

# An Organizational Needs Assessment Partnership Model: Government of Nova Scotia & Nova Products Ltd.

<b>Language</b>	English
<b>Provider</b>	Nova Products Ltd., Dartmouth, Nova Scotia (pseudonym for a real company) and Department of Labour and Workforce Development, Halifax, Nova Scotia
<b>Location</b>	<a href="#">Atlantic Canada</a>
<b>Highlights</b>	<p>This project is a partnership between Nova Products Ltd.(pseudonym for a real company), and the Department of Labour and Workforce Development to identify and address emerging essential skills training needs caused by growth, labour market forces, and new technology.</p> <p>The ONA process was made possible through the support of the Nova Scotia Department of Labour and Workforce Development. The Department provided guidance and needs assessment expertise that did not exist within Nova Products.</p>
<b>Overview</b>	To maintain its leadership in manufacturing, Nova Products has committed to investing in the development and training of essential skills for all employees. The objective of this Organizational Needs Assessment is to identify which specific essential skills should be prioritized for programming development.
<b>Issues Targeted</b>	<p>Nova Products is a manufacturer in Atlantic Canada. It is a privately owned company located in Halifax, N.S. and has grown to over 200 employees located in facilities located around the Maritimes. Nova Products understands the value of its people. While the majority of its workers have more than 25 years experience with the company, growth, technology and labour market changes have placed new demands on the workforce. In the near future, however, Nova Products anticipates large scale retirement and the accompanying risks of knowledge drain. Additionally, there have been associated shifts in workplace morale related to new machinery, policies, and increasing shifts new information technologies.</p> <p>As a result of these internal and external pressures, Nova Products has recognized a need for employee skills development and training. Emergent issues related to workplace culture and communications have convinced senior management to form a partnership with The Department of Labour and Workforce Development to investigate options for workplace education.</p> <p>Together the partnership sought to ensure future success by identifying and addressing the most pressing issues associated with current labour market transformation as well as</p>

	<p>several crucial issues arising from internal company developments.</p>
<p><b>Key Features</b></p>	<p>As a result of the perceived internal and external pressures, Nova Products identified the need to investigate options for workplace education. In partnership with the Nova Scotia Department of Labour and Workforce Development, the partnership initiated a two part information gathering process.</p> <p>The first stage involved a tour of Nova Products facilities to familiarize all stakeholders with the physical plant infrastructure and processes as well as the job environment, basic skills used on the job, vocabulary, communications processes, and workplace organization.</p> <p>In the second stage, six focus groups were held with the goal of exploring the organization’s future learning needs. The following inquiry framework guided the discussion through the key issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Employability &amp; Essential Skills needed by employees to fulfill their jobs</li> <li>Perceived need for Training</li> <li>Current training practices</li> <li>How to implement new training in the workplace</li> </ul> <p>In consultation with the Nova Scotia Department of Labour and Workforce Development, Nova Products settled on a focus group strategy for information gathering. Focus groups included a cross section of employees from plant workers, to office staff and management. These groups offered the Organizational Needs Assessment with useful, first hand information about commonly used skills, perceived needs for training, and ideas for implementation.</p> <p>The objective for the six focus groups was to fully understand essential skills in terms of workplace education and to explore how Nova Products might support programming that meets the unique needs of all employees. Specifically, the goal was to acquire data on issues such as employability skills needed by employees to perform their jobs, current training practices and workplace policies, and perceived learning needs. The partnership also sought to generate suggestions from participants to help the project team decide on appropriate training programs to implement.</p> <p><b>ONA Questions</b></p> <p>The aim of the ONA was to plumb the depth of experience resident in the eclectic range of focus group participants. All focus group discussions followed a set pattern ranging over three central themes: employability and essential skills, the perceived need for training, and implementation issues.</p> <p><b>Employability &amp; Essential Skills</b></p> <p>List 5 skills needed for positions at Nova Products.</p> <p>What are the key essential skills associated with the positions represented in your group?</p> <p>List jobs or tasks that require math, reading, computer, document use, and oral</p>

communication.

What are the current training practices at Nova Products? How do you learn your job?

Perceived need for Training

In which essential skills area do you see a need for training?

What changes have occurred in the past that have required retraining? What future tasks do you see coming that may require further training?

What type of courses would assist employees in skill development?

What is the best way to communicate information, details and changes with employees?

Training Implementation

When would be a good time to hold training courses? How many hours per week? Over how long?

How could union, management and workers be encouraged to participate? What could Nova Products provide to contribute to program success?

What, if any, might be barriers to employee participation in a course/program?

On a scale of 1 to 10, how interested would employees be in a course/program?

Findings

There was consensus among focus group participants that the most important and commonly used skills, were oral communication skills, working with others, thinking skills, and computer use:

Oral Communication Skills

All Nova Products employees use oral communication skills to...

- Communicate with coworkers to determine work progress, product status.
- Communicate with customers to clearly determine product desires.
- Train other employees.
- Relay and describe specific product details.
- Discuss special instructions.
- Clarify instructions or work orders.
- Check-in with other departments and individuals on an informal level.
- Demonstrate professionalism with customers and co-workers.

Working with Others

Nova Products employees use 'Working with Others' skills to...

- Complete specific job tasks in association with the product manufacturing cycle.
- Train other employees.
- Work inter-departmentally.
- Move around the factory as directed to fulfill roles or shortages.

Thinking Skills

Nova Products employees use thinking skills to...

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Track and manage work orders or product information.</li> <li>• Develop new work systems or enhance old ones.</li> <li>• Adjust procedures and policies related to advancements in manufacturing.</li> <li>• Review and assess employee work schedules.</li> <li>• Interpret notices, communications, and work related information.</li> <li>• Complete day-to-day tasks.</li> </ul> <p>Computer Use Nova Products employees use computer skills to...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create the product from concept and design to fabrication.</li> <li>• Specific to office staff; use all manner of modern technology to work with customers, communicate internally and externally (email, text).</li> <li>• Use computerized equipment to manufacture the product (Corrugator, HBL machine, Flexo-printer).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Key Results</b></p>	<p>The results from Organizational Needs Assessment partnership suggest that overall support for this form of programming and the internal motivation at Nova Products is high.</p> <p>In addition to the identified essential skills needs for Nova Products workforce, the needs assessment process also surfaced following implementation issues and potential success enablers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Programs should be delivered onsite at Nova Products.</li> <li>• A customized, joint, Communications program directed toward management/supervisors and plant workers should be developed.</li> <li>• A customized, joint, program on Working with Others directed to management/supervisors and plant workers should be provided.</li> <li>• Allow all team members have input to, and be kept informed about, program content.</li> </ul> <p>Establish 1 to 2 Project Team meetings throughout development of the programs to facilitate this input.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that the instructors hired for the related program(s) have an Adult Education background and knowledge of adult learning principles. The instructor should also have strong facilitation skills, an ability to manage group dynamics, and strong team building skills. Knowledge of the manufacturing industry is also considered an asset.</li> </ul> <p>Finally, participants indicated that a workplace education initiative would not only enhance general skill levels but would also encourage development of the key skills necessary for employees to establish a productive work environment. Participants placed special value on training that will help enhance workplace morale, develop workplace culture, and improve working relationships between employees giving special priority to joint workforce/supervisor /management programs for ‘Communication Skills’ and</p>

	'Working with Others.'
<b>Contact Details</b>	Nova Scotia Department of Labour and Workforce Development Adult Education PO Box 578 2021 Brunswick Street Halifax, NS B3J 2S9 Phone: 1-877-Go-NSSAL <a href="http://www.gov.ns.ca/lae">www.gov.ns.ca/lae</a>
<b>Sectors</b>	<a href="#">Manufacturing</a>
<b>Projects</b>	<a href="#">Organizational Needs Assessment</a>
<b>Sponsors</b>	<a href="#">Business: medium sized (between 100 and 499 employees)</a> <a href="#">Provincial/Territorial Government</a>
<b>Target Audiences</b>	<a href="#">Workers</a> <a href="#">Workers with low levels of literacy or essential skills</a>
<b>Initiative Types</b>	<a href="#">Practice</a>
<b>Initiative Type Details</b>	An Organizational Needs Assessment process supported and facilitated by the Nova Scotia Department of Labour and Workforce Development. Difficulty level/Suitability for SMEs: (Intermediate)