Skills for Success implementation guidance development

Executive summary

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INNOVATION • EXPERIMENTATION • EVALUATION

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

WHAT IS THE AIM OF THIS PROJECT?

In May 2021, the Government of Canada launched Skills for Success as a new model that reflects the evolving skills needs of the modernized labour market. Skills for Success are foundational and transferable to all aspects of work, learning, and life. The model gives prominence to the core literacy skills – Numeracy, Reading, and Writing – and expands the scope of skills that are increasingly important for today's job – Digital and Problem Solving. It also responds to a growing demand for socio-emotional skills from employers across sectors. Particularly, it broadens the scope of two existing socio-emotional skills – Communication and Collaboration – and introduces two more – Adaptability and Creativity and Innovation.

The current project, *Skills for Success Implementation Guidance*, produced a set of Guiding Principles and Promising Practices to support the implementation of Skills for Success training and assessment. The Principles and Practices aim to ensure future Skills for Success initiatives address the needs of groups underrepresented in the labour market and underserved by the traditional educational system (i.e., Indigenous people, racialized Canadians, members of the LGBTQ2+ community, newcomers, and people with disabilities). They also aim to ensure the priorities of employers and industry stakeholders are incorporated so that Skills for Success programming can be responsive to the needs of major sectors in the Canadian economy (e.g., Bioeconomy, Construction, Food Processing, Manufacturing, and Tourism).

Ultimately, this project:

1. Identified the training and assessment needs of key learner groups and sectors;

2. Developed Guiding Principles for implementing Skills for Success programming; and

3. Shared Promising Practices around Skills for Success training and assessments.

The final report synthesizes all project findings. It starts with a synthesis of training and assessment needs from the perspectives of practitioners serving underrepresented groups as well as representing sectoral priorities. It then describes the Guiding Principles that can inform the design, development, delivery, and evaluation of Skills for Success programming to address these needs. Promising Practices that have emerged from organizations that have made the early steps in transitioning into this new skills model are then provided to illustrate the feasibility and practicality of the Guiding Principles.

HOW ARE THE PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES STRUCTURED?

Training and assessment needs, as well as Guiding Principle and Promising Practices, are organized into four stages of training. As shown in Figure 1, training entry represents information that is key to learners' access and uptake of training, and/or employers' decisions to provide learning opportunities to current and prospective employees. Training engagement includes the factors that influence the success of training implementation and delivery. Assessment are tools used to measure skills gains, monitor learning progress, and collect data to demonstrate program value and accountability. Finally, learning transfer involves the application of skills, behaviours, and attitudes learned during the training to a new situation or context.

Figure 1   Stages of training
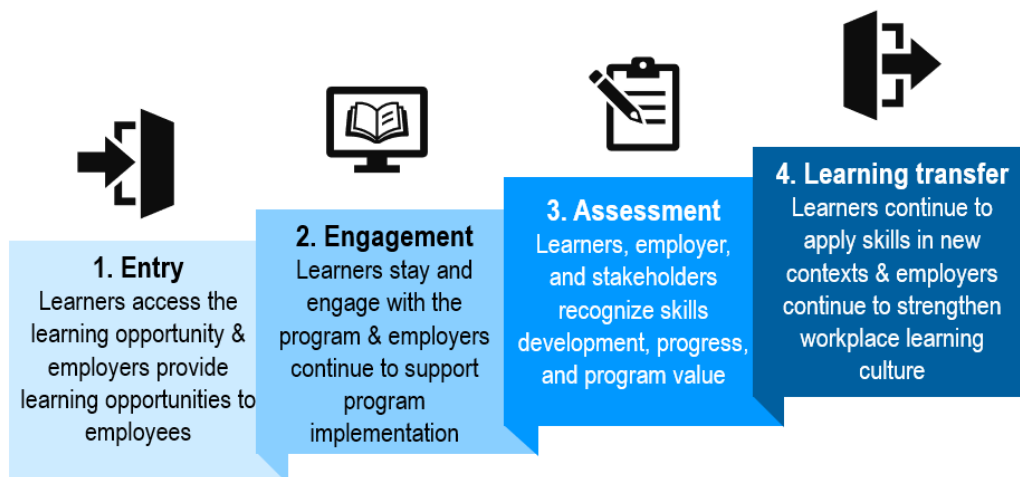
Along with the final report, a series of infographics have been created and can be accessed here.

WHO IS THE INTENDED AUDIENCE?

This project is designed to provide relevant and practical guidance for a range of key players within the Canadian skills training and employment systems. They are organized into five groups representing enactors who can lead, facilitate, and influence the implementation of Skills for Success programming:

- **Funders:** At the federal and provincial/territorial levels, funders set strategic direction, allocate budgets, and decide which components and activities are eligible for funding.

- **Training organizations:** Training organizations such as employment and career development organizations, community-based training organizations, and colleges with continuing education programs design and offer specific forms of training.

- **Employers**: Employers, industry associations, and other sectoral groups provide or support sector-based skills development initiatives aligned with their own talent acquisition and workforce development goals.

- **Practitioners:** Practitioners include instructors and other individuals who directly engage with learners throughout the learning event.

- **Mentors, supervisors, and community members:** These include a wide range of people who are not formal instructors but can integrate social supports and community assets to influence the learning environment as well as skills development and application progress.

Guiding Principles and Promising Practices highlight the specific roles that each enactor group can play to ensure Skills for Success implementation address learner and employer needs. The roles of enactors are overlapping and interconnected, and the successful implementation of Skills for Success will require multi-enactor collaboration to meet the needs of diverse learners and sectors.

WHAT WAS THE APPROACH?

The project involved depth engagement and collaboration with an Advisory Panel of nine prominent organizations across the Canadian skills and employment training sector, as well as extensive engagement with their networks of employers and practitioners through focus groups.

This research and consultation process involved focus groups with over 100 practitioners, the development of two workbooks for written feedback from the Panel, and four conference calls to discuss and finalize the summary of learning needs as well as Guiding Principles and Promising Practices. To facilitate knowledge dissemination and mobilization, a series of short summaries were also developed.

WHAT WERE THE KEY FINDINGS?

Table 1 provides an overview of the key themes across the Guiding Principles.

Table 1   Guiding Principles by stages of training and enactor groups

	Entry	Engagement	Assessment	Learning transfer
Funders	Set up equitable conditions for success	Modernize the employment and skills training sector	Accept multiple definitions of programming success	Promote continuous and lifelong learning
Training organizations	Make strategic investments in communication	Align learning with unique learner needs	Link Skills for Success outcomes with other milestones	Incorporate long-term follow-up in programming model
Employers	Minimize the opportunity cost of training	Align skills training with business priorities and job requirements	Facilitate a data-driven approach to workforce development	Facilitate industry-wide accreditation of Skills for Success
Practitioners	Enhance access to role models and mentors	Create safe learning space while building learner self-efficacy	Triangulate formal assessments with informal reflection	Develop tools and resources for continued skills application after training
Mentors, supervisors, & community	Foster long-term training partnerships	Promote holistic service delivery through partnerships	Identify and track community outcomes as part of program evaluation	Enhance learning culture through Skills for Success champions

To further showcase each Guiding Principle in practice, a list of Promising Practices is provided based on current innovative programming ideas, tools, and resources from organizations that have made the early transition to Skills for Success. One example Practice per Principle is provided in Table 2. More examples from sectoral representatives and practitioners experienced working with groups of learners underrepresented in the labour market are integrated throughout the report to illustrate how the content relates to diverse employment contexts and groups of learners.

Table 2   Examples of Promising Practices by stages of training and enactor groups

	Entry	Engagement	Assessment	Learning transfer
Funders	Encourage funding recipients to customize wrap-around supports to align with the lived experiences and realities of learners	Explore Skills for Success initiatives that incorporate diverse cultural methodologies and approaches	Support research that develops proficiency descriptors, occupational profiles, and other tools informing benchmarks of Skills for Success levels	Promote the broad applicability of Skills for Success across multiple contexts, including and going beyond employment
Training organizations	Leverage partner networks to enhance outreach and communication, especially for organizations with less extensive capacity	Incorporate a Universal Design for Learning (UDL) approach	Create a repository of assessment results and certifications to help learners keep track and provide proof of learning	Build check-ins and follow-ups with learners, employers, and communities after Skills for Success training delivery
Employers	Engage in sectoral collaboration and coalition-based training to enhance the training capacity of small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)	Support and coordinate organizational needs analysis to align Skills for Success with job performance expectations and business priorities	Partner with educators and assessment developers to align Skills for Success measurement with job competency tracking	Enhance the capacity of multiple levels of managers, supervisors, and HR staff to champion Skills for Success among employees
Practitioners	Promote case studies, success stories of program graduates with shared lived experiences with diverse learner groups	Incorporate trauma- and violence informed approaches to training and service delivery	Use Prior Learning Assessment & Recognition (PLAR) to document Skills for Success developed in other contexts	Find opportunities to engage with employers and community members to prepare for learning transfer
Mentors, supervisors, & community	Contextualize skills development as part of community development	Create and sustain a network of supports, resources, and opportunities to help learners persist in training	Involve trusted community members in assessment	Establish opportunities for peer support and mentorship, particularly for underrepresented groups

APPENDIX A: ADVISORY PANEL

Table 3   Panel members

Organizations	Name
Alberta Workforce Essential Skills Society	Tamara Jorgic
Alberta Workforce Essential Skills Society	Cindy Messaros
BioTalent Canada	Patti Galbaith
Bow Valley College	Alisa Foreman
Bow Valley College	Wendy Magahay
Bow Valley College	Krista Medhurst
Douglas College	Danica Isherwood
Douglas College	Julia Lewis
Douglas College	Pam Tetarenko
Excellence in Manufacturing Consortium	Jean-Pierre Giroux
Excellence in Manufacturing Consortium	Carolyn Rasiuk
Food Processing Skills Canada	Jennefer Griffith
Food Processing Skills Canada	Deanna Zenger
Frontier College	Angela Briscoe
Ontario Tourism Education Corporation	Adam Morrison
SkillPlan	Lee Lagan
SkillPlan	Lovey Sidhu

APPENDIX B: FOCUS GROUP ORGANIZATIONS

Table 4   List of organizations in focus groups that provided consent to be named in report

Organizations	Practitioners serving and/or representing the voice of:					
	People with disabilities	Newcomers	LGBTQ2+	Indigenous People	Racialized Canadians	Employers
Abilities to Work Mississauga	✓					
Action for Healthy Communities (AHC)		✓				
Alberta Motor Transport Association		✓		✓		✓
AWES		✓		✓		✓
BC Cancer Agency			✓			
BC Centre for Ability (BCCFA)	✓					
Bow Valley Learning Council		✓		✓		
Canadian Ecotourism Services						✓
Canadian Mental Health Association	✓					
Centennial College		✓				✓
CLAC AB Training						✓
Colleges and Institutes Canada	✓	✓		✓		
Community Living BC	✓					

Organizations	Practitioners serving and/or representing the voice of:					
	People with disabilities	Newcomers	LGBTQ2+	Indigenous People	Racialized Canadians	Employers
Douglas College	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Frontier College		✓		✓	✓	
Go2HR						✓
Immigrant Employment Council BC		✓				
Inclusion Langley	✓					
LGBT+ Chamber			✓			
Neil Squire Society	✓					
NorQuest College	✓	✓				
OFE		✓				
OTEC						✓
PCL Construction						✓
PFLAG Surrey			✓			
posAbilities	✓					
QMUNITY			✓			
Richmond Society for Community Living	✓					
Tourism Ontario – Explorer's Edge RTO12						✓
Tourism Saskatchewan						✓
WorkBC Langley			✓			

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