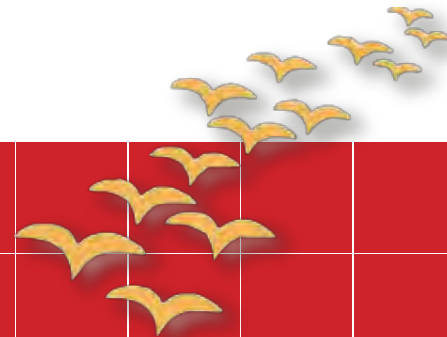


## Lesson from Work Up!

Discover what motivates the employer?

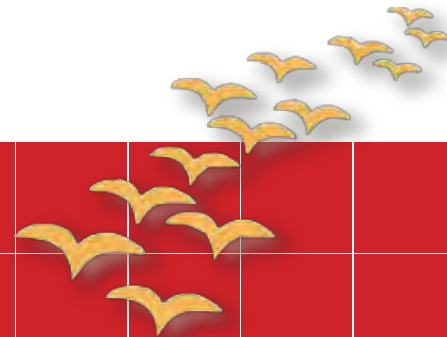
- Value to the employee?
- Value to the bottom line?

Often the motivation lies somewhere in between



## Lesson from work Up!

- Speak to employers' values
- Use language employers understand



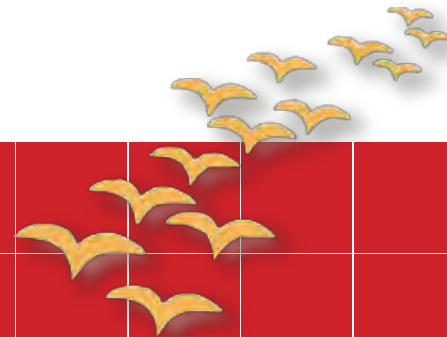
# Needs Assessment

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This is the critical step to developing quality, customized, relevant, and timely WES training.

## Lesson from Work Up!

Ask questions; ask a variety of people; and don't stop at the first answer.

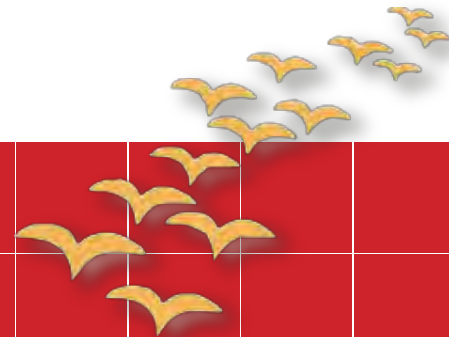


# Needs assessments

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Work Up! trainees completed a comprehensive needs assessment in a medium sized manufacturing company. They talked to management, supervisors, team leads and front line workers.

They heard a number of different stories!





# Implementation

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It's a simple process really!

Assess

Interview

Ask

Integrate

Synthesize

Interpret

Recommend

Suggest

Advise

Tailor

Design

Customize

Train

Coach

Mentor

Apply

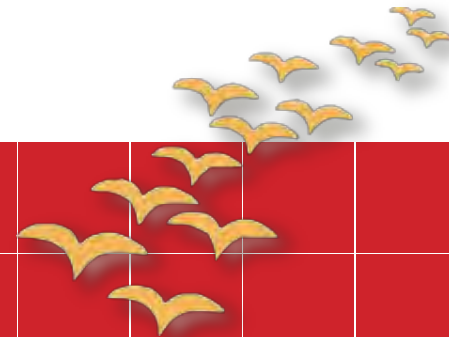
Transfer

Implement

Evaluate

Measure

Exceed



# Understanding Essential Skills

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We developed handouts\* showing how essential skills are used in:

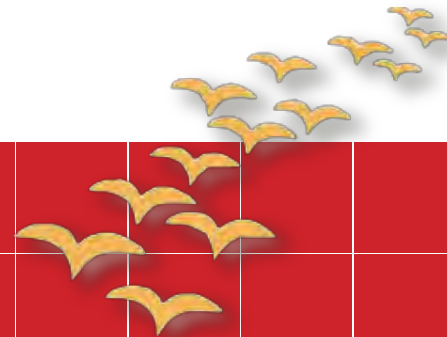
Construction

Hospitality

Manufacturing

And in moving from Apprentice to Supervisor

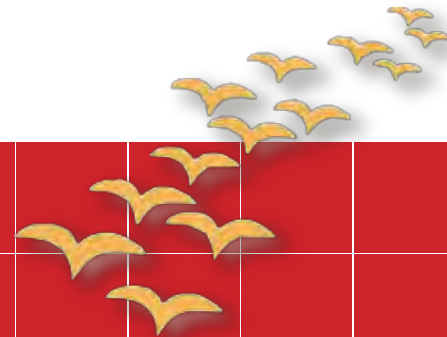
\*Adapted from OLES materials



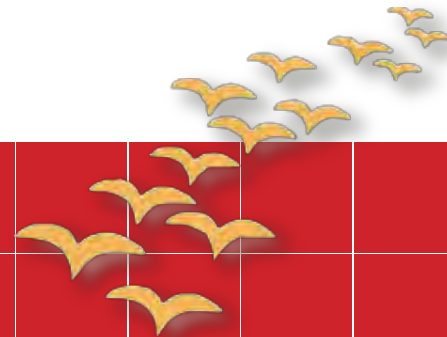
Every Work Up! trainee had over 50 hours of paid practicum experience through the project.

Each trainee:

- Engaged an employer in their own community
- Performed a comprehensive needs assessment
- Analyzed the results of the assessment
- Negotiated the training with the employer
- Designed and delivered the training
- Evaluated their results



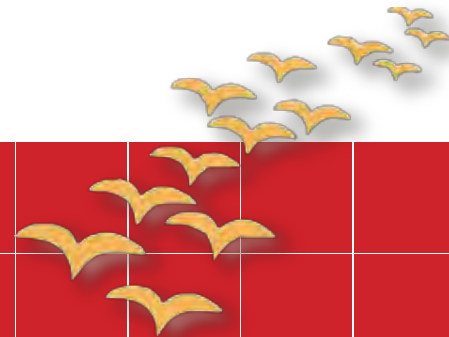
- Trainees are following up 8 months after the end of the project to see if the training is still seen as beneficial - where possible
- All employers provided release time
- Case Studies are written up in the final report.
- Mini case studies are in the *Unlock Potential* package



*Unlock Potential*: a folder of resources

Contents:

- Benefits of Essential Skills
- An essential skills mini-audit
- Brochures showing how Essential Skills are used in various workplaces
- Case studies of the Work Up! practica
- Other valuable tools

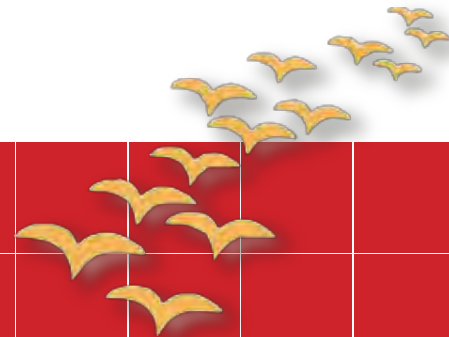


## *Getting Through the Door*

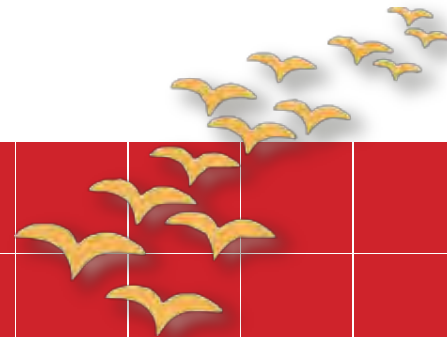
Through Work Up! we developed a small booklet for WES practitioners to use to have the conversation with employers. Ideas on everything from how to cold call employers to how to sell WES training.

**Lesson from Work Up!**

**Do your homework!**



- Work Up! was a successful project that met its deliverables
- Practitioners learned how to engage employers and to design and deliver customized quality, relevant, and timely essential skills training for the workplace.
- Employers are still reluctant to pay for ES training without some sort of incentive



# Questions for further discussion

- What strategies are you using to engage employers?
- Have you found success in designing programming or developing partnerships to address skills shortages? Or better aligning labour market programming with employer demand?