

IMPROVING ESSENTIAL SKILLS FOR WORK AND COMMUNITY

WORKPLACE AND
WORKFORCE
LITERACY



NUNAVUT AND NORTHWEST TERRITORIES



NWT LITERACY COUNCIL

IMPROVING ESSENTIAL SKILLS FOR WORK AND COMMUNITY
Workplace and Workforce Literacy



November 2007
Nunavut Literacy Council and NWT Literacy Council

We gratefully acknowledge the support of the
National Literacy Secretariat, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada

ISBN-10: ISBN 0-9735058-6-9
ISBN-13: ISBN 978-0-9735058-6-3

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DEFINITIONS

Literacy

In today's world we define literacy as the wide spectrum of skills that people need to share, understand and use information so they can participate fully in their family, community and work. The skills people need will shift and change throughout their life, based on personal choices and circumstances such as geography, culture, age, gender, and other social and economic factors.

We no longer consider people as 'literate' or 'illiterate'. Literacy is a continuous, lifelong process of learning.

Workplace Literacy

We define workplace literacy as programs that improve an individual's basic literacy or 'essential skills'. Essential skills are core skills that workers need to do their job effectively.

Workplace literacy programs use real life workplace materials as a tool to improve basic reading, writing and other essential skills.

Essential Skills

We define essential skills as the basic skills people use every day in their jobs and their lives. Essential skills are building blocks to learn other skills and become more complex as people integrate skills in the work setting.

Essential skills means people have the understanding and ability to:

- Read, understand and use text such as reports, letters and equipment manuals;
- Communicate effectively;
- Read, understand and use documents such as safety instructions, assembly directions and maps;
- Use numbers by themselves or in charts and tables;
- Think critically, solve problems, and make decisions;
- Use computers and other communication and information systems and technology;
- Build and work in teams;
- Show a positive attitude toward change; and
- Choose continuous, lifelong learning.

DEFINITIONS

Workforce Literacy

We define workforce literacy as programs and services that help less-skilled people find employment, move into a new job in a specific labour market, or enter training such as the trades. The programs include things such as pre-trades upgrading or job readiness training for adults with few essential skills.

Skills Development Programs

We define skills development programs as those designed to give workers job-specific training. For example, programs that teach workers how to use a new piece of equipment or technology. Workers need to already have essential skills to truly benefit from skills development programs.

Employability Skills

The Conference Board of Canada uses the term employability skills to describe the basic set of skills, attitudes and behaviours people need to:

- Get, keep and progress on a job;
- Work with others on a job; and
- Achieve the best results.

Employability skills are the generic set of skills that people need throughout all career and life development activities. Employability skills are not the same as essential skills, but they are connected. Employability skills are skills described from the employer's point of view; essential skills are described from the worker's point of view. Employability skills include attitudes and behaviours that employers look for.

Labour Force

The labour force includes employed and unemployed people 15 years and older that participate in the wage economy. Labour force participation rates typically do not include people involved with land-based activities – although some people think they should. How we define unemployment affects labour participation rates. For example, the ‘looking for work’ definition includes only people actively looking for work; the ‘no work available’ definition includes people that no longer look for work because they see no work available where they live.

Workers and Employers

Workers are people with jobs, people actively looking for work and people not actively looking because they see no work available for them – but would if they did. Employers include government, business and non-profit groups.

PURPOSE AND METHODOLOGY

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS PAPER?

The purpose of this paper is to provide information and analysis, and make recommendations about how to improve workplace and workforce literacy in Nunavut and the NWT. Specifically, the paper provides some basic information and analysis about:

- Why we should care about workplace and workforce literacy;
- Workplace and workforce literacy participation;
- Nunavut and NWT stakeholders for workplace and workforce literacy;
- Nunavut and NWT economic, social and cultural context for workforce and workplace literacy; and
- Elements of best practices for effective workplace and workforce literacy.

We used the information and analysis to make recommendations to improve workplace and workforce literacy in Nunavut and the NWT.

Two appendices provide more details:

- Appendix A: Basic Tools and Resources for Workplace and Workforce Literacy; and
- Appendix B: Summary of Eight Collaborative Models.

The demand is very high in Nunavut and the NWT for skilled workers in many areas of employment. There is a significant gap between available jobs and the skills of unemployed people – the people that really need the jobs. Much of the gap is due to low literacy skills.

The Nunavut and NWT Literacy Councils have received increased demands for information and resources about literacy in the workplace and literacy as part of workforce development.

In Nunavut and the NWT there is a critical need for more awareness and better information about workplace and workforce literacy. All stakeholders need to work together to understand exactly what is workplace and workforce literacy, and what we can do individually and collectively to support and improve it.

PURPOSE AND METHODOLOGY

METHODOLOGY

To meet the research objectives we carried out a literature review, including some information about past programs in Nunavut and the NWT.

We did interviews and focus groups based on two sets of questions – one for employers and educators, and one for workers and learners. More than 50 people participated in seven focus groups and nine interviews. They represented Aurora and Nunavut Arctic Colleges, secondary school educators, more than 10 employers and people from five training programs. See Appendix C for the questions and a list of the people that participated.

A final meeting provided further information. Employers, government officials, literacy workers and educators came together to consider a workplace/workforce literacy partnership for Nunavut and the NWT.

WHY WE SHOULD CARE ABOUT

WORKPLACE AND WORKFORCE LITERACY

Research clearly shows a direct relationship between overall economic well-being and workforce skills. Good workforce skills directly affect the health and well-being of our communities, families and individuals. To develop effective workforce skills people need continuous education and training, building on their initial, basic education.

Economic well-being is directly tied to effective programs:

- Programs that help unemployed people build useful skills so they can find suitable jobs; and
- Programs that help ensure employed people continue to use and improve their skills.

To develop and maintain economic well-being, we need to invest in programs that provide workers with the knowledge and skills they need throughout their life. And we know that today's world can demand significant changes to the knowledge and skills people need over time, and in the various work and living environments that people find themselves during their life.

Workers with low literacy skills have higher absentee rates, are more likely to make mistakes and have more accidents on the job. They are less likely to be satisfied with their job and more likely to get frustrated and quit.

Workplace and workforce literacy benefits everyone: workers, employers, government, families and communities. Society directly benefits from less unemployment, higher labour force participation rates, lower social security payments and higher tax receipts. And most, if not all, employer and worker benefits trickle through to society.

We know that people with good literacy skills and lifelong learning opportunities are more likely to:

- Be self-confident, productive and aware of health and safety issues at work;
- Find full-time work, less likely to be unemployed and experience shorter periods of unemployment;
- Be satisfied with their work, take pride and feel self-worth, and make more effort and do high quality work;
- Have enough income for proper housing, food, clothing and transportation;
- Participate in community and family life, help children with homework and volunteer;

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- Enjoy good health and make good lifestyle decisions based on available information such as pamphlets, labels and other public education media;
- Seek and receive further training, have more job opportunities and potential for promotion, become self-starters and manage their own career development;
- Work together as a team and help improve working conditions and labour relations on the job; and
- Have higher income – a male with higher literacy skills earns an extra \$585,000 over his lifetime; a female earns an extra \$683,000.

Research shows clear economic benefits to workplace literacy, but this message has not yet reached many Canadian workplaces¹. There are positive returns from investment in training, although the nature of the returns may vary among employers and workers. Research shows that general training has greater effect on worker productivity than specific training².

Employer returns on workplace/essential skills programs include³:

- Better communication, cooperation and labour-management relations;
- Workers with more ability to learn and work as a team;
- More productivity;
- Workers more aware of safety and able to act on that knowledge;
- Less absenteeism, increased retention, workers more committed to the employer;
- Workers more likely to accept and act on suggestions for personal improvement, more willing to take the initiative; and
- Workers with more ability to solve problems and eager to take on new roles as mentors and peer learning coaches.

Improved literacy is connected with increased GDP. A 1% increase in average literacy skills could lead to 1.5% increase in GDP per capita – three times the return from physical capital investments. There are good reasons for governments and employers to take action.

¹ Economic Benefits of Improving Literacy Skills in the Workplace. Conference Board of Canada. Sept. 2007.

² Return on Investment in Training. Bettina Lankard Brown. Centre on Education and Training for Employment. 2001.

³ Building Essential Skills in the Workplace. HRSDC. 2005.

WORKPLACE AND WORKFORCE

LITERACY PARTICIPATION

Canadian data tell us that an increasing number of workers get involved in workplace learning. In 2002, 35% of workers from 25 to 64 years old participated in some type of formal, job-related training – an increase from 29% in 1997.

Despite this, Canadian workers receive less workplace learning than workers in Scandinavian countries, the US and the UK; and more Canadian workers spend their own money for career development. US firms spend about 50% more on training than Canadian firms⁴. Canadian participation rates have stayed the same in recent years. Canadian workers have lower levels of essential skills than they need to participate in the knowledge economy. Basic skills training is only 2.2% of total training spending.

Government training programs tend to target the unemployed, especially the long-term unemployed, rather than the low skilled, low-waged employed.

Employers tend to provide more and better programs for workers who already have good skills. Employers are 2.5 times more likely to sponsor training for white-collar workers than for blue-collar workers. People with jobs are more likely to take training than unemployed people. Full-time workers have higher participation rates than part-time workers. Participation rates show no major gender differences. Women rely more on self-financing than men.

Larger firms engage in more formal job-related training. Small and medium-sized employers can have trouble supporting classroom training; the costs are too high and workflow too disrupted. Smaller employers tend to offer more informal training, to make up for lack of classroom training. Tutoring was the most common type of training. In Canada, 97% of firms have less than 100 workers; they employ 58% of all workers.

Young workers aged 25 to 34 and well-educated workers have much higher participation rates than older workers or workers with no more than high school. And the gaps are growing. Although older Canadians take fewer courses in the workplace they continue with various informal learning activities – nearly 40% of the 12-hour weekly average of informal learning was work-related. 1997 participation rates showed the following range according to level of education: less than high school – 11%, high school graduates – 22%, college graduates – 39%, university graduates – 48%.

⁴ Employer Investment in Workplace Learning in Canada. Canadian Council on Learning. 2006.

WORKPLACE AND WORKFORCE

LITERACY PARTICIPATION

Less educated workers are five times less likely to participate in job-related adult learning. When they do participate, they are almost twice as likely to report that learning helped them achieve a positive outcome such as more income or a promotion. The best use of training resources is to target those with the least education.

One in three workers reports having unmet training needs. Workers who already received some training were more likely to report an unmet need than workers who receive no training. And among those, the least educated were least likely to report unmet training needs. This may reflect their job, but could also reflect lack of understanding about the benefits of training.

Government and individuals pay for most basic education; employers and individuals pay for training courses. Public education institutions offer 75% of all adult education and training programs – a selection of courses and 25% of all training courses.

A 1990 survey clearly documents the need for workplace education in Canada⁵:

- 70% of businesses confirmed a need for basic skills training in some part of their organization.
- Up to 20% of the firms identified a need among supervisors for literacy and upgrading training.
- Up to 80% of workers in low skill jobs need literacy and upgrading training.
- The most affected sectors include accommodation and food, municipal governments and manufacturing.

Research shows that many people work at jobs that do not fully use their potential. Workers can lose skills if they don't use them. To maintain workers' essential skills, employers need to design jobs to include elements of teamwork, communication, critical thinking, problem solving and decision making. Careful attention to job design can:

- Help workers maintain essential skills and encourage them to learn new skills;
- Provide job satisfaction and help create opportunities for individual achievement and recognition; and
- Create an environment to increase worker productivity and help employers retain workers.

⁵ Conference Board of Canada Survey, 1990.

Workplace training is not just a human resource practice; it is a business strategy. The existing labour pool and population form an important part of meeting current and future labour force needs.

In recent years, people are more aware of the value of workplace learning. But we must remove access barriers to help increase the benefits of workplace training. Workers with low skills need information about the benefits of lifelong learning. Workers with low skills and older workers need effective opportunities to participate. Smaller employers need support to find innovative ways to increase the amount of formal training they can offer.

The primary barriers that prevent workers from participating in workplace and workforce literacy programs include the following:

- Too busy at work;
- Inconvenient time and/or location;
- Non-child family responsibilities; and
- Lack of child care or elder care.

Many northern workers either cannot or will not leave their community for training. And other barriers make it hard for many workers to move such as housing shortages and overcrowded housing, family responsibilities, and travel and living expenses.

Few policies or programs exist to actively encourage more women to enter non-traditional occupations. One example is the Women in Oil and Gas program of the NWT Status of Women Council.

Barriers for small and medium-sized employers are greater than for large ones. Primary barriers for employers to implement workplace and workforce programs are:

- Cost of training and cost of lost working time;
- Lack of information about where to get training and how to organize and provide it; what training is effective;
- Not convinced the return on investment is good enough, especially compared with other investments; and
- Worry about losing workers and, therefore, losing the investment – through ‘poaching’ or when workers quit for a different job.

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LITERACY PARTICIPATION

Nunavut and NWT stakeholders with direct experience with workplace and workforce literacy spoke of it highly. Most programs have ended. People described classes such as Inuktitut as a second language, on/or off-site general training in reading and understanding documents, and training to understand documents specific to the workplace such as safety manuals or human resources policies.

A small number of workplace literacy programs still exist, including the City of Iqaluit's program where workers have special classes and tutoring at Nunavut Arctic College campus. Less official programs are more common: employers provide training during working hours to help workers read and understand documents – often a necessity so workers can read and follow instructions, policies or client requests.

BHP Billiton and Diavik Mines each developed and implemented their own successful workplace literacy programs. BHP has a workplace learning program in-house and on-site. Diavik has two initiatives: community-based training to upgrade skills of local people and skills upgrading programs for the workers. Diavik noted that people that started with the community-based training initiative generally have done better in the workplace: fit in better and work well with co-workers.

The main factors for effective workplace and workforce literacy, based on BHP and Diavik experiences:

- Maintain credibility and ensure the company sees the training as adding business value. Focus on what is essential for workplace development to meet the company's business and safety needs.
- Provide release time to participate. Neither company has an official policy.
- Basic literacy or essential skills programs are not common in most workplaces. Companies may need to create the program from scratch and continuously adapt it to meet changing needs.
- People feel a stigma around low literacy skills. Depending on the situation, people may be reluctant to participate and fear lack of confidentiality.

- Two-week work rotation means workers have limited time with adult educators on site. Need to ensure workers have support in their home community.
- How to balance the training needs of workers and the needs of the company and the workplace.
- The program can accept only so many workers at one time because of available adult education staff and the two-week rotational work schedule.
- Build relationships and partnerships – college, corporate partners, government, communities.

Challenges and gaps include having to develop assessment tools for workers with low literacy skills as-needed and limited opportunities for people in small, isolated communities and for non-classroom workforce programs.

NUNAVUT AND NWT STAKEHOLDERS IN WORKPLACE AND WORKFORCE LITERACY

This section discusses some basic features of the following Nunavut and NWT workplace and workforce literacy stakeholders: government, employers, colleges, and Nunavut and NWT Literacy Councils. At the end of the section we briefly outline some common features of existing collaboration models – stakeholder partnerships in other jurisdictions.

The next section, ‘Nunavut and NWT Social, Economic and Cultural Context’, provides details about the main stakeholders – workers.

What priority do stakeholders put on workplace and workforce literacy? How do they understand what is workplace and workforce literacy? What capacity do they have to participate? How do they work together?

Governments, businesses and colleges seem to want to use skills development and job training programs to improve the literacy skills of workers who lack essential skills; who have trouble with written materials. Many Nunavut and NWT so-called workplace literacy programs are, in fact, employee skill development programs.

The 2004 IALSS⁶ results clearly show that stakeholders tend to develop and implement programs that increase the skills of people who already have skills. We lack programs that help people build essential skills, to enlarge the labour pool of potential workers.

Most Nunavut and NWT adult education and training programs exclude a significant number of people because they have poor literacy skills. And these people have few or no alternatives to access programs to develop these essential skills.

Space is another important factor. Many communities already lack space in the learning centre, have no other available space to offer a program, and have no housing to offer potential educators that may be hired to develop and deliver a program.

⁶ 2004 International Adult Literacy Skills Survey.

NUNAVUT AND NWT STAKEHOLDERS IN WORKPLACE AND WORKFORCE LITERACY

GOVERNMENT

Government has an important role to encourage and facilitate investment, to ensure disadvantaged populations have access, to share information and best practices, to promote labour mobility, to foster skilled immigration, and to ensure effective systems exist to recognize training. In Nunavut, government includes local and territorial public government, federal government and Inuit land claim organizations. In the NWT, government includes local and territorial public government, federal government and Aboriginal governments.

Territorial governments have responsibility for education, including adult training. The federal government is responsible for employment insurance (EI) and they fund adult skills training through that program. People that are not eligible for EI cannot participate in those programs.

In recent years, the role of the federal government has changed. Under the 1996 Employment Insurance Act, the federal government withdrew from direct training. They enter into Labour Market Development Agreements (LMDAs) funded through EI. Federal programs help employers deal with labour adjustments, help unemployed workers get skills and find work, and support industry sector initiatives. Federal funding supports labour market training only for EI clients and other target groups, including Aboriginal people.

The federal government provides some indirect support such as labour market research, career information and curriculum. One example is the Essential Skills Research Project. The goal was to develop profiles that show essential skills people need for over 500 Canadian occupations. Businesses can use the methodology to develop a customized profile for more specific occupations.

Another example is the Test of Workplace Essential Skills, or TOWES. Bow Valley College worked with SkillPlan to develop a test of three essential skills – reading text, using documents and using numbers. Businesses use TOWES to assess or screen workers for training or placement. Test materials are authentic workplace materials. See Appendix A for a few more details about these and other workplace and workforce resources.

Some federal initiatives changed under the Conservative government. They now include Workplace Skills Initiative (WSI) and Adult Learning, Literacy and Essential Skills (ALLES) program.

Aboriginal Futures was set up to manage an Aboriginal Skills Enhancement Program (ASEP) funded by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada. The focus is training and skills enhancement. They set up partnerships to help northern residents develop higher skills, such as grants to study at NAIT and SAIT.

The Government of Nunavut and Inuit organizations are firmly committed to make Inuktitut the primary language of work. The 1993 Nunavut Land Claims Agreement includes certain important provisions that affect workplace and workforce literacy:

- The number of government employees needs to represent the percent of Inuit in Nunavut – 85%.
- Federal and territorial governments have preferential procurement policies for Inuit firms.
- Each major development project must have an Inuit Impact and Benefits Agreement.
- Inuit have greater control over natural resources and the right to harvest.

Under the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement, mineral exploration and development has guidelines for local hiring practices, service contracts and environmental guidelines. These provisions should have real impact on Nunavut's economy and leave more money and control in the hands of Nunavummiut.

The Nunavut Economic Development Strategy 2003 includes 'economic development for youth' and 'education and training' as priorities under the 'people' strategies. The draft Nunavut Adult Learning Strategy includes 29 actions that can form the foundation for the ongoing evolution of adult learning for the next 20 years. The Strategy does not specifically mention workplace or workforce literacy, but many, if not all, actions contribute.

The NWT's political structure is changing as Aboriginal groups negotiate self-government. The transfer of responsibility from the territory to Aboriginal governments will further increase the demand for a skilled workforce in NWT communities.

NUNAVUT AND NWT STAKEHOLDERS IN WORKPLACE AND WORKFORCE LITERACY

The NWT Department of Education, Culture and Employment is responsible for adult education, training and skills upgrading. They provide basic education and career services under the Adult Literacy and Basic Education Directive and Building Essential Skills program. They provide skills enhancement and employment services, develop effective skills training and professional certification programs, and develop new occupational standards where needed. They focus on institutional training, workplace learning and industry training. They manage income and personal support programs, including a variety of labour market information activities.

The NWT Labour Force Development Plan: 2002 to 2007 includes:

- Adult Literacy and Basic Education Directive: to improve adult access to basic and secondary-level education. The GNWT administers a 'Building Essential Skills' program that provides short-term training for EI recipients.
- Skill enhancement to develop effective skills training and professional certification programs and new occupational standards where needed. Emphasizes collaboration, multi-sector approach and focuses on institutional training, workplace learning and industry training.
- Income and personal support for skills upgrading for individuals not eligible for EI support; grants and loans for post-secondary students.

In the mid-1990s the NWT government and Aurora College worked together to promote and initiate some workplace literacy activities:

- Provide some funding to help employers develop and deliver workplace literacy programs.
- Raise awareness about workplace literacy with business leaders and senior government officials.
- Provide training to help deliver workplace literacy.

Government cancelled the program in 1997. In 2001, the NWT government included workplace literacy as part of the NWT Literacy Strategy. They targeted funding to support workplace literacy in settings such as small business, bands and hamlets. The 2005 budget reduced workplace literacy funding by \$300,000 as employers did not access the funding⁷.

⁷ Hansard, February 24, 2005.

EMPLOYERS

Employers include business, government and non-profit groups. Business includes some very large, multi-national corporations as well as some small and medium local companies. What employers have in common is the need to attract and retain skilled workers.

Employers need workers to understand practices within the workplace, safety regulations, legal responsibilities and other work-related duties. Much work-related information comes in print, designed and written in ways that make it difficult for people with good literacy skills to easily read, understand and use – let alone workers with poor literacy skills. Employers face real problems when workers do not understand materials. They need plain language documents to help ensure safety and productivity; they need to consider creative alternatives with other media.

Employers describe the need for workplace and workforce literacy training – and their inability to provide it. Factors include a dispersed workforce, and lack of capacity and expertise. Many employers are prepared to support firm-specific training and feel that government should provide essential skills training.

In 2004, government provided 45 % of Nunavut's total employment; wholesale and retail about 12 %; construction and other goods producing industries about 11 %; transportation, accommodation and food services each about 4 %; other service-producing industries such as banks, business and arts about 25 %⁸. About 15 % of Nunavut's population is involved with some kind of arts production – carving, print-making, weaving and tapestries, film, broadcasting, music and new media.

Nunavut's private sector is small and it relies heavily on government for business. Nunavut employment should grow first in construction, health and education; then in mining, public administration, retail trade and perhaps fisheries.

Under Article 23 of the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement, Inuit should be 85 % of government employees. In 1999, Inuit were 45 % of the government's workforce, 41 % by March 2003, 45 % as of March 2004, and increased to 48 % by June 2006. Government simply can't find enough Inuit workers.

⁸ 2005 Nunavut Economic Outlook.

NUNAVUT AND NWT STAKEHOLDERS IN WORKPLACE AND WORKFORCE LITERACY

As an employer the Government of Nunavut must make workplace and workforce literacy within their own workforce a priority. This is key to ensure they meet the obligations for 85% Inuit government employees. The need is obvious given the problems they have hiring, training and retaining Inuit workers. A 2004 study estimates that Nunavut spends \$65 million to hire a largely southern-based workforce and support unemployed Inuit⁹.

Nunavut has a strong commitment to making Inuktitut the language of work. Government, business and non-profit groups find it important to offer employment and services for people whose first language is Inuktitut or one of its dialects – in addition to or instead of English or French. Some NWT employers also must provide services in Aboriginal languages. Nunavut and NWT employers have huge problems finding workers skilled in health and other professions who can work in Inuktitut or NWT Aboriginal languages. When interpreters are not available people ask relatives to translate – people that may not know the terminology; people that may have to take time away from their own job.

The NWT labour market total employment by industry¹⁰ includes: mining, oil and gas – 9%; construction – 8%; transportation – 10%; retail and wholesale – 11%; accommodation and food services – 5%; government, health, education – 39%; and other industries – 18%.

The diamond mines each have impact benefits agreements with directly impacted Aboriginal communities and socio-economic agreements with the GNWT. The agreements identify northern and Aboriginal hiring targets. The targets give these companies significant motivation to provide workplace literacy programs because a large portion of the target population lacks essential skills.

Poaching by other employers/mines happens; one company may benefit from another company's investments in skills upgrading. The diamond mines have little choice but to continue with their skills upgrading programs so they can meet their social obligations and hiring quotas in the agreements. Aboriginal self-government, a third diamond mine, and growing oil and gas development simply increases the competition and need for workers with essential skills.

Non-profit groups and small and medium northern businesses are not likely to have the resources to find and hire a person with

⁹ Report on the State of Inuit Culture and Society. 2003/04 and 2004/05.

¹⁰ NWT Socio-Economic Scan. 2006.

the skills needed to set up and deliver an effective workplace or workforce literacy program. Many northern businesses have workers spread around several smaller communities, with one or maybe two workers in each. In contrast, large companies such as BHP and Diavik have the resources to develop and implement their own programs and provide them on-site.

Many Nunavut and NWT employers can't find enough workers and have trouble keeping the workers they have. Northern employers experience skills and labour shortages, as do many other parts of the country. The northern labour pool is relatively small and a great portion of unemployed people lack essential skills. Small and medium businesses and non-profit groups can't keep up with wage demands set by government and large business such as mining. They lose workers to higher paying jobs and have trouble replacing them, spending time and resources they don't have to recruit new workers. Or they shut down and communities do without services, many of which are delivered on behalf of government.

Nunavut and NWT companies typically do not provide enough opportunities for young apprentices – they lack qualified journeypersons willing to take apprentices. Small business tends to train apprentices, not larger ones. Many young people that pass pre-trades programs lack the employability skills to succeed on the job. ARDHA holders are in a position to identify those prospective apprentices in need of essential skills programs.

Effective workforce and workplace literacy programs can help reduce the pressures from labour and skills shortages, and the constant time and resources needed to recruit and train new workers.

COLLEGES

Nunavut Arctic College and Aurora College offer basic adult education, including basic literacy, in Nunavut and NWT communities. Most communities have a learning centre, although staff levels and programs vary. Learning centres may offer some pre-trades training and specialized courses such as St. John's Ambulance or courses about local culture or land-based skills.

NUNAVUT AND NWT STAKEHOLDERS IN WORKPLACE AND WORKFORCE LITERACY

Learning centres may use some creative strategies to integrate basic education into more specialized pre-employment or skills courses. For example, students with some pre-trades courses at Aurora College use GIS technology to map their family's trap line and then visit the site to verify the map.

Other examples include building basic language skills into firearms courses and offering pre-employment upgrading before camp attendant courses or as part of cooking courses. They partner with large companies to provide essential skills upgrading as a prelude to computer training.

Some learning centres offer adult basic education in the evening or on-site at a workplace. This helps overcome barriers connected with negative classroom experiences or with lack of time for full-time training.

Nunavut Arctic College piloted a handful of workplace literacy programs. In 1992, they began to investigate the potential of developing and piloting a learner-centred workplace literacy program in Rankin Inlet. The investigation included an organizational needs assessment. Government provided funding in 1995 to implement the three-year pilot program. This successful program led to a nine-month pilot program in Cambridge Bay. Many businesses participated, but it did not continue beyond the first year due to lack of funding.

The projects identified some keys to success:

- Be flexible to meet varying needs of different workplaces. Make sure the program is relevant and accessible to workers.
- Expand Inuktitut activities.
- Encourage workers and employers to participate in program design.
- Continually promote the value of workplace education to employers, workers and the community in general.
- Foster understanding of what workplace education is and how it can work.
- Secure long-term funding to ensure continuity.
- The main challenges for Nunavut and NWT community learning centres include the following:
 - Find and keep staff with good skills, including linguistic skills.
 - Provide consistent, effective programs from one year to the next.

- Provide more flexible options: part-time as well as full-time; informal as well as more formal learning.
- Make sure the curriculum is relevant to the culture and lives of the students; use less formal curriculum.
- Ensure learners can access courses in sequence.
- Find creative strategies to integrate essential skills into more specialized pre-employment or skills courses.
- Secure enough, long-term financial resources.
- Have enough appropriate space for programs and housing for instructors.

Workplace instructors bridge the world of work and the essential skills workers need for tasks on the job. Instructors must balance employer’s needs with worker’s needs. Learning centres in NWT and Nunavut communities have an adult educator who administers and implements adult education programs. They may not have the time or skills to also develop and implement workplace and workforce literacy programs.

NUNAVUT AND NWT LITERACY COUNCILS

Over the past several years the Nunavut and NWT Literacy Councils have worked hard to build capacity and to create resources for community-based family literacy. Right now they have limited capacity or resources for workplace and workforce literacy.

Their family literacy experience shows that optimal learning takes place when it involves elders, parents and children; when it’s culturally relevant; and when there is a community context for learning.

Community capacity builds as local people take interest and learn to run a program or participate in one, and as people use and develop resources such as manuals and other tools.

These programs are part of the learning continuum for adults with low literacy skills. Less formal training is often a needed first step between the isolation of low literacy and more formal training. The basic principles that promote successful family literacy programs may provide some useful ideas and models for effective workplace and workforce literacy.

NUNAVUT AND NWT STAKEHOLDERS IN WORKPLACE AND WORKFORCE LITERACY

COLLABORATION MODELS

Other jurisdictions provide some examples of models for stakeholder partnerships. See Appendix B for details of eight different models. Some common elements of these collaboration models include the following:

- Individual members vary depending on the main objective of the partnership. Potential partners include government, labour, business, educational institutions, instructors, workers, industry and apprenticeship associations and boards, and non-profit groups.
- Each partnership has a clear vision and objectives. Most aim to serve a particular target group such as people with low literacy skills or workers for a particular industry – such as construction.
- Collaborations do actual work to achieve their objectives that may include one or more of the following:
 - Carry out needs assessments; develop and deliver customized workplace and workforce literacy programs.
 - Promote workplace and workforce literacy, and share information about the benefits.
 - Provide workshops and other activities to train instructors who specialize in workplace and workforce literacy.
 - Develop and share resources, including program materials.
- Partnerships often identify principles of best practices to guide their work.
- Partnerships share the costs to carry out their work. Funding comes from federal and provincial/territorial governments and other partners.

NUNAVUT AND NWT

SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL CONTEXT

Nunavut and NWT workplace and workforce literacy take place within a particular economic, social and cultural context. To describe this context we look at certain factors that particularly influence workplace and workforce literacy: education and skills, income and employment, health status, infrastructure and resources.

Nunavut and NWT economies both rely on a combination of land and cash-based activities. The balance between the two seems to be moving towards a greater reliance on wage employment. In some ways the wage and land-based economies interconnect. For example, tourism in part may depend on marketing and skills connected with a traditional, land-based way of life.

Land-based activities are more than economic activities – they are an integral part of the cultural and social way life for many Inuit and NWT Aboriginals. The Nunavut Economic Development Strategy estimates the replacement cost value of country food harvested as \$30 million. Cost savings do not take into account the health benefits of country food and the cultural and social importance for families and communities.

Nunavut has the youngest and fastest growing population in Canada: 35 % of the population is younger than 15 years – double the Canadian average. More than 50 % are under 25 years. About 24 % of the NWT population is younger than 15 years and the working age population is about 68 % of the total.

EDUCATION AND SKILLS

The evidence clearly shows that:

- Inuit and NWT Aboriginals have much less formal education than non-Inuit and non-Aboriginals.
- Many Nunavut and NWT residents, particularly Inuit and Aboriginal people, lack the basic literacy skills they need to fully participate in daily life – at work at home and in their communities.

A recent study¹¹ states that investing in things such as education and skills training is three times more important over the long term for economic growth than investing in infrastructure. Investments in literacy and women provide particularly high returns¹².

¹¹ CED Revisited Discussion Paper, Impact Economics. Developed in cooperation with Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. (Pending publication 2005.)

¹² International Adult Literacy Survey: Literacy Scores, Human Capital and Growth Across 14 OECD Countries. Serge Coulombe et al. Statistics Canada. 2004.

NUNAVUT AND NWT

SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL CONTEXT

The level of formal education and number of high school and post-secondary graduates is increasing, but still ranks low compared to the rest of Canada, especially in Nunavut¹³.

- High school graduates 25 to 29 years old: 64.7 % for Nunavut; 77.5 % for NWT. The Canadian average is 85.3 %.
- Post-secondary graduates aged 25 to 54 years: 43 % for Nunavut; 55.8 % for NWT. The Canadian average is 55.7 %.
- Less than high school diploma: over 50 % for Nunavut; 35 % for NWT.

To clearly understand the information about formal education and skills we compare Aboriginal with non-Aboriginal in the NWT¹⁴. We have no comparable statistics for Nunavut, but suspect a similar picture for Inuit and non-Inuit.

- People 15 years and older with high school or more: 45 % Aboriginal; 87 % non-Aboriginal.
- High school graduation rate: 40.3 % Aboriginal; 65.1 % non-Aboriginal.
- People 15 years and older with less than grade nine: 22.8 % Aboriginal; 2 % non-Aboriginal.

Many Inuit and NWT Aboriginals have skills people need to participate in the land-based activities. They learn these skills within their families and from elders.

In 2001, 85.6 % of Inuit spoke Inuktitut as their first language; 79.2 % use Inuktitut as the only or main language at home¹⁵. In the Kitikmeot region, only 0.9 % of Inuit spoke Inuinnaqtun at home; children often use English as their first language.

In the NWT, the percent of Aboriginals that speak an Aboriginal language has gone from 59.1 % in 1984 to 44 % in 2004¹⁶. In Yellowknife, the percent dropped from 51.5 % to 25.3 %; in Hay River, Fort Smith and Inuvik, from 36.5 % to 22.6 %; in smaller communities, from 68.9 % to 59.4 %.

The 2003 International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey (IALSS) measured prose literacy, document literacy, numeracy and problem solving. The IALSS scale uses level three as the minimum people need for everyday tasks in today's world. Overall results show that

¹³ 2005 Nunavut Economic Outlook.

¹⁴ NWT Socio-Economic Scan. 2006.

¹⁵ Annual Report on the State of Inuit Society and Culture. 2003/04 and 2004/05.

¹⁶ Selected Socio-Economic Indicators. 2007 Community Indicators.

the NWT matched the Canadian average in each category, although this picture is not overly encouraging. And Nunavut was lowest in all categories.

NWT results show that many working-age adults lack skills for everyday needs, including workplace needs: 40 % lack prose skills, over 50 % lack numeracy skills, and 70 % lack problem solving skills. There is a huge gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. NWT results show about 70 % of Aboriginal and 30 % non-Aboriginal lack skills for everyday needs.

Nunavut results show that 88 % of Inuit and 30 % of non-Inuit lack skills for everyday needs, including workplace needs. Over 60 % of people with jobs lack these skills. And over 80 % of Nunavut's youth between age 16 and 25 lack these skills.

IALSS showed a direct relationship between low employment rates and low literacy skills, and between high employment earnings and high literacy skills. IALSS showed people with higher literacy skills are more involved in community activities and as volunteers.

INUIT AND NWT ABORIGINAL LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

Language and culture issues in Nunavut and the NWT strongly affect education and skills. These issues affect K to 12 formal education and early childhood development, and encompass lifelong learning, including workplace and workforce literacy. For many Inuit and NWT Aboriginal people, formal schooling is part of a negative, racist, colonizing experience.

Many Inuit and NWT Aboriginal children have trouble adjusting from the informal, continuous learning within the traditional, extended family to the more formal school environment. Children make the transition to school more successfully when they have opportunities to participate in effective 'school readiness' programs such as the Head Start program. Family literacy programs also have a positive effect.

Many Inuit and NWT Aboriginal families feel a great divide separates home and school. Parents have no connection to the school system. They may have little or no formal education, and some very negative experiences, including residential school.

Educators describe high absenteeism and classrooms with too many students that lack literacy skills to effectively absorb the curriculum.

Learning styles in the formal school system may contradict more traditional learning styles. Traditional learning seems to focus more on watching and doing – learning from those who do it. The formal school system, including many workplace and workforce literacy program, seems to focus more on reading and talking – learning from those who know about it. Programs need more hands-on, practical learning.

Many Inuit and some NWT Aboriginals speak English as a second language. The formal school systems struggle to find a balance and develop bilingual or other programs that enhance learning in both languages. Students often end up with very poor literacy skills in both languages.

People with low literacy skills are not the ‘problem’. They are workers, parents and community members – doing the best they can with the resources and opportunities they have. Many factors contribute to low literacy skills such as:

- Poor first language acquisition;
- Too little or no formal schooling, or inappropriate formal schooling;
- Lack of good quality and/or too little language instruction in school;
- Special learning needs not identified or dealt with;
- Social and economic disadvantages such as poverty and overcrowded housing;
- No effective, consistent, long-term adult literacy programs where and when needed;
- Lack of effective government policies and adequate funding; and
- Racism and other forms of oppression.

Territorial and Aboriginal governments face a quandary. How do they preserve culture and language, and at the same time create a competitive workforce? Can they find a balance where it’s possible to have both?

INCOME AND EMPLOYMENT

The evidence clearly shows that:

- Nunavut and NWT job markets have jobs available.
- Employment rates for Inuit and NWT aboriginals are very much lower than for non-Inuit and non-Aboriginals.
- Lack of education is the greatest barrier to employment; it is greater for Inuit and NWT Aboriginals than for non-Inuit and non-Aboriginals.

Average Income and Income Support/Social Assistance

The average income per family in Nunavut is \$52,624, compared with \$75,102 in the NWT and \$66,160 for the national average.

In 2005, in the NWT an average of 4.5 % of the population received income support. The percent dropped in small communities from 18.4 % in 1996 to 7.8 % in 2005. In 2005, about 4 % of the population in regional centres received income support and 2.4 % in Yellowknife.

About 55 % of Nunavummiut receive income support at some point during the year¹⁷. In Nunavut, income support caseloads increased 1.8 % between 1999 and 2002 – an improvement from the early 1990s when caseloads grew 6 % per year¹⁸.

Unemployment Rates

Nunavut's unemployment rate ranges from 20.7 % to 27.2 % depending on the definition: people actively looking for work or people who don't look for work because they see no available jobs where they live.

In 1999, overall Inuit unemployment rates were 45.4 % Inuit compared with 4.5 % non-Inuit in the 'want a job' category. Inuit between 15 and 24 years of age averaged 48.1 % – excluding those still in school or involved entirely in land-based economic activity. People in small and medium communities averaged 41.3 % and 45.8 % in the 'want a job' category, compared with 21.6 % in the three regional centres.

¹⁷ Conference Board of Canada. 2001.

¹⁸ 2005 Nunavut Economic Outlook.

NUNAVUT AND NWT

SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL CONTEXT

The NWT unemployment rate for 2004 was 10.4%: ranging from 5% in Yellowknife to 8.6% in Hay River and Fort Smith, and 22.4% in the smaller communities.

| 1999 Unemployment Rates by Formal Education ¹⁹ | | |
|---|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| | 'No Jobs Available' | 'Want a Job' |
| Grade 0 to 8 | Inuit 44.6 % Non-Inuit 42.9 % | Inuit 44.6 % Non-Inuit 42.9 % |
| Grade 9 to 11 | Inuit 41.5 % Non-Inuit 9.7 % | Inuit 44.6 % Non-Inuit 42.9 % |
| High School | Inuit 21.2 % Non-Inuit 2.7 % | Inuit 44.6 % Non-Inuit 42.9 % |
| Diploma | Inuit 21.4 % Non-Inuit 1.7 % | Inuit 44.6 % Non-Inuit 42.9 % |
| University | Inuit 1.9 % Non-Inuit 2 % | Inuit 44.6 % Non-Inuit 42.9 % |

Employment Rates

Nunavut's average employment rate in 1999 was 52.8%: 43.3% for Inuit and 88.8% for non-Inuit. Employment rates were slightly higher for males than for females. The rate ranged from 43.4% in medium communities to 48.4% in smaller communities to 65.4% in the three regional centres.

The NWT employment rate in 2005 was 72.3%; it has been over 70% for four years. Employment rates were slightly higher for males than for females. An 82% rate in Yellowknife contrasts with a 62.8% rate in smaller communities; 83.4% rate for non-Aboriginal people contrasts with 55.1% for Aboriginal people. 2004 employment rates were 38.8% for people with less than high school and 81.7% for people with high school or greater. In 2007, in the NWT, 2,454 people were unemployed²⁰. Of these, 77.3% were Aboriginal, almost all from small communities, and 52.3% had less than a high school diploma.

¹⁹ 1999 Community Labour Force Survey. Nunavut Bureau of Statistics.

²⁰ Selected Socio-Economic Indicators NWT. 2007 Community Indicators.

Other Employment Factors

Northern workers with limited literacy skills take entry level jobs, but may lack the skills to safely and effectively do their work. For example, information from BHP shows that 30 to 35 % of Aboriginal workers in entry level jobs struggle to read simple documents.

Without effective literacy training this kind of job may become the end point for many Nunavut and NWT workers rather than the starting point, or they may quit from frustration. Without effective literacy training workers cannot move to higher level positions, and they limit opportunities for new labour market entrants.

HEALTH STATUS

Overall health is directly connected with income and employment, education and literacy skills, personal health practices, early childhood development, social supports, and physical and natural environments, including housing.

To describe health status we used available statistics related to life expectancy, infant mortality, suicide, weight and physical activity, certain diseases, smoking and crime. Statistics came from the NWT Socio-Economic Scan 2006, the 2005 Nunavut Economic Outlook, and the Annual Report on the State of Inuit Culture and Society 2003/04 and 2004/05.

- Average life expectancy for Nunavummiut males is about seven years less than the national average and for females about 10 years less.
- Years of life lost to unintentional injury or death is three times higher in both territories than the national average.
- Nunavut's infant mortality rate is three times higher than the national average.
- The suicide rate in Nunavut is six times the national average; in the NWT almost twice the national average.
- In Nunavut, only 31.6 % of people 12 years and older report they are active or moderately active, compared with 51 % in the NWT and for the national average. In 2000, 30.7 % of Nunavummiut were overweight and 23 % were obese.
- Nunavut has high rates of tuberculosis, lung cancer and low respiratory tract infections.
- In 2003, 65 % of Nunavummiut over 15 years old smoked.

- Nunavut's violent crime rate is more than eight times the national average; the NWT's is about seven times the national average. For both territories, property crime rate is almost two times the national average.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Infrastructure includes things such as transportation, housing and communications systems. Infrastructure is an important part of the economic, social and cultural context.

Adequate housing is a major infrastructure gap in Nunavut and the NWT. Lack of basic human needs such as adequate housing affects the overall outlook for economic, social and cultural well-being. The Nunavut Ten-Year Inuit Housing Action Plan states that Nunavut needs 3,000 new units to meet existing demands and another 270 per year to meet the needs of the growing population.

In the NWT, small communities have the greatest housing need. The 2004 NWT Community Survey states that 30.3 % of homes in small communities have core housing needs, compared to 11.3 % of homes in Hay River, Fort Smith and Inuvik, and 9.1 % of Yellowknife homes.

A growing northern population puts pressures on infrastructure other than housing, such as municipal water, sewer, garbage, energy production and transmission, and education and recreation facilities. As well as new infrastructure, both territories need to replace older infrastructure that is near or past the end of useful life, and try to meet new safety codes and/or energy efficiency standards.

Economic impacts of capital infrastructure projects are limited in the north, especially in Nunavut. Most of the materials and much of the labour are imported and most of the spending leaves the territory. Government spending on goods and services has much greater impact on the local economy – more money lands in the pockets of northern residents.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Natural resources include land, water, wildlife, plants, minerals, energy and knowledge about resources. Resources are an important part of the economic, social and cultural context.

Natural resources are vital to the overall way of life in Nunavut and the NWT, and land-based and wage-based economic activities. There are significant gaps in information about wildlife and fish populations, ecology, geology and other topics that directly affect land – and wage-based economic activities.

Climate change creates new pressures on resources and requires creative solutions to deal with impacts. Less sea ice means the Northwest Passage will open for shipping and more intensive mineral and oil and gas exploration. Impacts of climate change, such as melting permafrost, have huge implications for traditional land-based activities, mining, oil and gas, energy, and public and private infrastructure.

Existing resource-based industries include mining and oil and gas, hydro electricity, fishing, forestry, tourism, and fish and meat processing. The current NWT resource boom focuses on diamonds and oil and gas, including the proposed Mackenzie Gas Pipeline.

In both territories, the federal government controls much related to mining and oil and gas. Territorial and regional boards oversee environmental reviews and land and water licences. The federal government collects almost all royalties; in Nunavut a small share goes to the Nunavut Trust²¹. To benefit fully from mining and oil and gas development, Nunavut and the NWT must develop and implement devolution and resource revenue sharing agreements with the federal government. In the NWT, these agreements also involve Aboriginal governments.

In both territories, governments and other agencies envision that large-scale non-renewable resource development – mining and oil and gas in particular – plays a significant role to provide jobs and reduce unemployment. But governments must recognize the importance of other employment sectors, especially their own. They must ensure that workplace and workforce literacy prepares northern workers for a diverse range of employment opportunities.

²¹ Nunavut Economic Development Strategy. 2003.

ELEMENT OF BEST PRACTICES

Effective workplace and workforce literacy programs must have certain basic resources: stable long-term funding, skilled instructors to deliver programs, effective tools to assess employer and worker needs, suitable physical space and appropriate program materials.

Experience in NWT, Nunavut and other national and international jurisdictions confirms some common, important factors that contribute to program success. We organized the factors into four categories: for employers, for program design, for workers and for government.

For Employers

- Provide paid work time for workers to attend workplace and workforce literacy programs.
- Identify a champion to provide support from senior management.
- Share program information. Large businesses are more likely to have the resources to develop their own program. Typically, they tailor materials to the needs of their industry and their company. They own the materials and may be unwilling to share with others.
- Link training to the employer's priorities and strategic plan, and integrate training with overall management practices and the employer's culture.
- Support partnership arrangements and share resources and responsibility for funding.

For Program Design

- Use real workplace materials as a focus for learning; make links between learning and real life.
- Integrate culturally appropriate materials and traditional teachings. Teach essential skills in the context of the whole person and the community they come from.
- Use principles of adult learning. Adapt to the needs of the learner from a wide array of instruction and evaluation strategies. Focus on doing, talking and then reading about an activity – rather than reading, talking, then doing. Encourage workers to observe and imitate the work of their peers.
- Research, test and develop different approaches such as individual learning accounts and distance and internet learning methods.
- Involve workers, learners and communities when developing the program. Build relationships and trust.
- Help workers meet their literacy needs for their families and communities as well as for the workplace.

ELEMENT OF BEST PRACTICES

- Develop strong collaborations and work with partners: examples include government, business, education institutions, unions, non-profit groups and communities.
- Provide better information and training tools, test new approaches, share best practices. Use a comprehensive approach with a ‘menu’ or ‘tool box’ of various supports and initiatives; be flexible to specific needs and circumstances.
- Develop a custom training map to meet each worker’s particular development needs.
- Provide a learning environment where people feel safe and comfortable; a place where they can learn, take risks and be respected regardless of their skills.
- Develop a detailed job description for instructors. Identify things such as certification, experience, instructional techniques, contractor or employee, preparation time, materials and professional development. Look for flexible instructors experienced with workplace education programs, aware of issues impacting workers and the workplace, and able to link the two worlds.
- Develop a system to evaluate the program and to measure outcomes. Collect and analyze qualitative and quantitative data to show success. Keep detailed program documents to show the benefits to various stakeholders.
- Identify various quantitative and qualitative methods to evaluate students. Make sure that students know in advance if and how they will be tested.
- Provide ongoing communication between the instructor, the workplace, the worker and other stakeholders.
- Provide enough time, support and funding for all aspects of the program, including before, during and after program implementation.
- Maximize the number of workers that can participate.
- Consider a program steering committee and who should be a member; who will contribute to and enrich the program.
- Identify program logistics: prerequisites, assessments, prior learning, application, orientation, fees and financial support. What size, location and length of classes; how many per week. What equipment, transportation and supports such as child or elder care.

For Workers

- Provide good information that people can understand and use about the benefits of training, the potential impacts on work and other parts of their life.
- Encourage and support voluntary participation.
- Involve workers in as many aspects of the program as possible. Recognize them as whole people – they may need support and flexibility to overcome barriers such as lack of child care or other personal matters.

For Government

- Develop a comprehensive system of policies and support for workplace and workforce literacy, including financial support. This may include²² incentives for employers and workers, help to overcome barriers, incentives to influence investment, information and other tools and supports, well-functioning certification and recognition systems, outreach and awareness activities, and ongoing evaluation.
- Design subsidies and other public financing incentives to ensure access for smaller employers and disadvantaged worker populations.
- Carry out promotion and awareness campaigns – especially to convince employers of the benefits of investing in workplace learning.
- Offer incentives and better support to workers. Help them overcome financial barriers; provide information, advice and tools. Examples: use EI for paid training leave, training vouchers, tax measures, individual learning accounts.

²² Employer Investment in Workplace Learning in Canada. 2006.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The evidence is very clear. Inuit and NWT Aboriginal people cannot take their rightful place within the wage-based economy unless and until they receive effective and appropriate education and training, including workplace and workforce literacy programs. All people need access to effective, realistic opportunities to realize their full capacity to contribute – regardless of wealth, gender, race, age or other discriminating factors.

Territorial and Aboriginal governments identified the development of new job opportunities for northern workers as a priority – especially for Inuit and NWT Aboriginals. Current policies and practices do not seem to achieve the desired results.

Territorial, federal and Aboriginal governments in Nunavut and the NWT must take action right now and make it a priority to develop and deliver effective workplace and workforce literacy programs for people with low literacy skills. They must ensure that workplace and workforce literacy is part of the overall approach to labour market development.

Workplace literacy programs must give workers a solid base of essential skills for successful employment and from which they can learn other, new skills. Workforce literacy programs must provide people with essential skills so they can successfully enter the workforce and/or training, and help reduce skills shortages in the northern labour force.

Workplace and workforce literacy is part of lifelong learning and education. It is much more than employment policies and practices created to meet the demands and business needs of employers.

Stakeholders need to form a collaboration and develop and deliver community-based workplace and workforce literacy programs. Program design and delivery must recognize and deal with barriers that many Inuit and NWT Aboriginals experience to full participation in community and economic life. These barriers include racism, community wellness, learning disabilities, lack of role models, unwillingness or inability to relocate for training or work, and physical space and time to learn.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1) To all Stakeholders

Form a collaboration for essential skills, workplace and workforce literacy.

Develop a working partnership in each territory based on other collaboration models. Territorial governments take responsibility, play a coordinating role and identify sufficient long-term funding to support the collaboration and its work.

The collaboration must discuss and clearly identify what each partner will contribute, what each is responsible for and what role each plays. Potential stakeholders for the collaboration include the following:

- Territorial, federal and Aboriginal governments;
- Nunavut Arctic College and Aurora College;
- Employers – especially small and medium employers, business and non-profit employers;
- Instructors;
- Unions and labour organizations;
- Workers; and
- Literacy Councils and other social/cultural community-based groups.

2) To the Collaboration

Develop an essential skills strategy.

Identify basic values and principles on which to base the strategy, such as:

- Essential skills and literacy are vital elements of economic productivity, overall health and well-being, and social cohesion.
- Literacy concerns everyone – public and Aboriginal governments, social agencies, employers, communities, families and workers.
- Stakeholders cooperate and use best practices to develop and implement effective solutions.
- Programs target workers that most need workplace and workforce literacy programs, and ensure they have access to the programs they need, where and when they need them.

Decide what actions to carry out, including a schedule, funding and who is responsible. Possible action areas include the following:

- Carry out needs assessments. Customize skills profiles and assessment tools as needed. Consider how to measure and recognize prior learning.
- Develop curricula as needed. Use relevant materials directly from the workplace or from other areas of real life in the north. Workers can immediately apply what they learn to the job and other parts of their life.
- Provide flexible program options and ensure continuity.
- Consider different learning styles and use a mix of classroom and hands-on learning.
- Ensure workers have paid time off work for training. Encourage employers to develop formal policies. Provide other supports as needed such as child care elder care and transportation.
- Identify appropriate places to carry out programs. Use learning environments where people feel safe and inspired.
- Develop a communications plan to raise awareness and to provide information, advice and tools. Encourage employers to actively advocate a training culture and to find a champion. Encourage workers to participate and help overcome the stigma to low literacy skills.
- Identify long-term, stable funding.
- Monitor and evaluate the programs. Identify how different stakeholders benefit from workplace and workforce literacy: workers, government, families and communities, and employers.
- Study and understand the dynamics of the labour market – how the demand for labour and the supply interact within the real world for unemployed people. Include people involved with land-based activities.
- Share information and resources with others involved with workplace and workforce literacy.
- Link training with other labour bargaining topics such as working hours, changes in work organization, or human resource management.

3) To Federal, Territorial and Aboriginal Governments

Develop incentives for employers to develop and deliver workplace and workforce literacy programs.

Design incentives to target small and medium employers – business and non-profits. Quebec has legislation that requires firms to make a minimum investment in training. Ontario recently introduced an apprenticeship training tax credit²⁵. Some other examples to consider include:

- Develop a tax credit or other incentive to encourage small and medium employers to invest in training.
- Consider a policy to tie training requirements with signed contracts for government work. For example, construction contracts must keep licensed journey people on site and hire a certain number of apprentices.
- Provide a training fund with matching contributions from employers and government.
- Develop a training levy. Consider joint governance of the funds. Include social partners who represent ‘at risk’ and other normally under-represented groups to improve distribution of training opportunities.
- Be more flexible with funding such as from EI and LMDA. Help ensure people not eligible for EI get funding for essential skills training.
- Continue to use tools such as socio-economic agreements and impact benefits agreements to identify targets for northern training, employment and business opportunities with large resource development projects.

²⁵ Employer Investment in Workplace Learning in Canada. Canadian Council on Learning, 2006.

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Workplace Education Manitoba (WEM) web site
<http://www.wem.mb.ca/>

Workplace Education PEI web site
<http://www.nald.ca/workplaceedpei/>

APPENDIX A:

SOME BASIC TOOLS AND RESOURCES

Essential Skills Profiles

Profiles explain how workers in an occupation group use each essential skill. A profile describes the occupation and provides sample tasks, complexity ratings, future trends, physical aspects and attitudes needed. Stakeholders use the profiles to set training standards appropriate to particular occupation(s).

www.hrsdc-rhdcc.gc.ca/essentialskills

In 1994, the Essential Skills Research Project (ESRP) identified measurable, transferable, teachable skills present in all occupations. The project identified nine essential skills: reading text, document use, writing, numeracy, oral communication, thinking skills, working with others, computer use and continuous learning.

Test of Workplace Essential Skills (TOWES)

Bow Valley College and SkillPlan – BC Industry Skills Improvement Council. Tests three essential skills: reading, document use and numeracy. TOWES uses authentic workplace documents to recreate tasks as source items for the test. The measure-up is a free self-assessment component of the web site www.towes.com

ES Learning Tool

This is an interactive, web-based tool. It uses authentic workplace materials to give users a firsthand sense of the various essential skills and their complexity levels. It demonstrates differences between each level of the nine skills.

http://srv108.services.gc.ca/english/general/learning_tool_e.shtml

Applications of Working and Learning (AWAL) Innovations

Educators develop classroom activities that link curricula to the world of work using the lens of essential skills. AWAL brings the workplace to the classroom and students go to the workplace.

www.awal.ca

Business Results Through Literacy

CME's guide to workplace literacy training includes workshop materials for needs assessment, business case development and program implementation.

www.cme-mec.ca/on/documents/Literacy_Guide_CD.pdf

APPENDIX A:

SOME BASIC TOOLS AND RESOURCES

The Linkage Model

The Linkage Model is a 'made in Africa' training approach that integrates technical skills, business skills and workplace essential skills. The model approaches entrepreneurship training as an ongoing exercise in critical thinking, problem solving and decision making. This training delivery model can be used with a wide range of technical and vocational subject areas – training for employment or for self-employment.

[http://www.bowvalleycollege.ca/international/pdfs/What % 20is % 20the % 20Linkage % 20Model.pdf](http://www.bowvalleycollege.ca/international/pdfs/What%20is%20the%20Linkage%20Model.pdf)

The Workplace Practitioner Competency System

This system provides a comprehensive understanding of the critical competencies that lead to successful performance as a workplace practitioner specializing in essential skills solutions. The system defines five foundation KSA (knowledge, skills, attributes) competency areas, seven areas of workplace practice and five essential skills integration levels.

Work Readiness Program

A program the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation developed with Bow Valley College to help Inuvialuit beneficiaries move into the workplace. The program provides essential skills and job exposure through work placements. It is individually focused and flexible – can be delivered in the classroom, workplace and in small communities. The program has seven phases: orientation, assessment, individual career action plan, essential skills upgrading, streaming, work practicum and completion. It uses HRSDC skills profiles, TOWES assessment and supporting curriculum.

Contact: cmacgregor@irc.inuvialuit.com

Ready to Work North

This program helps entry-level workers develop transferable skills. It is based on Transferable Skills Standards originally created for the tourism sector. After a successful pilot in fall 2005 it is available to all northern communities.

The program constantly refers to the importance of positive attitudes to find and keep work. The student workbook begins with positive attitude based on the idea that it is the foundation to develop all other skills and attitudes needed for work. A positive attitude is a state of mind; it helps individuals expect positive outcomes when they approach activities and other people. Positive attitudes motivate people to work hard within their family, school, job and community; gives people a sense of purpose and confidence. People with positive attitudes take responsibility and put effort into their work, relationships and other activities to encourage good outcomes for themselves and for others.

Effective Reading in Context (ERIC)

ERIC is an interactive workshop that presents participants the opportunity to practice efficient workplace reading using proven and effective strategies. Effective reading courses offer the worker a means to manage their workplace reading.

Syncrude Applied Math (SAM)

SAM focuses on the math most commonly used in the workplace. It uses customized workplace examples and exercises to ensure workers are interested and involved. ERIC and SAM have been adapted to meet the needs of a variety of clients.

APPENDIX B:

SUMMARY OF EIGHT COLLABORATION MODELS

- Alberta Workforce Essential skills (AWES)
- Workplace Education Manitoba
- Nova Scotia Partners for Workplace Education; Nova-Scotia Workplace Education Initiative
- Workplace Education PEI
- Learning at Work – Saskatchewan Labour Force Development Board (SLFDB)
- Western Canada Workplace Essential Skills Training Network (WWestNet)
- SkillPlan BC
- Yukon Government, Department of Education, Advanced Education – Labour Market Programs and Services

ALBERTA WORKFORCE ESSENTIAL SKILLS (AWES)

Non-profit society. An advisory committee includes representatives from labour, industry associations, apprenticeship and industry training board and government.

Objectives:

- Pursue essential skills development in various sectors.
- Present information about workforce literacy issues to business, labour and government so they can make informed decisions about essential skills training and development.
- Stay informed about workforce literacy trends, programs, research findings and innovations.
- Develop ways for stakeholders to interact and share information with each other.
- Improve and extend workforce essential skills training and development through enhanced professional development, information sharing and training opportunities for practitioners.
- Be available for sharing and providing input at the inter-provincial, national and international levels.

Resources:

- AWES Centre for Research on Literacy, Faculty of Education, University of Alberta.
- ESL Resource Package for Alberta Communities – a guide and support for ESL teachers, particularly those without training and background in teaching ESL.
- Essential Skills for Hazard Analysis Critical Control Program – a front-line training program to help implement the food safety program to reduce the risk of food-borne illnesses through safe handling, production, processing and retailing of food products.

APPENDIX B: SUMMARY OF EIGHT COLLABORATION MODELS

- Sectoral Needs Assessment: A Process for Essential Skills Analysis – a guidebook on how to design and implement a needs assessment, interpret findings, shape recommendations, develop action plans and evaluate outcomes. Targeted to employer associations, sector councils, labour unions, community colleges, government and essential skills consultants.
- Spreading the Word: A Framework for Workplace Essential Skills Presentations – a marketing tool that provides scripts and practical strategies for practitioners and business and labour representatives.
- Travelling Trunk: Workplace Essential Resource Collection – an extensive library of training and resource materials available to practitioners.

WORKPLACE EDUCATION MANITOBA

The Workplace Education Manitoba Steering Committee (WEMSC) is a business/labour/government partnership that promotes essential skills and literacy training in the workplace. WEMSC has a resource library. Their funding comes from Manitoba Competitiveness Training and Trade, and Human Resources and Social Development Canada.

WEMSC works with employers to:

- Assess the need for essential skills training;
- Develop and deliver custom workplace training; and
- Train the trainer.

Objectives:

- Increase awareness within business about why essential skills are important.
- Build partnerships with government, business, labour and education institutions.
- Develop customized models, tools and materials to assess, develop and deliver work place learning programs.

NOVA SCOTIA PARTNERS FOR WORKPLACE EDUCATION – NOVA SCOTIA WORKPLACE EDUCATION INITIATIVE

The Department of Education, in partnership with business, industry and labour organizations, administers a program called Workplace Education. The program promotes learning at work and supports the development of a skilled and adaptable workforce. The program

provides learning programs for workers who need to upgrade or enhance their essential skills for work and community living.

Representatives from management, union and workers form a project team to initiate, coordinate and monitor the program. Team members share the costs, which may include: time release so workers can attend the program during the workday; program space, materials, child care, study supplies, transportation; and instruction costs.

To develop a program the project team follows a process:

- Carry out a needs assessment.
- Set goals and make a plan to achieve the goals.
- Develop and implement the program.
- Evaluate the program.
- Celebrate success.

THE ASSOCIATION OF WORKPLACE EDUCATORS OF NOVA SCOTIA (AWENS)

AWENS is an organization of workplace education instructors who deliver essential skills programs for Nova Scotia workplaces under the Nova Scotia Workplace Education Initiative. The board of directors includes six regional representatives. They meet with the Department of Education liaison eight to 10 times a year. Meetings provide ongoing instructor support for professional development and allow the organization to respond to trends. Their partners include Skills and Learning Branch, Department of Education, and Nova Scotia Partners for Workplace Education.

Nova Scotia has a Workplace Education Certification Program. Instructors can participate in workshops at institutes and regional sessions, or via self-directed study. The program has 18 modules that cover three areas: Getting to Know the Workplace; Workplace Education Programming; and Customizing and Delivering Workplace Education Programs. Nova Scotia Department of Education, Apprenticeship Skills and Learning Branch, certify instructors when they successfully complete 10 of the 18 modules.

APPENDIX B: SUMMARY OF EIGHT COLLABORATION MODELS

WORKPLACE EDUCATION PEI

Workplace Education PEI was developed in 1997 to help workplaces keep pace with the rapid changes in today's economy. It is a partnership with businesses, unions and organizations. They assess learning needs and recommend a variety of essential skills programs to meet workers' needs.

A field officer goes to the work site and assesses workplace learning needs, at no cost to the employer. The field officer recommends programs and works with an on-site project team to set up custom designed programs that may include, but are not limited to:

- Prepare for certification;
- Prepare for Grade 12 equivalency (GED);
- Writing for work;
- Workplace communications;
- Skills for supervisors;
- Basic computer skills; and
- Other custom-designed programs.

The field officer helps partners find funding to cover instruction costs. Potential employer contributions include:

- Cost of the instructor, materials and supplies;
- Classroom space and other in-kind services; and
- Release time for workers to attend classes.

Partners monitor and modify the program once it's in place, to ensure the worker and the company continue to progress towards their goals. Workplace Education PEI adopted the following keys to success:

- Hold classes at the work site.
- Provide a comfortable atmosphere; learning takes place with co-workers.
- Keep classes small; allow workers to progress at their own pace.
- Ensure programs and materials are relevant to the workplace.
- Set class schedules to suit the workers.

LEARNING AT WORK – SASKATCHEWAN LABOUR FORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD (SLFDB)

The SLFDB took on the issue of workplace literacy in 1998. Industry wanted to develop expertise to plan effective reactive and proactive strategies for a highly skilled workforce. The National Literacy Secretariat, Saskatchewan Post-Secondary Education and Skills

Training, and the SLFDB supported the Learning at Work project. Phase I of the project completed a province-wide needs assessment of workplace literacy from the point of view of business and labour, an Industry Vision of Workplace Literacy, and a basic information module for literacy practitioners.

Phase II of the project worked to include the Vision of Workplace Literacy in the provincial training strategy, and develop a commitment to and support for sustainable workplace literacy programming.

The Learning at Work project produced a guide to help employers, unions and workers investigate how essential workplace skills are used in their own jobs and workplaces. They developed the guide in consultation with business, labour, agriculture and other groups from the Saskatchewan Labour Force Development Board.

The Learning at Work Project carried out six pilot projects set in different Saskatchewan regions and with different partners. The purpose of the pilots was to understand how to promote essential workplace skills training to the small workplace and how the small workplace could best access this training.

The project focused on these principles:

- Ensure training is accessible and applicable to all residents.
- Plan and deliver training at local and regional levels.
- Include workplace literacy in human resources development plans.
- Clearly identify roles and responsibilities of workplace partners.

WESTERN CANADA WORKPLACE ESSENTIAL SKILLS TRAINING NETWORK (WWestNet)

WWestNet began in 1993. It is a group of educators, labour leaders, government representatives and business people interested in workplace basic skills education. Its purpose is to share information, raise awareness and be a catalyst for workplace literacy and essential skills training. They publish a newsletter, host conferences and facilitate worker education programs. They recognize and support champions of workplace literacy and essential skills. WWestNet provides a western Canada link to provincial, national and international workplace literacy and essential skills initiatives.

APPENDIX B: SUMMARY OF EIGHT COLLABORATION MODELS

SKILLPLAN

SkillPlan is a joint labour and management initiative of the BC construction industry. It is a not-for-profit society, started in March 1991. SkillPlan's mission is to develop strategies to improve the essential skills of people working in the unionized construction industry in British Columbia and Yukon.

SkillPlan provides direct assistance to members, including tutoring, study groups and classroom delivery. They work in partnership with a network of training plan administrators and instructors to support apprentices in fulfilling their essential skills upgrading needs.

SkillPlan offers professional support to develop courses and for testing and clear language. Essential skills resources include Tools for the Trade and Numeracy Rules, developed from their experience working with apprentices. The resources provide supplementary materials to assist workers in training and on the job.

SkillPlan provides consulting services when the scope of the work contributes to their objectives. Services include developing essential skills curricula, developing plain language, professional development workshops and mentoring.

SkillPlan has been involved with the research, development and promotion of workplace essential skills for 13 years. This includes essential skills job profiling, self-assessment and resource development. The Essential Skills at Work series, developed with the support of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, provides educators with hands-on, applied materials to bring workplace essential skills into instructional settings.

YUKON GOVERNMENT, DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, ADVANCED EDUCATION – LABOUR MARKET PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Advanced Education provides education, training, employment and other services to prepare Yukoners for the labour force. The department works closely with other territorial departments, the federal government, business, labour, Yukon College, First Nations, equity groups, and provinces and other territories to develop and implement programs.

The Labour Market Development Unit maintains and implements the Yukon Training Strategy – the government framework for training and labour force development. The vision for the training strategy is to ensure all Yukon people have the opportunity to participate fully in training and development, to enhance their life skills and employability.

The Labour Market Development Unit implements this vision through the following actions:

- Support workplace and community literacy programs.
- Work with labour, women’s organizations, youth, the private sector, non-profit organizations, communities, First Nations and the federal government to develop and implement specific labour force development strategies and policies such as:
 - Women In Trades and Technology (WITT);
 - Older Worker Initiative;
 - Youth Internship Program (youth at risk); and
 - Labour Mobility Program.
- Register trade schools physically located in Yukon.
- Coordinate education obligations and training issues under Land Claims Implementation.
- Support and work with Yukon College to achieve the objectives of the Yukon Training Strategy and meet local educational and training needs and aspirations.
- Develop labour force planning information and policy.
- Co-manage employment programs and services in the Yukon with HRDC under the Labour Market Development Agreement.
- Provide settlement services for new immigrants.

APPENDIX C:

QUESTIONS AND LISTS OF PARTICIPANTS

QUESTIONS FOR EMPLOYERS

1. Are you aware of programs and resources designed to assist you and your employees in increasing the level of literacy in your workplace?
2. Do you have experience with literacy programs designed to increase literacy levels in the workplace? If you have such experience, or are aware of any specifics, continue:
 - Can you describe the workplace literacy program?
 - What worked? What didn't work?
3. What is your experience with literacy levels of employees and potential employees? If finding employees with high enough levels of literacy is a challenge, continue:
 - Do you have any programs to which you refer employees or potential employees? (If yes, continue.)
 - i. What works about those programs? What doesn't work?
 - ii. How could those programs better meet your needs?
 - If no, what kind of training or literacy programs would you like to have to meet your needs for employees with higher literacy levels?
4. Do you have any interest in workplace literacy? What resources would you need to undertake such a program? What supports would help you?
5. Do you have any experience in collaborating with other employers or agencies with interest and experience in workplace literacy?
 - If so, what worked in the collaboration? What didn't work? What would have made it more effective for you?
 - If not, how do you think collaboration like this might help you as employer? What would it take to be beneficial for you?

APPENDIX C:

QUESTIONS AND LISTS OF PARTICIPANTS

QUESTIONS FOR EMPLOYEES AND POTENTIAL EMPLOYEES

1. What reading, writing, math and computer skills do you use on the job?
2. Has literacy been a barrier for you in school or in looking for a job? On the job? Can you describe the barrier(s)?
3. Have you taken any literacy or basic education training in your community, your learning centre or the college?
 - If so, what did you like about the training? Was there anything that didn't work for you?
 - How could the training have been improved?
 - What makes technical, safety or other training hard for people?
4. What kind of literacy training would be most helpful to you in your work life? Does this training exist? Do you think training in the workplace would be better or outside the workplace?
5. What would you like your employers to do to help you improve your literacy level?
6. If you are employed, does your employer encourage reading on the job? Are there things to read as part of your work or when you are on break?
7. Have you used any literacy training materials that you found particularly helpful? Have any materials NOT been helpful? Do you have any ideas for materials that would make learning easier for you?
8. If you could tell your employer or possible employer one thing about how to help you improve your literacy, what would it be?

FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS

The names listed below include only those people who expressly gave permission for their names to be listed. Not all participants gave permission. Employee participants listed are also youth; where youth were among employers, they are labelled as youth participants.

Youth Participants – Cambridge Bay

Sarah Jancke Beverly Uviluq
Clinton Panegyuk Michael Jancke
Julian Tologanak Charles Jr. Egotak
Ryan Angohiatok Shelaine Inooya
Jerilyn Kaniak

Employer Participants – Cambridge Bay

Kane Tologanak, Director, Embrace Life Council
Elik Tologanak, Counsellor, Kullik Ilihakvik Elementary
Brenda Jancke, Regional Director, Department of Education
Charmian Jenvenne, Language Program, Nunavut Arctic College
Fiona Buchan-Corey, Kitikmeot Campus Director,
Nunavut Arctic College
Donna Olsen-Hakongak, Community Program Manager,
Nunavut Arctic College
Paul Chaulk, Program Manager, Nunavut Housing Corporation
Dave Shuttleworth, RCMP

Employee Participants – Iqaluit

Don Kunuk, City of Iqaluit
Joetanie Kanayuk, City of Iqaluit

Employer Participants – Iqaluit

Judy Watts, Special Projects Officer,
Health and Social Services
Yvonne Earle, Legislative Librarian
and Chair of Iqaluit Literacy Committee
Ericka Chemko, Inuit Heritage Trust, Youth Coordinator
Nigel Qaumariaq, Human Resources – Youth Participant
Tanya Saxby, Community Program Coordinator,
Nunavut Arctic College
Steven Koonoo, HRSD
Hal Timor, Baffin Regional Chamber of Commerce
Tina Price, Human Resources – Youth Participant

APPENDIX C:

QUESTIONS AND LISTS OF PARTICIPANTS

Employer Participants – Rankin Inlet

Janice Seto, Management Studies Instructor, NAC
Corrine DaBreo, Supervisor, Social Work,
Health and Social Services
Margaret Wallace, Health and Social Services
Beverly Walker, M&T Enterprises
Metro Solomon, Director, Economic Development
Ruthann Johnston, Health and Social Services
Mike Shouldice, Campus Director, Kivalliq, NAC
Mariah Aliyak, Health Benefits, Health and Social Services

Employee Participants – Rankin Inlet

Angela Cook
Teresa Amarok

Artist Participants – Rankin Inlet

John Kurok
Jack Nuviyak
Jackie Ittigaitok

One-on-One Interviews

Corrine MacDonald, Student Support Teacher, Kiilnik High School
Randy Millar, Manager, Canadian North, Rankin Inlet
Colin McGregor, Chief HR Officer, Inuvialuit Regional Corporation
Linda MacDonald, Benefits Advisor, Mackenzie Gas Project,
Imperial Oil
Robert Ward, Coordinator, Mine and Industrial Program,
Aurora College
Virginia Qulaut Lloyd, Nunavut Tunngavik Inc.
Youth Policy – Youth Participant
Barb Miron, Literacy Coordinator,
Government of Northwest Territories
Dudley Johnson, Aurora College
Barb Tsetso, Aurora College

