

MATCHING NEED & RESPONSE

EVALUATION OF THE WORKPLACE EDUCATION INITIATIVE

Final Report

**Prepared for:
The Nova Scotia Department
Of Education**



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We would also like to thank the participants of Workplace Education for sharing their stories and experience with the Initiative and to Instructors for sharing their classrooms with us.

OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS

AWENS

The Association of Workplace Educators of Nova Scotia is involved in the promotion and advancement of Workplace Education and is comprised of active instructors working within the Initiative.

Needs Assessments

Needs assessments are conducted during the initial stages of a Workplace Education program. Initially, an organizational needs assessment is conducted by a Skill Development Coordinator and the results of this assessment are sent with the application for funding. Once funding is received, individual learning needs assessments are conducted.

Participant

An employee taking part in a program offered through the Initiative.

Program

The term program is used to describe a course offered through the Initiative that employees take part in.

Project Team

The Project Team encompasses representatives from parties involved with the Workplace Education Initiative. The Team is comprised of a representative from management, union, Skill Development Coordinator, program instructor, and program participant. Together, the Project Team is responsible for addressing issues as they arise throughout a program, assisting the Skill Development Coordinator to conduct the needs assessment, and to hire the instructor.

Skill Development Coordinator

There are six Skill Development Coordinators responsible for areas within Nova Scotia (Appendix A). Coordinators approach organizations to generate interest in participation. When organizations pursue a program, a needs assessment is conducted, and the Coordinator assists with the application for funding.

Steering Committee

The Steering Committee (Appendix B) is comprised of Skill Development Coordinators, a former instructor, representative of business, and a former participant within the Initiative. This committee provided assistance throughout the evaluation and provided needed documentation and information.

The Initiative

The Initiative refers to the Workplace Education Initiative. The term has been shorted for clarity during reading.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Workplace Education Initiative is offered through the Department of Education. It was developed to improve the literacy levels of Nova Scotians in 1989 and provides a non-traditional approach to education. Programs offered within Workplace Education are held mostly on the work site, incorporate workplace relevant material into the curriculum, and focuses on building essential skills. The focus on essential skills is founded in the belief that improving on skills, such as reading, writing, and communicating, enables individuals and organizations to grow and prosper.

Workplace Education programs are arranged by Skill Development Coordinators throughout Nova Scotia. These Coordinators approach organizations, meet with management, assist with the application for funding and also conduct organizational and individual needs assessments. This assessment ensures that each program delivered is tailored for the audience.

Instructors within the Initiative have the responsibility of customizing programs each time they deliver a program. This approach is a characteristic of Workplace Education that enables it to meet the needs of both individuals and organizations.

The Evaluation Methodology

Various methods of data collection were employed. These included document/literature review, interviews and discussion groups with participants, employers, union representatives, instructors, Skill Development Coordinators, Partners of Workplace Education, and the Association of Workplace Educators of Nova Scotia Board of Directors Committee. Site visits were also conducted which involved participating in and observing a Workplace Education program.

Qualitative data collected through these methods was analyzed using content theme analysis.

Findings

Data collected from all groups indicated strong support for the Initiative. All groups viewed Workplace Education as "the way of the future." Workplace Education also received praise for its ability to impact. Benefits received from participating in a Workplace Education program go far beyond what is viewed on the surface. For example, participants indicated taking a greater interest in their children's education and believed they would communicate the importance of education to them. Employers also noted that individuals improve their confidence levels and are more productive at work. As a result of demonstrating new skills after participating in a program, individuals are often promoted and earn a higher income.

These individuals are often promoted to higher positions and income because of the skills they demonstrate after participating in a program.

Discussion

The discussion section outlines the defining characteristics of Workplace Education and the impact it has. The discussion section also documents the debates that were encountered during data collection, such as instructors' desire for agreed upon outcomes for programs yet there is also a desire to maintain flexibility when designing programs.

The discussion section also details methods for improving the Initiative and items of consideration.

BACKGROUND

What is Literacy?

The concept of literacy has evolved greatly over the past several decades. Early research regarded literacy to be something tangible, a condition that either was or was not possessed. This concept falls short in many areas and fails to grasp the complexity of what we now understand (Bloom, Burrows, Lafleur, & Squires, 2004). Currently, Statistics Canada defines literacy as, "an ability to understand and employ printed information in daily activities, at home, at work, and in the community - to achieve one's goals, and to develop one's knowledge and potential." This idea of literacy has been expanded to include work place literacy. Literacy, in this light, focuses on the skills one requires to execute a job successfully, such as being able to read, write, and perform basic math. These skills also include the ability to think critically and problem solve (www.ns.literacy.ca).

The Nova Scotia Literacy Foundation defines literacy as being able to use printed material to function in all aspects of one's life such as home or work. The Foundation also defines literacy as an ability to combine critical thinking and social skills to understand the world around us, achieve goals, and develop potential (www.ns.literacy.ca). Regardless of how literacy is specifically defined, the emphasis remains, literacy is the essential skill and unfortunately, many Nova Scotians lack this skill. This deficit is disconcerting for several reasons. For example, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) has found that individuals with higher literacy skills experience greater economic successes than those with lower literacy skills (www.hrsdc.gc.ca; Bloom, et. al., 2004). These successes include higher wages and a reduced likelihood of experiencing unemployment, both of which have a great impact on the quality of one's life.

Literacy Levels in Canada and Nova Scotia

In 2003, the Nova Scotia Provincial Department of Education estimated that 52% of residents struggle significantly with reading, writing, and understanding documents to a level where they can be put to use (www.ns.literacy.ca). This number is staggering and has great implications for the future of the economy. The Government of Canada estimates that 70% of new jobs will require a post secondary education and many individuals lack the required qualifications to meet these demands. A similar estimate was put forth by HRSDC when it acknowledged that traditional jobs, such as manufacturing or clerical work, are becoming relatively non-existent and are being replaced by positions requiring much higher literacy levels (www.hrsdc.gc.ca). In a recent presentation to the Metro Council on Continuing Education, Ray Ivany, President, Nova Scotia Community College, discussed such changes occurring in the workplace. He noted that a gap is forming between the number of jobs requiring skilled workers and the number of available individuals possessing these skills.) To meet the demands of an ever-changing economy, the Workplace Education Initiative was implemented to enhance the skills of workers to allow them to compete competitively in the labor force.

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1. Personal communication, 2005.

History of Workplace Education

Workplace Education began when alarming statistics published by Statistics Canada in 1987 motivated the Department of Education to improve literacy skills of Canadians and specifically, Nova Scotians. Initially, the program provided employers with increased access to opportunities that would aid workers in upgrading or enhancing the skills they required for work. The Initiative was redesigned to meet the needs of workers in 1994 and has been evolving continually. Currently, the programs reflect the needs of today's employees. Workplace Education provides training programs to a variety of industries and organizations. Each program is tailored to meet the needs of participants and organizations and can range from enhancing basic literacy skills, such as reading and writing, to enhancing technological skills related to computer programming, and completing a General Educational Development certificate (G.E.D). After HRSDC published the nine recognized essential skills required for work, programs offered within Workplace Education changed. For example, skills related to computer training and communication now applied.

Benefits of Workplace Education Programs

The Conference Board of Canada's research indicates that participating in Workplace Education programs yields significant benefits to the participants, employers, and economy (Bloom & LaFleur 1999, Bloom, et. al., 2004). These benefits include enhancing skills required for work, leading to greater pride and conscientiousness, enhancing the ability to learn, and can also lead to enhanced family life (Bloom & LaFleur 1999, Bloom, et. al., 2004). When an employee acquires new skills and a higher level of understanding of the work, chances for promotions and mobility also increase. Employers have reported increased quality and production of product, improved records, better team performance, and higher retention of employees (Bloom & LaFleur 1999, Bloom, et. al., 2004). The benefits experienced by employers have a direct impact on the economy; greater production of goods and a higher quality reflects positively on the economy and attracts more business.

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Partners of Workplace Education

The Association of Workplace Educators in Nova Scotia (AWENS) plays a valuable role in the Workplace Education Initiative. AWENS began in 1998 and shortly thereafter, in partnership with the Department of Education and Workplace Education staff, developed a certification program for Workplace Education instructors. This program aims to prepare instructors for the environment of Workplace Education and has received a great deal of praise.

The Nova Scotia Partners for Workplace Education Committee includes representatives from organizations involved in the Initiative, such as labor, business, and government and also includes active instructors.

The committee contributes to Workplace Education by providing information on shifts and trends within their sectors, promoting the partnership approach, and by being an ambassador for the Initiative. Committee members also voice the perspective of those they represent.

Previous Evaluation Findings

The Workplace Education Initiative was evaluated in 1999. Evaluators interviewed over 300 individuals involved in the program to determine their experiences with the program and to determine if Workplace Education had met its objectives. The findings from this evaluation were highly in favor of continuing the Initiative, as it was clear benefits were gained by all those involved. Participants reported achieving goals such as improving overall performance on the job, increasing communication skills, and gaining confidence to participate in other training programs. Employers reported improved management-worker relations, greater communication skills, and experiencing greater productivity in employees.

The Current Evaluation

Evaluation is an opportunity to tell a story. It has been over five years since Workplace Education was evaluated. Those involved with the program want to know if the findings from the previous evaluation still hold true. In other words, has the story of Workplace Education changed?

Despite the benefits of participating in a Workplace Education Program, a report issued by the Conference Board of Canada in 2001 revealed that many potential employers are not taking part. The report is a two-part series designed to identify barriers to Workplace Education Programs and provide suggestions for how to breach these barriers. One major obstacle identified in this report was the lack of awareness by employers, managers, and unions. This evaluation may assist with increasing such awareness.

The goal of increasing awareness was further emphasized when the evaluation began. A review was conducted of available literature including Skills Nova Scotia Action Plan 2004-2005, Skills Action Plan 2003-2004, and the Department of Education's Business Plan 2005-2006. Although the Workplace Education Initiative has existed for several decades, has been well received by all stakeholders, and continues to be a successful program, it has received little profile from the Government of Nova Scotia.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Structural Overview

The Workplace Education Initiative is one of the programs offered through the Apprenticeship Training and Skill Development Division, at the Nova Scotia Department of Education. Workplace Education began as a yearly funded project when a need was recognized in the workforce of Nova Scotia. The success of Workplace Education has moved it into core funding. Recently, a program manager has been hired to oversee the work conducted under this Initiative. The position of manager was left vacant for two years because of organizational and re-structuring difficulties.

The actual implementation of Workplace Education is at the discretion of Skill Development Coordinators. This allows them to be responsive to regional needs, however, the capacity to deliver Workplace Education is constrained by the resources available at the regional level. The extent of the reach of the Initiative is described in the regional profiles (Appendix C).

Partners of Workplace Education

The Association of Workplace Educators in Nova Scotia (AWENS) is an important partner. This association is comprised of instructors supportive of Workplace Education and are dedicated to advancing educational levels of those in Nova Scotia. AWENS also assists the Department of Education in the delivery of some of the education modules within a certification program that prepares instructors for the environment of Workplace Education. This program is affordable, accessible, and practical for instructors. AWENS also provides networking opportunities for instructors and generally promotes Workplace Education.

The Nova Scotia Partners for Workplace Education Committee also contributes to Workplace Education. This committee includes individuals who represent those involved with Workplace Education, such as union representatives, instructors, participants, and employers. Each member of the committee voices the concerns of those they represent and also work together to generate solutions to issues that may arise. The committee also generates interest and awareness in the Initiative and attempts to improve the service.

The Initiative provides non-traditional educational opportunities to staff within organizations who wish to improve their essential skills.

Model

The Workplace Education Initiative reaches many organizations throughout Nova Scotia. The Initiative provides non-traditional educational opportunities to staff within organizations who wish to improve their essential skills. Workplace Education is founded on the belief that enhancing these essential skills will allow for greater participation in the workplace, in the home, and community. Human Resources and Skills Development Canada,² (HRSDC) has recognized that essential skills are enabling skills which:

2. www15.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca

- help people perform occupational and everyday tasks
- provide people with a foundation to learn other skills
- enhance people's ability to adapt to change in the workplace

HRSDC has identified nine essential skills. These include:

- reading
- document use
- writing
- numeracy (math)
- oral communication
- thinking skills
- working with others
- computer use
- continuous learning

Essential skill upgrading also enables participants to follow standards, and adhere to guidelines, both of which are becoming increasingly important in many settings.

Process of Implementation

Once an organization decides to become involved with Workplace Education, a Project Team is formed. The Project Team is formed to ensure a partnership approach is taken and is a defining characteristic of the Initiative. The responsibilities of the Project Team are outlined below. The next step in the implementation is to complete an organizational needs assessment to determine if a Workplace Education program is an option for the organization. The results of this assessment are sent with the application for funding. Skill Development Coordinators assist with applications to ensure they are approved. The application is sent to an approval committee within the Department of Education.

The Project Team plays a large role in Workplace Education and is considered to be very important to the success of a particular program. The Project Team consists of a representative from management, union (if applicable), participants, instructor, and a Skill Development Coordinator. One of the greatest responsibilities of the team is hiring the instructor for a program. The instructor selected for a program must be appropriate for the group they will be teaching.

The team also assists the Skill Development Coordinator in conducting the needs assessments. This assessment determines if the needs of the employees and organization fit within the mandate of Workplace Education. This assessment also guides the creation of the curriculum the instructor will present. Each program is customized for the specific workplace and incorporates material from the work site. Instructors create their own curriculum and do not have standardized material to present, making programs relevant to the audience. Instructors also present programs based on adult education principles.

Each program is customized for the specific workplace and incorporates material from the work site.

As Skill Development Coordinators are responsible for implementation, they confront a number of challenges. Questions of which sectors and organizations are most in need, and what content produces the most favorable outcomes, are uncertain. Skill Development Coordinators are also faced with a demand beyond their capacity to respond. This leaves them with the dilemma of choosing to respond where implementation is of less effort or attempting to build a new partnership where the results are, at first, uncertain.

Programs

Programs range from upgrading essential skills, such as reading and writing, to developing communication and computer skills. Each program is based on the needs of an organization and the flexibility within Workplace Education allows each organization's needs to be met. Program times vary from 40 to 80 hours. The impact-programs have in such a short amount of time is great and will be discussed within the report.

Upon completion of a program, closing ceremonies are held to celebrate the accomplishments of the participants. These ceremonies are attended by families, instructors, Skill Development Coordinators, unions, and management.

Goal of the evaluation

While Workplace Education is viewed very positively by all involved, the story, and thus the impact, is not well known. It is hoped that this evaluation will generate additional knowledge about this work.

THE METHOD

Introduction

Multiple data collection methods were employed to ensure that all perspectives were included within the evaluation. This section briefly describes the methods used to conduct the evaluation, the data sources, the numbers contacted, and the data analysis.

Project Management

The evaluators met with the Steering Committee in the early stages of the evaluation to discuss the requirements of the work, to identify data sources, and questions to be asked of each source. Several meetings were held with Skill Development Coordinators and the Steering Committee to explain the evaluation plan and receive feedback. On going communication occurred with the Chair of the Steering Committee to ensure the evaluation remained on schedule. This working relationship allowed us to:

- finalize the work plan
- discuss and approve data collection instruments
- identify work place sites to visit
- identify key individuals for interviews
- discuss drafts of reports

Data Collection

Document and File Review

The document review involved examining the previous evaluation of the Workplace Education Initiative, documents from each region, and literature, which spoke to the value of Workplace Education. Literature reviewed included statistics on literacy levels, and the impact of literacy from Human Resources and Skills Development Canada.

Regional Profiles

Regional documents were reviewed to determine the activity within each region since the last evaluation. This review however, was hindered because data were incomplete. This required seeking additional information from program approval forms and speaking directly with Skill Development Coordinators regarding the activity in their area.

Site Visits

With the help of Skill Development Coordinators, three to four sites, active with Workplace Education were identified from each region and two were chosen for a site visit (Appendix D). During the site visit, when available, a class was observed, a focus group was held with program participants, and interviews occurred with instructors, employers or supervisors, and union representatives. All participants received a copy of the interview or discussion questions in advance.

Discussion Group with Nova Scotia Partners

A discussion group was held with the Nova Scotia Partners for Workplace Education Committee. The discussion group questions focused on the policy and model on which the Initiative is based. Guides were provided to Partners during the discussion (Appendix E). Partners were also asked to indicate the contribution Workplace Education can make and if it should be expanded.

Partners' Questionnaire

A questionnaire (Appendix F) was administered to the Nova Scotia Partners following the discussion group. Administering the questionnaire allowed for individual responses and asked Partners to indicate their level of satisfaction with various aspects of Workplace Education and give suggestions for the future.

Discussion with AWENS

A discussion group was held with the AWENS Board of Directors. The discussion group questions sought to determine the need for Workplace Education in Nova Scotia, the ability of the Initiative to meet this need, and suggestions for the future. Guides were provided to the Board of Directors during the discussion (See Appendix G).

Discussion Group with Participants

Discussion groups were held with 30 participants of Workplace Education in each region. A discussion group guide (Appendix H) was distributed to participants. The questions gathered individuals' experiences with programs, their satisfaction with programs, and what they believe has changed in their lives as a result of their participation.

Telephone interviews were conducted with participants when a discussion group was not an option. The telephone interviews addressed the same questions as the discussion group.

Interviews with Employers

Interviews were held with 12 employers involved with Workplace Education. Interview guides (Appendix I) were provided in advance. The interviews aimed to gather employers' satisfaction with the program, with employees after participation in the program, and benefits received as they related to the costs. Employers were also asked to indicate the challenges they experienced with programs and if they would recommend Workplace Education to other employers.

Interviews with Instructors

Interviews were held with 11 Workplace Education instructors. Interview guides were provided in advance (Appendix J). The purpose of the interviews was to gather instructors' perceptions of the success of Workplace Education, participants' motivation behind participation, and the contribution that can be made to an individual and workplace. Instructors were also asked how satisfied they were with the support received throughout the program and with the overall organization of the Initiative.

Interviews with Union Representatives

Interviews were held with five union representatives from those organizations that were unionized. Interview guides were provided in advance (Appendix K). The interviews aimed to gather the unions' perspective on Workplace Education, the benefits of programs, and the union's ability to contribute and promote the program.

Interviews with Skill Development Coordinators

Interviews were held with all six Skill Development Coordinators. Interview guides were provided in advance (Appendix L). These interviews sought a representation of each region in terms of organizations involved in Workplace Education and the types of programs being requested. These interviews also inquired about specific needs within each region and how coordinators perceived the program to be operating.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using content theme analysis. Data were grouped first according to respondent category and then by specific questions. Data were then coded by themes that emerged. All findings are reported anonymously.

Summary of Data Collection

<i>Interview / Discussion Groups</i>	<i>#Interviewed</i>
Skill Development Coordinators	6
Employers	12
Instructors	11
Union Representatives	5
Observation of class	5
Participant Focus Groups	7
Participant Telephone Interview	2
Partners	11
Site Visits	9

Confidentiality and Security of Information

Information gathered during this evaluation may contain personal information as defined by *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Acts*. Those interviewed were told why information was gathered and how information would be used. Interviews were audio taped with the agreement that the audio tape was for the purpose of the write-up and would be destroyed following the interview. It is important that all participants and all audiences understand that information can be used only for the purpose for which it is gathered. We will hold all confidential data for six months following the completion of the evaluation, at which time it will be destroyed.

FINDINGS: EMPLOYERS

The following findings sections report the evidence as collected during data collection in summary form and are presented without discussion. This section reports the evidence by category and may be repetitive. However, results are reported in this manner to demonstrate the support provided by each group of individuals interviewed.

Interviews were held with 12 employers within Nova Scotia representing various organization and sectors including food processing, government, health care, and tourism.

Involvement

Employers are very supportive of the Workplace Education Initiative and see it as *"the way of the future."* Many employers became involved with the Initiative after recognizing a gap between the skills required for work and the skills possessed by employees. Employers saw Workplace Education as a means to keep ahead of changing requirements and also as a means to train within, thus retaining employees with valuable experience. One employer noted, *"there are opportunities within this company, employees just need to train to be able to pursue them."* Employers also indicated that workers within Nova Scotia, in general, have a low level of education. Improving on the essential skills, such as reading and writing are important to engage in further education. It was noted that after being introduced to education in a positive, relaxed setting, enthusiasm for learning increased. Employers stressed the benefits that individuals, as well as the organization, receive when an educational environment is created. Many employers believed the creation of this environment allows them to begin with basic skills upgrading and then *"move on from there."* Employers also mentioned that Workplace Education enables them to compete in the labor market. For example, one employer noted, *"At the board of directors' meetings we now talk about the future of the company instead of reviewing the past. We are going to be offering a program, through Workplace Education, focusing on customer relations as positive interactions allows us to ensure a customer for our product."*

"I now expect it to be ongoing, be innovative, and produce results."

Expectations

Employers were asked about their expectations of Workplace Education. Employers indicated they initially expected programs to be flexible, collaborative between the company, participants, and the union, and expected the Initiative to provide a knowledgeable instructor. They also expected programs to be incorporated into the workday, to be located onsite, and to involve a needs assessment. Employers also believed participating in a program would encourage further education, and build on the knowledge of their workforce. Many of these expectations are a direct focus of Workplace Education and were easily met. Employers stated that after participating in several programs, expectations increased. As one employer noted, *"I now expect it to be ongoing, be innovative, and produce results."* While another stated, *"I expect it to provide an environment that maintains and allows employees to grow."*

"I expect it to provide an environment that maintains and allows employees to grow."

Costs vs. Benefits

When asked about the costs of Workplace Education, each employer indicated that because of the benefits received from the Initiative the costs seemed minimal. As each program is tailored to meet the needs of the employees, the benefits occur almost immediately. Morale increases, employees work more effectively, and absenteeism decreases. Employers did note that some benefits are hard to measure, such as an individual increasing confidence in their abilities.

"It levels the playing field between employees."

Employers were encouraged by the fact the program ensures that each employee has equal opportunity for advancement, as it *"levels the playing field between employees."* Employers also praised Workplace Education for the approach taken; combining work experience with education was believed to be very effective.

Although the financial support from the Department of Education was important, employers were willing to carry as much of the cost as possible.

Recruitment into Workplace Education Programs

Employers indicated that recruitment is carried out through various mechanisms, such as encouragement by supervisors, posting information on upcoming programs in high traffic areas, contacting individuals who have previously participated, holding information sessions, and involving union representatives to spread the word. In many cases, once a program has been completed recruitment occurs without effort. For example, employers noted that employees have identified a need themselves, such as improving communication skills. Employers also noted that younger employees tend to be more open to training and are more eager to participate than older workers. Employers did indicate that even in settings that require a higher level of education, such as health care, employees were initially reluctant to engage in the program. However, after participating they were able to see changes in their work and expressed a desire to continue with the Initiative.

Outcomes

Employers were asked if changes have occurred after employees participated in the program. All employers indicated the organization experienced:

- increased production
- increased involvement within the company
- increased confidence of staff
- increased morale within staff

Employers also noted employees demonstrated:

- increased or broader understanding of one another's work and the workplace
- increased pride in work
- improved interactions with clientele
- a new desire to take on challenges and responsibility
- reduced absenteeism
- decreased apprehension to change
- the learning that had taken place in the classroom

"A change like this is good for everyone and Nova Scotia."

Other changes included the improvement of home lives. For example, one employer commented, *"People have mentioned helping their children with their homework and reading to them more."* This employer felt, *"A change like this is good for everyone and Nova Scotia."* Employers also noted that employees are pleased to be noticed by management when they are involved with Workplace Education as employees are proud of what they are doing. Some employers also noted that co-workers encourage one another to participate and work together during a program.

Challenges

Overall, employers were impressed with the success of Workplace Education. Many were surprised by the smooth process of implementation and felt more employers should be informed about the Initiative. They indicated experiencing few challenges during the initial stages. However, one common challenge experienced was selecting a time to hold a program that was suitable for all individuals who were interested, as many employees worked opposite shifts.

Project Team

Employers were pleased with the role of the Project Team. Because this team involves representatives from all interested parties, issues were dealt with in a manner that satisfied all. The Team provided feedback to the Skill Development Coordinator, provided support, recruited employees, and hired the instructor. Employers believed that hiring the 'right' instructor was crucial to the success of a program.

Employers believed that hiring the 'right' instructor was crucial to the success of a program.

Appropriateness of the Model

Employers indicated they would recommend Workplace Education to other employers and spoke highly of the model. Adult education principles guide program delivery, and as a result, employers indicated that learners are engaged and are comfortable. As programs are so customized for each workplace, employers indicated that additional participation in the Initiative was guaranteed. Further participation with Workplace Education was also supported by the notion that developing essential skills is imperative for individuals to be successful. Once individuals acquire these skills, they have them for life.

Suggestions

Employers believe promotion needs to increase, as more companies could benefit if they were aware of Workplace Education. Employers also suggested increasing communication from the Department of Education on the benefits of the Initiative. They believe that outlining the benefits experienced by organizations would dispel any concerns management may have about becoming involved. Employers also indicated that the preparation time provided to instructors prior to a program should increase. As each program is unique, the time required to prepare should be made a priority.

FINDINGS: PARTICIPANTS

Discussion groups were held with participants of Workplace Education. In total, seven discussion groups and two telephone interviews were held. In total, approximately 30 individuals participated across the province.

Awareness

Participants described how they became aware of the Initiative. Individuals indicated they found out about the program through their union representative, posters placed at their work site, co-workers, and management.

...they wanted to improve their literacy skills in order to become more involved with their children's education and to be able to assist them with their schoolwork.

Motivation

Participants were asked what motivated them to become involved. Many indicated they participated in Workplace Education to improve their life circumstance. For example, participants noted a desire for career advancement and sense of fulfillment with their work. Many participants recognized increased education could lead to job promotion and greater income. Participants also indicated they wanted to improve their literacy skills in order to become more involved with their children's education and to be able to assist them with their schoolwork.

Participants believed becoming involved with this Initiative was an effective way to plan for the future. As one participant indicated, *"There is a life after this company that you have to think about."*

Participants also stated that they got involved with Workplace Education to improve their educational qualification. For example, participants indicated that without a grade 12 certification, many doors are closed, limiting the occupations in which they could work. Obtaining a grade 12 certification was a goal that many participants wanted to achieve and believed Workplace Education could improve their essential skills enough to reach this objective. Others indicated they simply had a desire to learn more because, *"You can never learn too much."*

For example, participants stated that improving their work skills allowed for greater efficiency and productivity, both contributing to greater job satisfaction.

Participants also indicated they got involved in the Initiative to improve their work skills and ability to communicate and work effectively with co-workers. For example, participants stated that improving their work skills allowed for greater efficiency and productivity, both contributing to greater job satisfaction. Participants also indicated it was important to understand how another's work is influenced by their own. Participants pointed out that within some fields, teamwork is a large component of the work required. Without clear communication and understanding between co-workers, work can be hindered. Participants believed the relationship shared between co-workers also contributes greatly to the morale of a workplace. When co-workers develop a positive relationship with one another, everyone benefits. During classroom observations, the exchange between co-workers was noted as being very positive.

Experience/ Satisfaction

Participants were very positive about their experience stating that it exceeded expectations. Programs were highly enjoyed by participants and have been recommended to others.

Participants also commented on the positive classroom approach. They indicated that programs are very participatory, engaging, and tailored for adult learners. Many participants noted that, *"Because the program is tailored for adults it makes a huge difference. Basically, you don't feel stupid when you are there."* During classroom observation, the appropriateness of the approach was recognized as contributing to the enjoyment of the programs by participants and to the success of Workplace Education. Although participants indicated that they enjoyed taking part in a program, they did note that participation requires commitment.

All participants expressed great satisfaction with the Initiative and commented on the appropriateness and ability of the instructor. All participants spoke highly of their instructors and believed that it was because of the instructor the program was such a success. This point will be pursued in the discussion section of the report.

"When your confidence increases it overlaps into everything you do at work, at home, and in the community."

Outcomes

Participants identified the changes they have experienced as a result of participating in Workplace Education. Data collected indicated that changes occurred in several areas such as personal growth, increased participation in the home, greater understanding and appreciation of education, and improved work skills.

Participants were pleased with the increase in confidence they experienced after participating in a program. One participant commented, *"When your confidence increases it overlaps into everything you do at work, at home, and in the community."* Participants also indicated learning about themselves, such as coming to the realization, *"I am still able to study and pass tests."* Participants stated that their level of independence also increased. They indicated taking on tasks that typically had been another's responsibility. As a result of participation, participants also stated they have begun to think long term. For example, after participating in this program, they saw it as a means to *"keep up"* with recent graduates and ensure their skills were employable ones.

... they saw it as a means to "keep up" with recent graduates and ensure their skills were employable ones.

Increased participation in the home was also a change participants noted. For example, participants also stated they have become more involved with their children's education by assisting their children with homework and attending parent/teacher meetings. Participants also indicated that because they had improved upon skills such as communication, they were able to interact more effectively with their spouses and children. One participant commented, *"I couldn't believe that this program helped me get along better with my wife."*

A frequent statement participants made referred to their new perspective on education. Individuals who have left school at an early age typically had negative experiences with education. Participation in this program demonstrates education is beneficial and something to be valued. Participants indicated they developed anew appreciation of education and became *"interested in learning"* and wanted to further their education. Participants also learned 'how to learn' through the Initiative, which greatly assisted them in other areas. Participants believed their new appreciation for education was something that would be passed on to their children.

Participants also appreciated the setting in which classes were held. They noted that it was unlike past educational experiences. They believed because it was voluntary, the environment of the classroom was relaxed, and it was held at a familiar location, learning was facilitated.

Participants also indicated experiencing changes at their workplace. Many employees believed they developed a greater understanding of their work as well as their position within a particular organization, both of which assisted in improving performance. Participants were also pleased with their increased ability to work with the clientele within an organization. One participant commented that she now takes a greater interest in the clientele she works with and in doing so, provides better service. Participants noted their increased ability to communicate with co-workers and because they were able to learn about another's perspective, developed a greater understanding and appreciation for their work.

Above all, participants expressed a desire to continue with Workplace Education.

Suggestions

Above all, participants expressed a desire to continue with Workplace Education. They felt that many more lives could be improved through the Initiative and it should continue. However, some suggestions were put forth. For example, participants suggested extending the amount of time for programs, increasing the funding, and broadening the programs currently offered. Some participants also suggested designating a particular location within small communities to be used as the Workplace Education site, as holding class in some organizations can be distracting. Participants stressed the importance of selecting the right instructor for a group. They suggested ensuring that all Project Teams are aware of the impact an instructor has, so as to guarantee that the right instructor is hired. Participants also indicated promotion about Workplace Education should increase. They believed that many individuals are still unaware of the Initiative and what it can offer them. Many participants also expressed a desire to increase support from management and believed this would occur if the benefits of participation were documented.

FINDINGS: UNION REPRESENTATIVES

Interviews were held with five union representatives from sites currently participating in Workplace Education. Throughout this section, union representatives will also be referred to as representatives.

Representatives indicated that working together on a Project Team ensures everyone has the opportunity to share their concerns.

Involvement

Union representatives were asked to explain how involved their union is with Workplace Education. All representatives indicated that they have been involved with the Initiative for several years and are very satisfied. Representatives noted their unions became involved with Workplace Education after recognizing a need for members to upgrade skills. Many unions felt focusing on education was an effective method to address this need. Representatives reported they were very involved with Workplace Education and indicated they provide information about the Initiative and future programs to union members through meetings, conversations, and in newsletters. Unions have also supplied the textbooks required for a program and arranged transportation to test taking sites.

Approach

Representatives were asked to describe their satisfaction with the partnership approach taken with the Initiative. They indicated that this approach was crucial to the success of any program and believed this is the only way to incorporate all perspectives equally. Representatives indicated that working together on a Project Team ensures everyone has the opportunity to share their concerns.

Benefits

Representatives were also asked to identify the benefits of participating in a Workplace Education program. A number of benefits were identified including:

- the development and utilization of new skills
- increased communication within unions, between co-workers as well as with management, which has also reduced conflicts

Union representatives also indicated Workplace Education is a source of motivation for individuals to increase their education and expand upon their skill sets.

Union representatives also indicated Workplace Education is a source of motivation for individuals to increase their education and expand upon their skill sets. One union representative mentioned that individuals involved in a program have indicated feeling proud of their accomplishments, gaining a sense of fulfillment and purpose, and increasing their overall confidence. Union representatives also noted that individuals, who were once embarrassed of their literacy levels, have more confidence after participating in a program.

A union representative commented, "After participating in a program an awareness that education is needed develops, as well as a recognition that education provides them with a tool to further their career and achieve personal fulfillment." Representatives also noted that because co-workers attend programs together, relationships improve which has a direct benefit on the workday by improving morale.

Improved relationships were apparent to one union representative who indicated that, "Education really makes things flow easier and the teamwork that develops really helps with day to day tasks." Union representatives also praised Workplace Education for its focus on preparing individuals for change in the workplace. As technology is incorporated into many work settings, workers need to adapt and respond. Representatives were also pleased with the comfort individuals experience and ease at which they are able to relate to the material.

When asked about disadvantages related to participating in a program, very few were identified aside from challenges in scheduling programs at appropriate times and obtaining support from managers.

Support

Union representatives were asked how unions could support and contribute to Workplace Education. Representatives indicated that support comes in many forms, including:

- keeping members informed about upcoming programs
- providing support for those who take part by encouraging their efforts
- supplying text books and other material required for programs
- providing transportation to testing locations
- supplying catering for closing ceremonies held at the end of a program

Representatives also indicated that unions support the Initiative by providing a representative to participate on the Project Team. Representatives believed it is the duty of the Project Team to select an appropriate instructor. Hiring the "right instructor" is very important to the success of a program. When asked how unions may contribute to Workplace Education, representatives indicated that they bring concerns and suggestions of their union members to Skill Development Coordinators.

Impact

Representatives were asked to describe the benefits Workplace Education has provided participants, union memberships, sectors, and to the economy in Nova Scotia.

Representatives believed there are many benefits to individuals taking part in a program. Although it was noted that not all benefits are immediately apparent, some benefits included increased confidence and overall ability to perform on the job. Representatives believed demonstrating a greater ability often leads to promotion and higher income. Representatives indicated the program provides a counter argument to a notion some individuals carry - the idea they are unable to participate in an educational setting. This program demonstrates to individuals they do in fact have the ability to learn and they develop a sense of value in education. Union representatives also indicated that after participating in a program, information is shared between co-workers and with those individuals who did not participate in a program. In this manner, material covered in a program is passed along and increases interest in Workplace Education. After participating in a program, individuals often realize they would not have access to this type of learning elsewhere and appreciate the opportunity.

Union representatives also praised Workplace Education for its focus on preparing individuals for change in the workplace.

Hiring the "right instructor" is very important to the success of a program.

When asked to identify the benefits to union membership, representatives reported experiencing an increase in attendance to meetings and participation on committees. Other representatives reported increased communication and understanding of key documentation, such as the collective agreement. Relationships between union members have also improved, as participating in Workplace Education demonstrates to union members that their union is concerned about its members. One union representative explained how procedures are carried out differently as a result of the Initiative. For example, within a particular union, there is a policy that vehicles are not allowed to idle for an extended period of time. If an individual exceeded this amount of time, he/she was reprimanded. Now, as a result of the Initiative, individuals are educated as to why this policy is in place and since this approach, the problem has dissipated.

After participating in a program, individuals often realize they would not have access to this type of learning elsewhere and appreciate the opportunity.

Representatives indicated that benefits to the sector and economy all stem from the individual. When individuals improve their ability to do their job, have a greater understanding of their work, and find greater fulfillment in their work, absenteeism decreases, and productivity and profits increase.

When organizations are profitable, there is a draw for other organizations to an area and decreases the chance organizations will down size or shut down completely. Representatives believe a skilled workforce is key to attracting new business and ensuring individuals are not at risk of being unemployed.

Representatives believe a skilled workforce is key to attracting new business and ensuring individuals are not at risk of being unemployed.

Suggestions

Each union representative gave suggestions for the future of Workplace Education. The majority expressed a desire to see an increase in funding and communication about the Initiative. The suggestion was also put forth that unions make a greater financial contribution to increase the number of programs offered. Overall, representatives were very satisfied with the Initiative and were very supportive of its efforts.

FINDINGS: INSTRUCTORS

Interviews were held with 11 active instructors within Nova Scotia. Data collection indicated that instructors teach, on average, two or three courses every year. Although the majority of instructors have five years experience, several instructors have over ten years experience in the area.

Success

Instructors were asked what made a Workplace Education program successful. Instructors strongly believed the environment of the classroom is a major determinant for success. Participants should feel comfortable, safe, and relaxed, the instructor should be approachable, and the location of the classroom should be held on the work site or at an easily accessible location. Instructors also believed that ensuring the curriculum is engaging is very important for success.

Instructors indicated that when participants are involved with the Initiative because of their own desire to learn, success is much higher.

Instructors also identified that the full participation of all parties with a vested interest contributed to success. For example, co-operation from employers, such as allowing employees the time to attend a program, providing a facility in which to hold programs, and maintaining a positive attitude about the Initiative, all make a positive contribution.

Union participation was also highlighted as important. Unions often support a program by notifying members of upcoming programs and providing material for them. Instructors also mentioned the willingness of participants to learn plays a factor in the success of a program. Instructors indicated that when participants are involved with the Initiative because of their own desire to learn, success is much higher. As one instructor commented, "Education is not something that can be forced."

Instructors also believed that active participation of the Project Team and Skill Development Coordinator contributed to the success of a program. Instructors believed an accurate assessment and proper understanding of needs, leading to a customized and relevant program, is crucial.

Motivation

Instructors were asked to indicate why individuals take part in the program. The majority of instructors indicated that in their experience, motivation comes from:

- a desire for self-improvement
- a desire to set an example for children
- a desire to learn in order to assist children with their own school work
- a desire for job security and increased income
- a desire to participate fully within their community
- recognition of the opportunity for education not available elsewhere

Instructors also believed that active participation of the Project Team and Skill development coordinator contributed to the success of a program.

Outcomes

Instructors commented on the contribution the Initiative makes to the individual, the workplace environment, the company, co-workers, and the economy.

"When someone is in a program, they walk around with their head held high, like they know something special."

Instructors believe participants gain an improvement in their quality of life, as evidenced by an increase in self-confidence. For example, an instructor noted that, *"When someone is in a program, they walk around with their head held high, like they know something special."* Instructors stated that lives are improved because of increased access to future promotions and higher income. When an individual is aware that there is a potential for mobility within an organization, they are more satisfied and believe they have something to work towards. Instructors also noted that increased skills contribute to an individual's employability and were encouraged by the fact that participating in a program decreases an individual's chance of experiencing unemployment.

Instructors also highlighted the educational opportunity the Initiative provides. Individuals can access a learning environment that may not be otherwise available. Financial constraints, family obligations, or the location of another program are challenges employees face. Since the Initiative is offered during work hours and at or near the work site, it is accessible for many who greatly benefit from the education. Instructors were encouraged by the positive experience they are able to provide through Workplace Education. Instructors indicated that many individuals who left school at an early age typically had negative experiences with education. This Initiative allows for a new attitude about education and learning to be formed. Instructors also felt that this positive experience with education promotes further participation in training programs and also sets an example within the home that education is important. One instructor commented on a course she facilitated where a participant brought his son to class for extra help with his schoolwork. She noted they would work together on tasks and would work together at home. This instructor was struck with the opportunity that was provided, which led to a closer bond between a father and son, an increased education for both, and brought an educational environment into a home.

Instructors also believe individuals develop their ability to deal with change in the workplace, how to be assertive in a respectful manner, and how to improve their interpersonal skills, all of which contribute to an individual's ability to function in their environments. Instructors were pleased that participation in a program teaches individuals to be effective at the home and at work.

Instructors indicated that because the organization is recognized for the contribution they are making to their employees, a positive perception of the organization is created. This new perception benefits the organization and workplace by motivating workers to focus on company goals. Organizations also retain a greater number of employees, as employees will remain with an organization when they know advancement is possible. This means organizations are able to fill positions with employees who have the skill and years of experience. Instructors also noted that organizations gain more effective employees, as employees are able to think critically and act strategically, both of which lead to increased productivity. Instructors stated that workplaces often become more positive. Employees are more supportive of one another and teamwork increases, a benefit that is experienced by both the company and co-workers. Instructors noted that support for Workplace Education from employers and management is very important. It was noted that those companies who fully support the Initiative experience the greatest benefits.

This Initiative allows for a new attitude about education and learning to be formed

Co-worker relationships are enhanced through the program. In addition to providing support for one another and working effectively as a team, co-workers form friendships, and also gain a greater understanding of another's work and realize how their own work impacts others. They noted that learning about co-workers and how to communicate effectively with them often "opens their eyes" and improves morale.

They noted that learning about co-workers and how to communicate effectively with them often "opens their eyes" and improves morale.

When asked about the contribution this Initiative can make to the economy, some instructors felt that the question did not apply and did not make the connection between the Initiative and its broader influence. This finding will be further pursued within the discussion section of the report. Those instructors who recognized the benefits to the economy believed that Workplace Education has great potential to make a substantial contribution and indicated that a skilled workforce will attract more business to the province, will decrease the risk of outsourcing, and will decrease the risk of unemployment.

Organization

Overall, instructors believed that the Initiative is well organized and well supported by Project Teams and by the majority of employers they have worked with. They indicated that Workplace Education is effective because it allows all perspectives, from the union to the participant, to be included.

...a skilled workforce will attract more business to the province, will

Instructors also indicated that because Workplace Education is flexible there is a greater chance that programs will be completed. For example, if participants require class times to be rearranged or require more time to complete a program, accommodations can be made. Instructors also noted that within Workplace Education, all needs are met because each program is tailored to each organization and each individual. Instructors are able to create their own curriculum based on the needs identified. Instructors stressed the importance of creating the right curriculum for a group. Instructors indicated that because they are not just, "mouthing someone else's words", programs are very effective.

decrease the risk of outsourcing, and will decrease the risk of unemployment.

Instructors highlighted the importance of the certification program offered through Association of Workplace Educators of Nova Scotia (AWENS). Instructors believed that without this program, they would not have understood the environment in which they would be working and would have been less effective.

Instructors had limited complaints about the organization of Workplace Education. However, they indicated that there is currently no way of knowing when contracts for more teaching are becoming available. Instructors indicated that although they would prefer to instruct within Workplace Education, they are often seeking alternative income. It is therefore not surprising instructors noted that, *"This is not a money maker."* In terms of the preparation time provided to instructors, some instructors felt that the time provided was not enough and yet others felt that the amount of time was sufficient.

Satisfaction

Instructors were asked to indicate how satisfied they were with the support received from Project Teams, employers, and program resources.

"Anytime I needed something, they (the Project Team) were always there."

Overall, instructors are pleased with the support they have received from Project Teams. Instructors did note that typically, one individual assumes a leadership role within the team. However, instructors did not believe that having an individual in this role was crucial for the team to be effective. In general, instructors experienced working with teams that had a desire to see the program succeed and felt that all members of the team wanted to be a part of the process. Instructors believed the work of the Project Team was a great contribution to Workplace Education as they help to create a learning environment within the organization and motivate individuals to get involved. Project Teams have met instructors' expectations and many instructors commented that, *"Anytime I needed something, they (the Project Team) were always there."*

Instructors reported experiencing sufficient support from employers, however, it was stressed that the amount of support received from an employer does depend on the organization participating. For the most part, instructors reported positive experiences when dealing with employers. Instructors indicated many employers enjoy seeing their employees taking part in the Initiative and are always present at the closing ceremony to show their support. Instructors feel strongly that the role of the Skill Development Coordinator is crucial in obtaining support from employers.

Instructors feel strongly that the role of the Skill development coordinator is crucial in obtaining support from employers.

In terms of satisfaction with program resources, responses varied. The majority of instructors indicated great dissatisfaction with program resources. Others were not aware of what was available. When asked this question, the response given was *"What program resources?"* Many instructors research the material they require on their own. Instructors stressed the importance of forming a resource library or reading list. One instructor indicated that it is very difficult to obtain material that is suitable for lower literacy levels and is not directed at a young audience. Others pointed out the fact even when an appropriate novel is found, many local libraries do not contain the number of copies required for an entire class. Overall, program resources were a source of great discontent for instructors.

Suggestions

Although instructors believe Workplace Education is well organized, they had suggestions for the future. Instructors repeatedly stressed the fact there are no program resources available for teaching. Instructors do not have access to a resource library, as one does not exist. Therefore, instructors made the request that a resource library be created or consider creating some mechanism through which instructors could easily share information. Instructors expressed a desire for pre and post program data to measure the impact of Workplace Education in a manner that speaks loudly to decision makers. They also believed that the items included on the end of program evaluations do not reveal useful information. Instructors suggested reviewing these forms for revision.

Instructors also suggested increasing awareness of the Initiative, as many organizations that could benefit from the Program are not participating. Instructors believed that posting upcoming contracts on a web site and increasing instructor preparation time would be beneficial.

FINDINGS: AWENS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

A discussion group was held with members of the AWENS Board of Directors (the committee). AWENS is involved in the promotion and advancement of Workplace Education. AWENS worked in partnership with the Department of Education to develop a certification program for instructors working within the Initiative. This certification program prepares individuals for the environment in which they will be working. The Committee is comprised of certified instructors working in various regions around Nova Scotia.

Does a Need Exist?

The committee was asked if there was a need for Workplace Education within Nova Scotia. The committee felt very strongly that there is a definite need within the province. They believed this need is evidenced by changing demands placed on today's employees. Many organizations are incorporating technology into the workplace and employees are required to follow demanding standards and guidelines. Members of the committee also highlighted the fact the many individuals working in the same organization for many years have not received upgrading or training. The committee indicated that it has been their experience that these individuals are at a great risk of unemployment if the organization in which they are working down sizes or shuts down and these employees have little mobility. They stated that this Initiative targets those who require further education and training to ensure they are qualified to work in a variety of settings.

Ability

Members of the committee were also asked to indicate how well they believed Workplace Education is responding to the need. The committee highlighted the flexibility within the initiative that allows instructors to tailor each program to meet the needs of each individual and organization. However, it was noted that, at times, Workplace Education is not able to address all needs. For example, if an individual has been absent from an educational setting for several decades, participation in one program may not be enough to completely develop essential skills. However, participation does open the door to further opportunities. For example, it was noted that many individuals experience greater confidence in their abilities and improve their skills in a manner that decreases their chances of being unemployed. The committee also indicated that a positive experience with education leads to a greater understanding of the role education plays and develops a greater appreciation for learning. It has been the experience of members of the committee that individuals will often increase their participation in their children's education and will begin to teach the value of education after participating in a program. This has important implication for the future and will be pursued in the discussion section of the report. The committee indicated Workplace Education provides individuals and organizations with a tool to use everyday.

Members of the committee also highlighted the fact the many individuals working in the same organization for many years have not received upgrading or training.

The committee highlighted the flexibility within the Initiative that allows instructors to tailor each program to meet the needs of each individual and organization.

Suggestions

When asked for suggestions for the future of the Initiative, committee members indicated that more resources should be made available for instructors, as it is often a considerable challenge to find appropriate teaching materials. A suggestion was also made to include some consistency between programs so instructors would be aware of what other instructors are teaching. Although consistency was suggested, the committee also stressed the importance of maintaining the flexibility of the Initiative.

FINDINGS: NOVA SCOTIA PARTNERS

A discussion group was held with 11 members of the Nova Scotia Partners for Workplace Education representing various groups interested in the Initiative. This included various union and labor representatives, instructors, participants, representatives of business, and Department of Education representatives.

Model

Members of the Partners committee (the committee) were asked to explain how they understood the model of Workplace Education. The committee indicated that it is a tripartite model where by every interested party has equal input into how a program will run within an organization. Programs are responsive to the assessment and the flexibility within the model allows each program to be tailored to each individual and organization. The model focuses on building the capacity of the whole individual by enhancing essential skills required for further training. The committee noted that because of these characteristics, this model is innovative. Committee members believed communication about Workplace Education requires attention. Initially, communication was required to inform organizations about the Initiative. Now that it is established, less communication is carried out even though some organizations are still unaware of the opportunities. The committee also indicated the model needs to be linked back to the theory of Workplace Education. This last point will be pursued within the discussion section of the report.

The model focuses on building the capacity of the whole individual by enhancing essential skills required for further training.

Ability

Committee members were positive about the model's ability to fulfill the mandate of Workplace Education. They indicated the Initiative meets the needs of both the individual and the organization, a task not easily completed. Within many sectors there is a desire to learn from peers and the current model incorporates this type of approach. The committee believed that an appreciation for essential skills is lacking within organizations and the Initiative has the potential to build such an appreciation. Overall, the committee believed the approach used by Workplace Education is appropriate.

Reach

The committee was asked if the model should be expanded. They indicated that more partnerships need to be formed and communication about Workplace Education needs to increase. However, it was mentioned the growth of the Initiative must be inline with resources, such as the number of instructors available. There was some concern that many instructors are no longer involved with Workplace Education as it is difficult for them to sustain themselves. Members of the committee also expressed concern that isolated communities are not being reached and an effort should be made to include them.

... more partnerships need to be formed and communication about Workplace Education needs to increase.

Contributions

When asked about the contribution Workplace Education can make, several responses were given. Members of the committee believed the increase in confidence that occurs after participating in a program has a great impact on an individual's life at work. Individuals increase their skills, which increases their employability and decreases their chances of experiencing unemployment. The committee also indicated that the environments in which individuals work are influenced. Individuals gain a new appreciation and understanding of another's position, which increases communication, and contributes to an improved workplace.

Individuals gain a new appreciation and understanding of another's position, which increases communication, and contributes to an improved workplace.

Members also believed that Workplace Education, above all, develops citizenship within its participants. Individuals who take part in the Initiative typically become more involved within their homes, their communities, and with local politics. Increased participation within the community has many positive benefits for both the individual and the community as a whole. Both outcomes have a direct impact on the economy.

Questionnaire

Partners also completed a short questionnaire. Ten responses were received. The questionnaire asked members of the committee to describe their role on the committee, indicate their level of satisfaction with various aspects of the Initiative, indicate strengths and limitations of Workplace Education, and provide suggestions for the future. Results from the questionnaire follow.

Role

Individuals on the committee saw their role as representing various organizations, being an ambassador for the Initiative, increasing partnerships with others, and generally promoting Workplace Education.

Satisfaction

The majority of the committee indicated they were satisfied to very satisfied with the theory or intent of the Initiative; one individual was somewhat satisfied. The majority of committee members also indicated a greater sense of satisfaction with the implementation of Workplace Education.

The Committee was asked to indicate their satisfaction with the range of sectors taking part in Workplace Education as well as on the Partner Committee. Most committee members indicated satisfaction with the representation in both areas.

When asked to indicate their satisfaction with the range of sectors taking part in Workplace Education, as well as on the Partners Committee, most committee members indicated satisfaction with the representation in both areas. Members of the committee also indicated they were satisfied with the contribution the committee was making to the Initiative.

When asked about program resources, the majority of the group was satisfied. However, some members of the committee were very unsatisfied. After rating satisfaction, the committee was also asked to comment on program resources. Four members of the committee did not answer this question. Those who did indicated that total resources are not communicated and as a result, employers, instructors, and union representatives are unsure as to what is available. Others indicated that the resources allocated to the Initiative are sufficient.

Strengths of Workplace Education were identified as the model employed, the results produced, and dedication of staff involved.

The committee was asked about the communication surrounding Workplace Education. Results to this item varied. Half of the group were somewhat satisfied, several were unsatisfied, and some were very satisfied.

Strengths

Strengths of Workplace Education were identified as the model employed, the results produced, and dedication of staff involved.

The committee indicated that the model allows for the flexibility required to tailor each program to specific individuals and organizations. They also stated that the model encourages work with local partners and incorporates the partnership approach, both of which contribute to the success of Workplace Education. The committee also indicated that the model ensures the delivery of appropriate programs.

The results produced by Workplace Education were also identified as a strength. Members of the committee indicated that the Initiative fosters growth within organizations and individuals, and increases confidence and ability to communicate, produces safer work environments, and higher job satisfaction.

The committee also believed the dedication of the Skill Development Coordinators, instructors, and program administration involved with Workplace Education is a great strength. Members indicated they are genuinely concerned about advancing the education of workers in Nova Scotia.

Limitations

The committee identified several weaknesses within Workplace Education. For example, the lack of documentation regarding the impact of the Initiative is troublesome. The committee believed that because such documentation is not available, it is very difficult to encourage organizations to become involved. The lack of communication about the Initiative was also identified as a limitation as many organizations are unaware of the opportunities.

The committee also indicated that the budget allocated for the Initiative limits its reach, as does the shortage of instructors, Skill Development Coordinators, and program administration. Workplace Education is also limited by the lack of clear definition of eligible workplaces. Many expressed concern that there is no understanding or communication about whom the Initiative is attempting to reach. Is funding to be allocated to smaller businesses or larger corporations who may be able to afford programs without assistance from the Department of Education? This finding will be pursued further in the discussion section of the report.

Improvements

When asked for suggestions for the future of Workplace Education, the committee was certain that it could be improved upon. For example, several members indicated that the value and impact of Workplace Education needs to be documented. Some members have made note of this type of information for their own use, such as rates of employment and promotion. Although measuring impact in a manner that speaks to decision makers was unclear, members believed that consideration should be given to obtaining this type of information. Members believed that the first step in such documentation may be to improve the current evaluation forms. They stated that the current forms do not produce useful information. Members indicated the needs of instructors should be addressed, as instructors are such an important aspect of the Initiative. The committee also noted areas of potential growth should be explored. For example, many rural communities that could benefit from the Initiative are not participating.

FINDINGS: SKILL DEVELOPMENT COORDINATORS

Interviews were held with all Skill Development Coordinators (coordinators) representing six different regions within Nova Scotia.

Initial Steps

Skill Development Coordinators described the process of setting up a Workplace Education program. All Skill Development Coordinators appear to follow a similar format when establishing a program within an organization. Both Skill Development Coordinators and organizations can initiate contact to explore the viability of Workplace Education programs. Once contact has been made, the management within the organization is briefly informed about the Initiative and if they are still interested then a meeting is scheduled.

At the initial meeting, Skill Development Coordinators stress the importance of the partnership approach and outline the programs available through Workplace Education. Coordinators also outline the responsibilities of management, such as matching the funding provided by the Department of Education and ensuring that employees are able to attend classes. To continue, a Project Team is formed and an organizational needs assessment is conducted to determine if the need of the organization fits with the mandate of Workplace Education. The results are included with the application for funding and are sent to the review committee within the Department of Education for approval.

Part of the responsibility of the Skill Development Coordinator is to ensure the application is in good standing and contains the components required for approval. Although applications have been returned occasionally, the majority are approved. Once funding is issued, an instructor is hired and the program begins. The Skill Development Coordinator sits on the Project Team to participate and address concerns as they arise. Upon completion of a program, a closing ceremony is held with participants, families, employers, the instructor, and the Skill Development Coordinator.

They believed participating in other educational settings is limited because of timing, location, and financial cost.

Enabling Employees

Skill Development Coordinators were also asked how the Initiative contributes to employees as well as employers. They believed that the program contributes to overall individual growth. For example, it increases individual's self-esteem, confidence in their abilities to do their job, and if the communication program is taken, their ability to communicate with others. Coordinators noted employees who demonstrate these abilities increase their opportunity for promotion and higher income. Coordinators believe since programs are offered at the work site, during work time, many employees who participate in this program would not be able to otherwise. They believed participating in other educational settings is limited because of timing, location, and financial cost.

Coordinators also mentioned, in general, there can be a tendency to overlook someone once they are employed. They believed this is unfortunate as individuals who have worked in an organization for a long time with no upgrading, lack the skills required of today's employees. Coordinators indicated these individuals are at risk of unemployment if their current employer downsizes or shuts down. Coordinators were encouraged as Workplace Education recognizes these individuals and prepares them for the future. Coordinators also noted that individuals in a program prove to themselves they are able to reach goals, which once seemed unattainable.

Improved Workplace

Skill Development Coordinators found Workplace Education contributes to improved workplaces as evidenced by improved morale, improved employer/employee relations, decreased conflict in the work site, and improved employee attitude regarding change. Employers benefited by gaining effective, efficient employees who are now skilled as well as experienced. Employers also see the potential in employees as many "come out of their shell" during a program. Coordinators indicated employers gain loyal employees as they recognize and appreciate the effort of employers through Workplace Education.

Coordinators also noted that individuals in a program prove to them selves they are able to reach goals, which once seemed unattainable.

Coordinators also indicated that employers experience financial benefits. When employees are confident in their work and understand what is required of them, productivity increases. Coordinators also noted that when an employee is satisfied within their workplace, absenteeism decreases.

Shifts in Trends

Coordinators were asked to indicate how the Initiative has changed over the last number of years. They identified several changes. The types of programs requested by organizations has changed.

The types of programs requested by organizations has changed

Initially, programs most requested focused on upgrading basic skills, such as reading and writing. Currently, programs in greatest demand concentrate on report writing, and increasing or developing computer and communication skills. Coordinators believed that this shift is a reflection of the demands placed on workers within the province, as many companies are moving toward integrating computer systems and maintaining detailed documentation. Skill Development Coordinators also noted the reach of Workplace Education has expanded to include small business owners, a target group new to the Initiative. In the near future, instructors will be trained to complete the needs assessment, as this task could be completed by instructors, and would provide more time for Coordinators to complete other tasks. Another change identified was the development of the Workforce Education program. This program is similar to Workplace Education but targets unemployed individuals. Those who are unemployed may require upgrading to become employable and do not qualify to participate in Workplace Education, offered through a work site. Although Workforce Education plays an important role, the current evaluation focused only on the Workplace Education Initiative.

All Coordinators stressed the Initiative's uniqueness.

Fit with other Programs

Skill Development Coordinators indicated how Workplace Education differs from other programs with a similar mandate. All Coordinators stressed the Initiative's uniqueness. Each program is tailored to the needs of the employees and incorporates workplace relevant material. Incorporating familiar material makes Workplace Education programs very relevant to each workplace and reinforces concepts taught. Coordinators noted that because there is such flexibility within the Initiative, many different organizations are able to participate. Skill Development Coordinators believed that programs are very accessible and comfortable for individuals as they take place at the work site.

Coordinators reported the target group Workplace Education reaches sets it apart from other programs. As previously mentioned, the Initiative reaches those who would have no or limited access to traditional educational settings for various reasons. Unlike other programs, Workplace Education does not offer certification upon completion of a program. However, it does provide an avenue for employees to seek further upgrading or certification.

As previously mentioned, the Initiative reaches those who would have no or limited access to traditional educational settings for various reasons.

Appropriateness of the Model

Coordinators were asked if the current model for Workplace Education is successful. Coordinators indicated that the model is working effectively because of the:

- flexibility
- approach
- ability to create a learning environment
- focus on participant

Coordinators noted the flexibility within the model contributes to the success of the Initiative as it allows each program to be tailored to participants' needs as well as to the needs of an organization. Although certain procedures must be followed, there is room for modification.

Coordinators also believed that success is due in part to the partnerships. Incorporating the perspectives of management, participants, instructors, and the Skill Development Coordinator allows agreements to be reached that satisfy all areas. The partnership approach ensures that the Project Teams are involved and encourage participation in a program. Coordinators also commented that when all members of the partnership are involved, the creation of a learning environment is much more likely to occur.

When a learning environment is created, individuals look to education to solve workplace problems.

When a learning environment is created, individuals look to education to solve workplace problems. They also devise solutions to situations as they appear. This environment also fosters interest in further training and other learning opportunities. This finding will be pursued further within the discussion section of the report. Coordinators also noted that because the model is focused on the participant and incorporates adult education principles in the program delivery, the model has sustained over ten years.

The Skill Development Coordinators believe if more resources were allocated to the Initiative, the number of organizations participating would increase. Coordinators felt strongly about the positive impact Workplace Education has and expressed a desire to see the number and types of organizations increase.

Success

As each Workplace Education program is unique, Coordinators were asked to indicate what characterized a successful program. Coordinators noted something is learned after each program and the outcomes are always unknown. As one Coordinator indicated, "All you can do is provide the first step and then you don't know the rest."

"All you can do is provide the first step and then you don't know the rest."

Coordinators cited several elements they consider to reflect a successful program including overall participation, such as good attendance to class and a positive attitude toward learning. When individuals are interested in a program, they attend each class and are positive about their participation, then goals are more likely to be reached. Coordinators also consider a program successful when both participants and management reach their goals.

A program is also considered successful when interest in Workplace Education is increased. For example, after a program is completed, other employees within the organization become interested and want to take part. In addition to creating more interest, those who have just completed a program commonly express a desire to further their education.

Coordinators reported that a program is successful when the Project Team follows the model, addresses concerns brought forward, and meets regularly. However, the greatest indicator of success was identified as a positive change in an individual's life. This includes increased participation in home life or within the community, or gaining a feeling of satisfaction with their job.

Interest

Coordinators were asked if there have been inquiries for a Workplace Education program that did not produce a program. Coordinators indicated this is not uncommon. For example, after the completion a needs assessment, the requirements of the organization or of the individuals may fall outside the mandate of the Initiative. As one Skill Development Coordinator commented, "Our mandate is essential skills, the stepping stone." If an organization is unable to participate in the Initiative, the organization is given direction as to how they may meet their needs through other routes.

"Our mandate is essential skills, the stepping stone."

Coordinators also indicated that a program might not begin because of reluctance from key parties. For example, management may either lack commitment to the Project Team or offer resistance because of fear workers will unionize. Within other organizations, downsizing has occurred or new management has been hired that did not value the Initiative. Reluctance to offer a program has also occurred when employees would not participate in a needs assessment. The Coordinator working with this organization believed the unwillingness from employees was due to other issues within the organization.

Coordinators noted programs may not begin because of scheduling difficulties because of shift work. Determining a suitable time for all participants is challenging and, at times, cannot be accomplished.

Need

Coordinators were asked if different needs exist in each region and if so, does the Initiative accommodate these differences. They noted the variations found in each region are due to the nature of the industry, the population, and the main occupations within an area. Coordinators indicated Workplace Education effectively responds to each regions particular needs because of its flexibility.

Partners

Coordinators explained partnering with others enhances Workplace Education and spreads the word about programs offered. Coordinators also indicated it is important to form partnerships with other organizations to ensure they are aware of how to get involved in Workplace Education. Some partners identified were Human Resources Skills and Development Canada; Regional Development Authorities, Department of Community Services, and Chambers of Commerce.

Suggestions

When asked what changes they would like to see made to Workplace Education, Coordinators consistently reported a desire to see an increase in staff. During times of vacation, Skill Development Coordinators have to cover other areas, which potentially decreases the amount of assistance provided to organizations. Coordinators also expressed a strong aversion to the current evaluation forms. These forms were reported as yielding information that was not put to any practical use and were unnecessarily burdensome on those who have to complete them. Coordinators also expressed a desire for clear documentation of the impact of this Initiative.

DISCUSSION

This discussion is intended to interpret the issues from the findings in such a way that it highlights the value and impact of Workplace Education and also informs decisions about the future. Discussion on the findings is presented under four main headings:

- The Initiative - discussing characteristics of implementation
- Benefits - discussing the impact of the Initiative
- Debates - discussing issues that should be pursued
- Documenting the Story - discussing the need to report on accomplishments.

The Workplace Education Initiative is operating successfully within the province. The Initiative has had an impact on many individuals and organizations. There is no question that those who participate in a program enjoy their experience and benefit from it. It is also clear that Workplace Education is contributing to a learning culture in Nova Scotia.

The recommendations provided in this section are intended to promote discussion and help with decisions regarding the Initiative.

The Initiative

Several key elements were identified as distinguishing the Initiative from other programs and as contributing to success.

Needs Assessments

The individual and organizational needs assessments conducted by the Skill Development Coordinator, while very time consuming, seems to be an important determinant of success. It certainly allows the Skill Development Coordinators to become familiar with the organization and provides the opportunity for an appropriate response. The current effort to teach instructors to carry out the needs assessments will enable Skill Development Coordinators to engage in other activities, such as pursue new partnerships - another time consuming task. After this method has been employed for some time, it will be interesting to evaluate the needs assessments conducted by instructors to ensure needs assessments make the same contribution to the success of Workplace Education as those conducted by Skill Development Coordinators. *It is therefore recommended that:*

Appropriate needs assessments continue to be conducted and in form programming decisions.

Approach

The approach of Workplace Education is appropriate. The approach incorporates the perspectives of all parties involved and allows each party to have equal input into a program through their participation on the Project Team. Having the opportunity to give input was appreciated by all those interviewed. This type of partnership approach also ensures that all levels within an organization are participating. This participation assists in the creation of a learning environment.

<p>Recommendation #1 <i>Appropriate needs assessments continue to be conducted and inform programming decisions.</i></p>
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The approach also requires that participation in a program is voluntary. When individuals participate in a program on their own accord, their experience will be much more positive and enjoyable. During data collection, it was noted that because of this approach, those who take part are self-motivated and are therefore more likely to reach their goals. Many participants noted that because their experience was so positive, they were motivated to continue with additional programs. Participants were also encouraged to further their education because they felt more confident in their abilities. Material from the workplace is incorporated into the program and essentially demonstrates to participants what they already know. This approach makes participants feel more comfortable and recognize the abilities they already possess. *It is therefore recommended that:*

The Initiative continue with all aspects of the approach presently employed.

Instructor role

Instructors play a crucial part to the success of a program. Many participants contributed their success within a program to their instructor and believed goals would not have been reached without the approach of the instructor. The role of the instructor seems to be more important in this setting than in other educational settings. While the importance of the instructor is recognized informally, it is not recognized in structure. For example, there are limited resources available to instructors. As indicated during interviews, instructors spend a great deal of time researching material that is appropriate for their group. Many instructors expressed frustration with the lack of resources available and believe a resource library should be made available. Similarly, because of the contract nature of their employment and uncertainty of income, many instructors have sought employment elsewhere. AWENS is working to improve the work life of instructors but need the support of the Department of Education to recognize instructors' contribution to the Initiative. It is therefore recommended that:

Recommendation #2
The Initiative continue with all aspects of the approach presently employed.

The concerns of instructors be documented and considered by the Department of Education.

Reach

The population targeted by Workplace Education is one that has limited access to other educational opportunities. Programs may not be available in some areas and if they are, programs are too costly for many. Evening participation is difficult for single parents and for many, participating in educational programs is not an established practice. Many individuals who take part in a Workplace Education program have very little education. The literacy skills they possess are much lower than other skills they have developed, such as the ability to accurately measure something using just the eye. Lacking basic essential skills puts these individuals at a great risk of being unable to work if their current employer no longer requires their services. However, becoming involved with this Initiative enhances their skills, which increases their overall employability and prepares individuals for the future.

Recommendation #3
The concerns of instructors be documented and considered by the Department of Education.

Workplace Education also caters to multiple audiences. Individuals are able to participate in this program regardless of educational level, occupation, or ability. Programs are tailored to each individual depending on their need. The reach of Workplace Education sets it apart from other programs and provides one of the only bridges to education that is feasible. It is therefore recommended that:

Workplace Education should continue with the programs that reach a population in need and a population which benefits from the intervention.

Although the reach of Workplace Education is positive, it is limited by several factors. Skill Development Coordinators are not informed as to which organizations or which sectors they should be targeting. When the Initiative first began, many organizations were approached to determine their interest. Since the Initiative has been in existence for several years, contracts are now largely relationship based. There is little capacity to expand and funding can be on a first come, first serve basis. Organizations that could participate are not being approached because funding is consumed by organizations that have participated in the past. This approach still reaches a number of workers but may explain why many interviewed believe organizations are still unaware of the Initiative. It is therefore recommended that:

Recommendation #4
Workplace Education should continue with the programs that reach a population in need and a population which benefits from the intervention.

A systematic approach to recruiting organizations into the Initiative be developed.

Uniqueness

Perhaps the truly unique quality of Workplace Education is the high impact and the sustainability of the impact. With a small amount of funding from the Department of Education lives are changed, organizations create a learning environment, and a contribution is made to the economy. Funds are leveraged from the organization and other community organizations in the form of in-kind support, which often builds the sense of community amongst employees and in the organization.

Recommendation #5
A systematic approach to recruiting organizations into the Initiative be developed.

Workplace Education also targets essential skill development. Improving on individuals' essential skills has a multiplier effect. Individuals increase their confidence to the point where they participate fully in their communities, workplace, and homes, improving their overall quality of life.

Promotion

Although, the Workplace Education Initiative falls under the Department of Education and the Province's corporate strategic framework, Skills Nova Scotia, there is no mention of the program in the Skills Nova Scotia Action Plan 2004-2005.

In the 2004-2005 Action Plan, the item closest to articulating support for the Initiative is the objective "Provide career- and employment-related services to Nova Scotians to help them develop their skills and find sustainable jobs." One highlighted activity within this objective, listed as already being underway, is promoting "a work-based training program designed to provide workplace learning opportunities and foundations for long-term employment." However, more details regarding this Employment Development Program were not available within the document or on the web site, and ascertaining its relation to or support for the Workplace Education Initiative was not possible.

The strongest support for the Initiative, in terms of stated policy or priorities, is within the Department of Education's Business Plan 2005- 2006. Listed under the goal "develop a skilled and adaptable workforce," are priorities supporting the development of the Initiative. These priorities include workplace training and certification, career development, and employer incentives supporting workplace learning.

The Workplace Education Initiative has been very successful delivering programs and services to Nova Scotians aimed at both capacity building and skills development. The identified priorities, listed in the 2005-2006 Business Plan, are all matched by the outcomes of the Initiative. Increasing the education level of Nova Scotians will also drive the provincial economy. However, one of the largest downfalls of the Initiative has been its limited focus on promotion. To date, many of the organizations aware of the Workplace Education Initiative have been made aware by Skill Development Coordinators. Unfortunately, many employees or employers do not know about the Initiative and the positive impact it can have on their lives, businesses, and the Nova Scotian economy as a whole. To reach the public audience, one suggestion would be an inter-departmental web site listing all government programs and services by category or theme. To reach the business audience, another suggestion is to have representatives of programs, like the Workplace Education Initiative, participate, present and promote their services. This work can be done with industry association, conferences, meetings and communication tools, such as industry specific newsletters and web sites.

During data collection, many individuals also stressed that promotion about Workplace Education needs to increase. However, promotion must be kept in line with human resources able to deliver programs. Without the staff in place to respond to increased demand, the high quality service associated with the Initiative will dissipate. Staff are currently working to capacity and levels need to increase before expansion is considered. *It is therefore recommended that:*

The Government of Nova Scotia, including the Department of Education, Skills Nova Scotia, and the Workplace Education Initiative actively promote its programs available to the public and businesses.

Recommendation #6
The Government of Nova Scotia, including the Department of Education, Skills Nova Scotia, and the Workplace Education Initiative actively promote its programs available to the public and businesses.

Expansion should occur only when staff and resources increase in all regions to promote Workplace Education to accommodate the demand.

Benefits

Throughout data collection, the many benefits experienced as a result of participating in this Initiative were emphasized. Benefits gained by employers, employees, unions, sectors, and the economy, could not be separated or isolated by groups. One benefit can have a ripple effect that reaches from just one family to the economy. For example, mobility was an outcome to which all groups referred. Once an individual has participated in a program, skills improve, as does the ability to perform on the job. As a result of demonstrating an increased ability to carry out work, employees gain increased access to promotion and higher income. Increased income impacts a family in many positive ways.

Recommendation #7
Expansion should occur only when staff and resources increase in all regions to promote Workplace Education to accommodate the demand.

The mobility of an employee also impacts an organization, as organizations are able to fill positions from within. Promoting an individual with experience is much more cost efficient than hiring from outside. Organizations that are able to fill positions with skilled, experienced workers increase their productivity and demonstrate the employment opportunities they provide.

Once a program has been completed, a learning environment is created. This means that solutions to problems are researched, challenges and responsibilities are taken on, and an interest in further education develops. Within this type of environment, the value of education is learned. This means that those who did not value education in the past now recognize that education is essential to being successful in one's environment. The value of education is then communicated to children within the home, as individuals are more involved with their children's education. When parents promote the value of education, it helps to reinforce the messages about education.

Unanticipated Outcomes

Although there are certain goals set out in the beginning of a program, data collection indicated that many unanticipated outcomes occur. For example, the respect shown during classes was transferred to the work site and employees were more respectful of co-workers and clientele. This respect also improved morale within the workplace.

Another unanticipated outcome was the increased loyalty to organizations. Employees appreciated the investment employers were making and expressed a desire to remain with the organization because advancement was a possibility. Outcomes such as these are not uncommon. Throughout data collection, many outcomes exceeded expectations.

The Debate

A strength of Workplace Education is the openness, flexibility, and discussion about approaches. Healthy debates were heard about the benefits of instructors developing their own material compared to teaching established curriculum. This also has some appearance of inefficiency, not ineffectiveness. Similarly, although instructors indicated flexibility was of utmost importance, we heard a desire for some sense of agreed upon outcomes at the end of a program.

There was also a healthy discussion about which organizations are eligible for assistance. Skill Development Coordinators have a certain amount of direction and a certain amount of discretion to ensure effective use of resources.

Debates are usually solved by looking to the theory that guides the practice. However, clear documented theory appears to be missing.

Making It Work: A Guide for Workplace Education Project Teams in Nova Scotia, is an excellent and comprehensive document. It clearly outlines the goals of Workplace Education and provides the necessary information required for organizations to make a decision. The guide also describes the need for such a program and what Workplace Education has accomplished in the past. This document is highly recommended for anyone involved in implementation.

However, other than this manual, there has been little documentation regarding the theory of Workplace Education. The theory of the Initiative is embedded within the model; programs are offered in a manner that is comfortable and familiar to participants, programs include workplace relevant material, and are held on the "work site, etc. but the reasons behind such practices are not clearly communicated. Data collection indicated that individuals are not aware of the 'why' behind certain practices. The Nova Scotia Partners Committee expressed a desire to learn how the theory relates to actual implementation. A program theory should be made explicit and a logic model developed to demonstrate the connection between theory, activity, and outcome.

A program theory, making clear the contribution of the intervention, is necessary to understand and measure outcomes. For example, although instructors are aware of the benefits received by organizations and participants, many were unable to make the connection between the work of Workplace Education and the social impact. The theory of the Initiative needs to be communicated to ensure that those involved are fully aware of the contribution they are making. *It is therefore recommended that:*

The theory of Workplace Education and logic model be developed and be communicated as part of the communication of the Initiative.

Documenting the Story

While the evidence pointed to a program that is clearly meeting the need in Nova Scotia, a persistent theme was that the story of accomplishment or impact is not being reported. It is not being reported because it lacks a clear plan to do so. The current evaluation forms are seen as burdensome and 'useless'. They collect information which is not put to use, there by limiting the opportunity to report on outcomes. It is also worthy to note that developing an organization's independence did not come out during data collection.

Although some organizations have gone so far as to build a learning centre as a result of participating in Workplace Education, this has neither been well documented nor promoted. On a similar note, four organizations within Nova Scotia have been nationally recognized for their participation and success with Workplace Education. However, this is not common knowledge to those interviewed. Many interviewed also believed the Department of Education does not receive credit for their efforts. This further emphasizes the need for formal reporting.

Recommendation #8
The theory of Workplace Education and logic model be developed and be communicated as part of the communication of the Initiative.

All levels of governments are increasing their demand for explanation of public spending. In the case of Workplace Education there is considerable return for investment. Information on the impact of Workplace Education should be gathered in a systematic way where the various parts (participants, instructors, employers, and Skill Development Coordinators) contribute to the whole story. The information should be used to help with decisions and promote the Initiative. *It is therefore recommended that:*

Title current evaluation forms be discarded and a new plan for evaluation be considered.

A communication plan be developed to promote title success of title Initiative and improve awareness.

Summary

The evidence collected on Workplace Education suggests it is a program responding well to an important need. The analysis suggests it should continue and expand. As stated earlier, this report is intended to inform decision makers about the impact and importance of the Initiative. Further discussion and development of action plans is encouraged.

Recommendation #9
Title current evaluation forms be discarded and a new plan for evaluation be considered.

Recommendation #10 A
communication plan be developed to promote title success of the Initiative and improve awareness.

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APPENDIX A: SKILL DEVELOPMENT COORDINATORS

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APPENDIX B: STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Chair:

Renette Muise, Skill Development Coordinator, Valley Region

Members:

Karen Morse, Skill Development Coordinator, Central Region

Martin Kennedy, Instructor

Kevin Landry, Participant

Virginia Vacheresse, Employer

APPENDIX C: REGIONAL PROFILES

Region: Cape Breton

Year	Most Active Sector	Most Active Company	Most Utilized Program	Number of New Companies Joining	Number of Companies Returning	Total Programs Participated In Each Year within the Region	Summary
1999/2000	Labor-Mining	DEVCO	No description given	3	-	18	From 1999 to 2004, 14 new companies have participated in the Workplace Education Initiative. Over the five years, the most utilized program was basic skills upgrading and the most active sector was labor (mining).
2000/2001	Labor-Mining	DEVCO	GED Preparation	1	2	18	
2001/2002	Labor-Mining	DEVCO	Basic Skills for Computers	2	2	22	
2002/2003	Labor-Mining	DEVCO	Basic skills Upgrading	3	2	18	
2003/2004	Community Development	Community Cares	Basic and Essential Skills Upgrading	5	5	32	

Region: Central

Year	Most Active Sector	Most Active Company	Most Utilized Program	Number of New Companies Joining	Number of Companies Returning	Total Programs Participated In Each Year within the Region	Summary
1999/2000	-	-	-	-	-	-	From 1999 to 2004, 6 new companies have participated in the Workplace Education Initiative. Over the five years, the most utilized program was essential communication, skills for health care workers and the most active sector was health care.
2000/2001	-	-	-	-	-	-	
2001/2002	Health Care	Townview Estates and Westside Villa	Communication and Documentation in the Workplace	3	0	7	
2002/2003	Health Care	Cedarstone Enhanced Care Facility	Essential Skills for Physical Assessment and Communication Skills for Health Care Workers	1	0	6	
2003/2004	Health Care	Cedarstone Enhanced Care Facility & The Mira	Essential skills for Communication for Health Care Workers	2	1	14	

Region: Metro

Year	Most Active Sector	Most Active Company	Most Utilized Program	Number of New Companies Joining	Number of Companies Returning	Total Programs Participated In Each Year within the Region	Summary
1999/2000	3 sectors were equally active: Manufacturing Child Care, and Public Sector	East Preston Day Care	No description given	12	-	30	From 1999 to 2004, 52 new companies have taken part in the workplace education initiative. Over the five years the most utilized program was essential communication skills and the most active sector was government.
2000/2001	Public Sector and Forestry	Mac Tara Ltd. and Halifax Regional Municipality	Academic Upgrading	6	4	30	
2001/2002	Community Development and Public Sector	Department of Transportation	Essential Skills for the Workplace	10	6	42	
2002/2003	Community Development	SEEDS - Career Centre	Communication Skills	10	4	20	
2003/2004	Health Care	Northwood Care	Essential Communication Skills	17	3	38	

Region: Northern/Strait

Year	Most Active Sector	Most Active Company	Most Utilized Program	Number of New Companies Joining	Number of Companies Returning	Total Programs Participated In Each Year within the Region	Summary
1999/2000	Community Development	Each company participated once	No description given	3	-	13	<p>From 1999 to 2004, 16 new companies have taken part in the workplace education initiative. Over the five years, the most utilized program was essential workplace communication skills and the most active sector was health care.</p> <p>It is worthy to note that within the last 2 years, over 60 small businesses have taken part in the Initiative. Accommodations were made through partnerships to ensure small businesses were able to participate.</p>
2000/2001	Manufacturing	Trenton Works Ltd.	Essential Reading, Writing, and Math Skills	2	1	8	
2001/2002	Health Care and Manufacturing	Glen Haven Manor and Trenton Works Ltd.	Academic Upgrading and Workplace Communication Skills	1	2	8	
2002/2003	Health Care	Glen Haven Manor	Essential Workplace Communication Skills	1	1	3	
2003/2004	Small Business	Guys borough Co. Inshore Fishermen's Association Pictou Co. Chamber of Commerce	Essential Computer Skills	64	1	34	

Region: Southwestern

Year	Most Active Sector	Most Active Company	Most Utilized Program	Number of New Companies Joining	Number of Companies Returning	Total Programs Participated In Each Year within the Region	Summary
1999/2000	Community Development	Each company participated equally	No description given	7	-	13	From 1999 to 2004, 24 new companies have taken part in the workplace education initiative. Over the five years, the most utilized program was essential communication, skills and the most active sector was community development.
2000/2001	Community Development and Food Processing	High Liner Foods Inc.	Essential Communication Skills	4	2	9	
2001/2002	Public Sector	Department of Transportation	Essential Workplace Skill Development	5	2	12	
2002/2003	Community Development	South Shore Family Resource Association and Shelburne County Adult Workshop	Essential Computer Skills	2	6	10	
2003/2004	Community Development	Each company participated equally	Essential Communication Skills	6	6	21	

Region: Valley

Year	Most Active Sector	Most Active Company	Most Utilized Program	Number of New Companies Joining	Number of Companies Returning	Total Programs Participated In Each Year within the Region	Summary
1999/2000	Manufacturing and Forestry	Minas Basin Pulp and Power	No description given	4	-	10	From 1999 to 2004, 16 new companies have taken part in the workplace education initiative. Over the five years, the most utilized program was essential workplace skills and the most active sector was manufacturing.
2000/2001	Manufacturing	Dept. of Transportation	Essential Skills for the Workplace and GED Preparation.	4	4	16	
2001/2002	Vocational Workshop	The Flower Cart	Essential Workplace Skills	2	2	9	
2002/2003	Public Sector and Aboriginal Affairs	Each company participated equally	Essential Workplace Skills and Essential Communication Skills	1	1	3	
2003/2004	Agriculture	Each company participated equally	Essential Workplace Skills	4	1	13	

APPENDIX D: SITES VISITED

The following sites were visited during the evaluation of the Workplace Education Initiative:

Halifax Region:

- Centennial Hotel
- Elmsdale Lumber

Valley Region:

- The Flower Cart

Southwestern Region:

- High Liner Foods Inc.

Northern Region:

- Summer Street Industries
- Glen Haven Manor

Cape Breton Region:

- Department of Transportation
- Cape Breton Victoria Region School Board

Central Region:

- Cedar stone Enhanced Care

Other sites:

In some instances, employers were interviewed by telephone and not during a site visit. These included:

Metro Region:

- Fisherman's Cove

Valley Region:

- Minas Basin Pulp and Power

Southwestern Region:

- Department of Transportation

APPENDIX E: DISCUSSION GROUP - NOVA SCOTIA PARTNERS

Workplace Education Initiative

The Evaluation

Chaytor Consulting Services Ltd. has been contracted to conduct the evaluation of the Workplace Education Initiative. The goal of this evaluation is to inform decision making on many levels about the value of the program to participants, to employers, as well as to the workforce of Nova Scotia. The evaluation will focus on questions such as, "Is this program a valuable investment for tax dollars?" and "How could this program be improved?". The evaluation will also include suggestions for future evaluations.

The Questions

1. What involvement does your organization have with the Workplace Education program? What expertise do you bring to this initiative?
2. How do you see the role of Workplace Education contributing to the individual? To the employer? To the economy?
3. How do you feel about the way in which Workplace Education is arranged and carried out?
4. How does Workplace Education fit with other programs offered in Nova Scotia?
5. What are your suggestions for how this program can be improved?

Thank you for your participation!

Evaluation of the Workplace Education Initiative

The Workplace Education Initiative offers many programs to organizations and individuals within Nova Scotia. The Program is being examined to determine the value of the Program to individuals, organizations, as well as the workforce within Nova Scotia and also to determine how it fits with other programs in the province.

This evaluation has many components. Part of the evaluation involves gaining the perspective from you, the workplace education partners.

Please do not sign your completed questionnaire or include any other identifying information. Submit your response directly to the evaluator. Only the evaluators will see your individual completed questionnaire and your response will be presented in summary form.

Your participation in this component of the evaluation is voluntary. However, any information you can provide will be greatly appreciated as you are contributing to the enhancement of the program.

Thank you for your time.

1. Please describe your role as a Partner of Workplace Education.

2. Please indicate, on a continuum of 1 to 5 (one being not at all satisfied five being very satisfied), how satisfied you are with the following:

	Not at all satisfied		Somewhat satisfied		Very Satisfied
a. Theory or intent of Workplace Education	1	2	3	4	5
b. Implementation of Workplace Education	1	2	3	4	5
c. Sector representation within the program	1	2	3	4	5
d. Representation on the N.S. Partner committee	1	2	3	4	5
e. Contribution of the N.S. Partner committee	1	2	3	4	5
f. Program resources*	1	2	3	4	5
g. Communication about the program	1	2	3	4	5

*Please comment on program resources:

3. Please indicate the strengths of the Workplace Education Initiative.

4. Please indicate any limitations of the Workplace Education Initiative.

5. What other suggestions do you have for this Initiative?

APPENDIX G: DISCUSSION GROUP - AWENS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The Evaluation

Chaytor Consulting Services Ltd. has been contracted to conduct the evaluation of the Workplace Education Initiative. The goal of this evaluation is to inform decision making on many levels about the value of the program to participants, to employers, as well as to the workforce of Nova Scotia. The evaluation will focus on questions such as, *"Is this program a valuable investment for tax dollars?"* and *"How could this program be improved?"* The evaluation will also include suggestions for future evaluations.

The Questions:

1. What is the need for Workplace Education in Nova Scotia; what evidence are you using to describe need?
2. How well can/does the Workplace Education Initiative address the need?
3. How do we best assess and express the value of Workplace Education?
4. What are your suggestions for the future of Workplace Education?

Thank you for participating in this discussion group!

APPENDIX H: DISCUSSION GROUP - PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

Workplace Education Initiative

The Evaluation

Chaytor Consulting Services Ltd. has been contracted to conduct the evaluation of the Workplace Education Initiative. The goal of this evaluation is to inform decision making on many levels about the value of the program to participants, to employers, as well as to the workforce of Nova Scotia. The evaluation will focus on questions such as, *"Is this program a valuable investment for tax dollars?"* and *"How could this program be improved?"* The evaluation will also include suggestions for future evaluations.

The Questions

We will hold a discussion for about 30 minutes asking you to discuss the following points:

1. How did you find out about Workplace Education?
2. Why did you get involved with Workplace Education at this time?
3. How would you describe your experience with Workplace Education?
4. How satisfied are you with the Workplace Education program?
5. What changes (work, home, community) have you experienced as a result of the program?
6. What suggestions do you have to improve the Workplace Education program?

Thank you for your participation in this discussion group!

APPENDIX I: INTERVIEW GUIDE - EMPLOYER/SUPERVISOR

Workplace Education Initiative

The Evaluation

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The Questions

1. Why did you get involved with Workplace Education? How important is workplace education to you?
2. What were your expectations about Workplace Education? How do you feel about the costs of the program compared to the benefits?
3. How did you recruit employees into the program? What arrangements are made for Workplace Education?
4. Have you noticed any changes in your employees since they took part in the program? Have employees transferred their learning to the workplace?
5. What challenges did you face throughout the process of applying for the program? What is the role of the Project Team?
6. Do you feel this is a good model for education? Would you get involved with this program again? Would you recommend this program to other employers?
7. Do you have any suggestions as to how the program maybe improved?

Thank you for your participation!

APPENDIX J: INTERVIEW GUIDE - INSTRUCTOR

Workplace Education Initiative

The Evaluation

Chaytor Consulting Services Ltd. has been contracted to conduct the evaluation of the Workplace Education Initiative. The goal of this evaluation is to inform decision making on many levels about the value of the program to participants, to employers, as well as to the workforce of Nova Scotia. The evaluation will ask questions such as, *"Is this program a valuable investment for tax dollars?"* and *"How could this program be improved?"* The evaluation will also include suggestions for future evaluations.

The Questions

1. How involved are you with Workplace Education?
2. What makes a Workplace Education program successful?
3. In your experience, what motivates individuals to take part in the Workplace Education program?
4. What major contributions can a program like Workplace Education make? To the individual? To the workplace environment? To co-workers? To the company? To the economy?
5. How do you feel about the way the Workplace Education program is organized?
6. How satisfied are you with the support you received from the Project Team? From employers? From program resources?
7. What are your suggestions for improving this program

Thank you for your participation!

APPENDIX K: INTERVIEW GUIDE - UNION REPRESENTATIVE

Workplace Education Initiative

The Evaluation

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The Questions

1. How involved has the union been with workplace education? Is the team, or partnership approach working?
2. In your experience, what are the benefits of employees taking part in this program? Have there been disadvantages to participating?
3. How can unions support and contribute to Workplace Education?
4. What impact does a program like Workplace Education have? To workers? To union membership? To sector? To N.S. economy?
5. Do you have any suggestion as to how the program may be improved?

Thank you for your participation!

APPENDIX L: INTERVIEW GUIDE - SKILL DEVELOPMENT COORDINATORS

Workplace Education Initiative

The Evaluation

Chaytor Consulting Services Ltd. has been contracted to conduct the evaluation of the Workplace Education Initiative. The goal of this evaluation is to inform decision making on many levels about the value of the program to participants, to employers, as well as to the workforce of Nova Scotia. The evaluation will focus on questions such as, *"Is this program a valuable investment for tax dollars?"* and *"How could this program be improved?"* The evaluation will also include suggestions for future evaluations.

The Questions

1. What is the process of Workplace Education from beginning to end?
2. What types of companies are using the services the most?
 - a. How many new companies are taking part?
 - b. What type of training is used the most (ie computer skills training, GED Preparation, etc)?
 - c. What can Workplace Education offer individuals who participate? Employers?
3. How has Workplace Education changed over the last several years?
4. How is this program different from (or fit with?) other programs such as the N.S. School for Adult Learning?
5. How would you describe the role of your region in Workplace Education. Have there been inquiries for WE that have not produced a program? If so, please explain.
6. From your experience, is this model working? What has worked? What hasn't?
7. What constitutes a Workplace Education program as successful?
8. Have there been inquiries for WE that have not produced a program? If so, why?
9. Are there different or special needs for each region? Does the provincial program accommodate regional needs?
10. Who are your regional partners? Explain your relationship with regional partners.
11. What changes would you like to see made to the Workplace Education Initiative?
12. Any other final comments?