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# NWT WORKFORCE/WORKPLACE LITERACY AND ESSENTIAL SKILLS REVIEW

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## FINAL REPORT

PREPARED FOR THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES LITERACY  
COUNCIL

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The NWT Literacy Council (NWTLC) was asked by the Government of the NWT (GNWT) Department of Education, Culture and Employment to look at ways to implement items contained in *Towards Literacy: A Strategy Framework – 2008 – 2018*, NWT's Literacy Strategy, as they related to workplace literacy. The NWTLC concluded it was important first to see how these actions could best be implemented in 2012, since several years had elapsed since the release of the Literacy Strategy. At the same time, the NWTLC had to look at workplace learning in the NWT, and the Council's role in it, as part of its funding agreement with the Office of Literacy and Essential Skills (OLES).

This report is an environmental scan of past workforce and workplace literacy and essential skills activities, the current state of activity, and possible models or approaches that could work in NWT. This information should enable the GNWT to move forward with implementing those parts of the Literacy Strategy related to workforce and workplace literacy. The environmental scan is based on a literature review, interviews with 33 key informants, and 3 focus groups held with 36 employers, educators, Aboriginal organizations, non-profit organizations, and government representatives.

The GNWT's Literacy Strategy with its objectives for workplace literacy is a positive development. In addition, there is an opportunity to meld literacy and essential skills with the Labour Market Agreement (LMA) and other initiatives. The Regional Training Committees (RTCs) develop multi-year plans to support the NWT Labour Force Development Framework and help Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) determine how to allocate LMA funds. The RTCs provide an existing partnership framework with key stakeholders and are a built-in vehicle for examining workforce and workplace literacy needs and finding relevant solutions.

There is a great deal of creativity and informal work on the part of adult educators to build essential skills and skills training into their ALBE programs. There have also been some successful strategies to address the needs for workforce literacy through programs like "Ready to Work North". In addition, there has been work on the part of Aboriginal organizations and governments to upgrade the skills of their employees through both formal and informal approaches for workforce literacy and essential skills. However, there is little activity around literacy and essential skills as it relates to employed workers.

Overall, there is an obvious need to focus on workforce and workplace literacy and essential skills and a growing number of stakeholders who want to see something happen along with a number of initiatives that show great possibilities.

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Several gaps and barriers exist preventing full implementation of the NWT Literacy Strategy as it relates to workforce and workplace literacy and essential skills. Perhaps the most obvious gap is that there is no dedicated government staff person, dedicated funding or resources for workforce and workplace literacy as part of the NWT Literacy Strategy. There is no workplace coordinator on the ground with expertise in workforce and workplace literacy and essential skills to assist communities to work with employers and other community partners. Learning outcomes are not tracked. ALBE needs to have concrete workforce/ workplace literacy outcomes embedded though the inclusion of workforce development and essential skills. Some Community Learning Centres (CLCs) could benefit from having more staff. CLCs need adult educators who are trained in workforce and workplace literacy planning and programming. There are significant challenges around lack of employer commitment and buy-in to workplace literacy and essential skills. Employers need more information on why they should get involved and what programs are available to address needs around literacy, language, and essential skills. They also need support and resources to get started.

The environmental scan identified a number of success factors and approaches for workforce and workplace essential skills programming. The success factors include:

1. Government Incentives and Infrastructure Support
2. Employer Commitment and Support
3. Worker/Learner Commitment and Buy-in
4. Collaboration and Partnerships
5. Program Planning and Design
6. Contextualized and Worker-Centred Learning
7. Workforce and Workplace Literacy and Essential Skills Instructors
8. Measurement of Program Outcomes and Return on Expectations

Examples of approaches that work include:

- Preparation for trades and job related training and employment (e.g. Ready to Work North: Northern Women in Mining, Oil & Gas Project; Community Learning Centres: Integrating ALBE and Skills Training)
- Various approaches to workplace literacy and essential skills (e.g. BHP Billiton Workplace Learning Program; La Ronge (SK) Motor Hotel; Rankin Inlet's Workplace

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## Learning Program; Community Learning Centres: Tutoring Individuals in Various Workplaces)

Several other models are offered that might have applicability in the North. These include a community development approach from rural Manitoba and one from British Columbia; an integrated trades training approach used by SkillPlan in BC; a peer training approach from BC; and a mentoring network developed in Australia.

This environment scan shows clearly the conditions needed for workforce and workplace essential skills initiatives to be successful:

1. promotion and awareness building
2. partnership development and leadership development at a regional and territorial level
3. program planning and needs assessment
4. contextualized learning geared to the workplace
5. professional development and resources for adult educators and other instructors
6. tools to document northern approaches.

The NWT Literacy Strategy highlighted four specific actions related to workforce and workplace literacy. The first was the development of an essential skills curriculum. Two existing initiatives could be adapted to meet this task. The first is the ALBE curriculum. The curriculum should be adapted to include work-related skills for those who have an employment goal. The second platform is Return to Work North. This program holds much promise and can be adapted to be more responsive to community labour market needs as well as the needs of the individual learner.

The second item from the NWT Literacy Strategy is the development of an essential skill credential. There was support for a non-academic credential. However, this step ought to be carefully analysed before taking any decision.

The third action item was promotion. There can never be too much promotion of the value of literacy and essential skills. However, without the requisite infrastructure to support training, promotion efforts will fail.

The final item in the NWT Literacy Strategy is incentives. Clearly, for workplace literacy programs to be successful there needs to be incentives to the employer and to the worker.

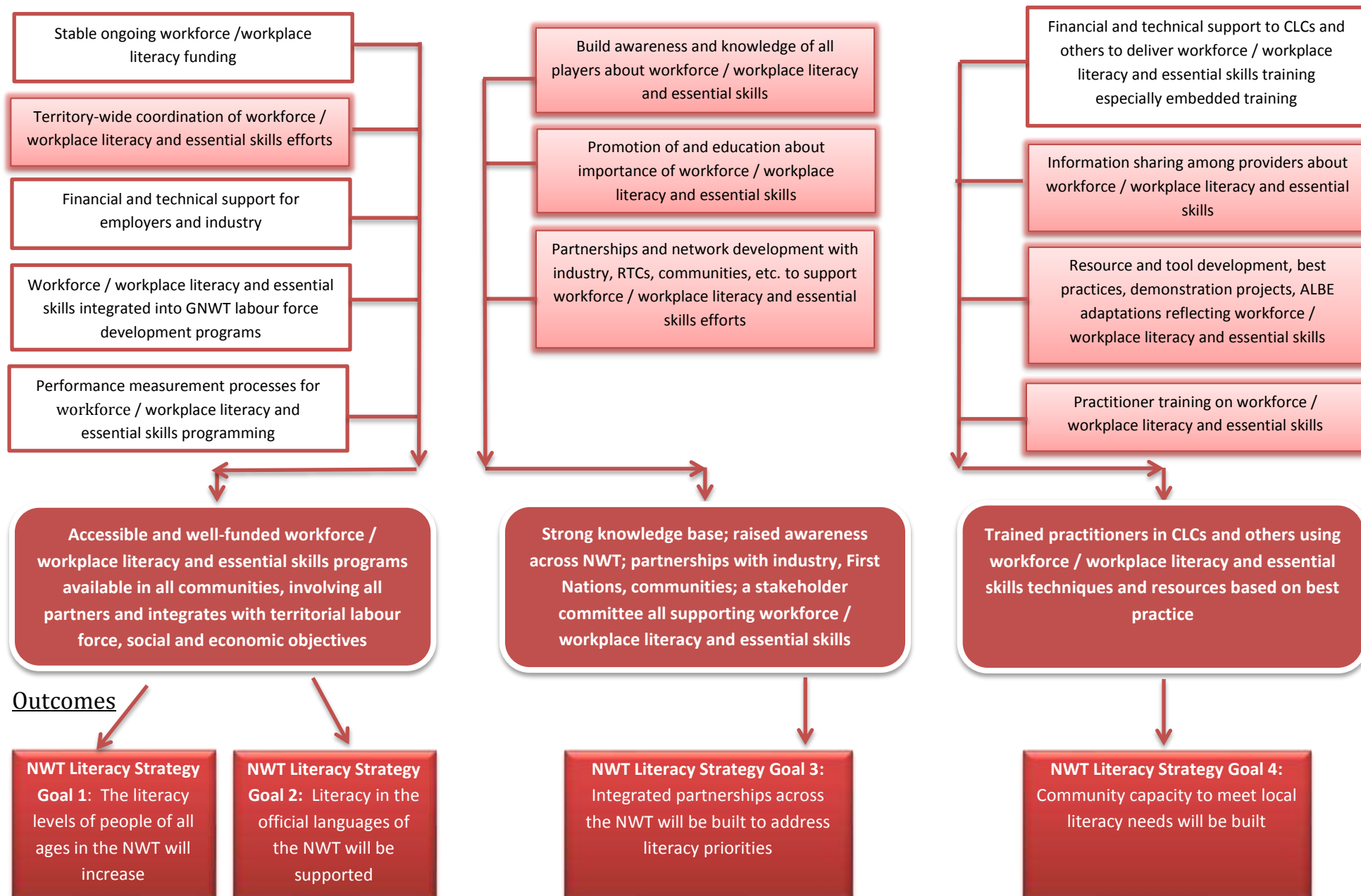
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Despite the fact that past efforts did not turn out as expected, there is a willingness and a need in the NWT to re-launch and re-invigorate efforts to support the workforce and workplace literacy and essential skills needs of northern learners and workers. As one key informant stated, “in the North, community trumps workplace.” This means that all efforts must be based on a model that works for the community. Community development – social, economic, and political – relies on strong individual and collective skills.

The NWT Literacy Strategy recognizes the importance of workforce and workplace literacy elements. This strategic review proposes a framework for workforce and workplace literacy and essential skills that includes adequate funding, awareness and promotion of the issue, practitioner training and development, a designated coordinator, support to employers and other partners, and research and program evaluation.

# Framework for Workforce and Workplace Literacy and Essential Skills in the NWT

## Activities



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## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Embed literacy and essential skills considerations in all programs operating under the Labour Market Agreement and the NWT Labour Force Development Framework.
2. Adjust the Community Literacy Development Fund (CLDF) to highlight workforce and workplace literacy and essential skills funding, include employers as eligible project recipients, and track and promote workforce/workplace projects.
3. Provide Community Learning Centres with targeted resources to support workforce and workplace development.
4. Fund and evaluate demonstration projects that address workforce and workplace literacy and essential skills.
5. Track and evaluate workforce and workplace literacy and essential skills activities, not only those undertaken under the CLDF but also those resulting from labour market agreement programming.
6. Investigate in collaboration with literacy partners including NWTLC and Aurora College the feasibility of offering incentives and infrastructure support to employers to mount workplace literacy and essential skills programs.
7. Provide Regional Training Committees (RTCs) with orientation and training on workforce and workplace literacy and essential skills.
8. Provide dedicated support, required to make the workforce and workplace literacy elements of the NWT Literacy Strategy a reality, through dedicated staff within ECE (however, not necessarily full-time) and a dedicated workforce/workplace coordinator.
9. Embed workforce literacy and essential skills principles and practices in the Adult Literacy and Basic Education (ALBE) curriculum.



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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines the purpose, context, and methodology of the review. It also provides working definitions of key concepts.

This review was designed to address *Towards Literacy: A Strategy Framework – 2008 – 2018*, NWT’s Literacy Strategy activities under the “awareness and support” objective. The NWT Literacy Strategy calls for an exploration of the nature and feasibility of a workplace essential skills curricula based on industry needs. This action was to be complemented by efforts to establish a recognizable workplace essential skills credential, promotion of workplace literacy programs, and identification of incentives for work release and on the job training.

The NWT Literacy Council (NWTLC) was asked by the Government of the NWT (GNWT) to begin work on implementing some of the items contained in the NWT Literacy Strategy as they related to workplace literacy. However, upon reflection, the NWTLC concluded it was important first to see how these actions could best be implemented in 2012 since several years had elapsed since the release of the Literacy Strategy.

The NWTLC contracted the authors of this report to conduct an environmental scan of past workforce and workplace literacy and essential skills activities, the current state of activity, and possible models or approaches that work in NWT before proceeding with implementation

### PURPOSE OF THE REVIEW

The purpose of the review was two-fold:

1. The state of workforce/workplace literacy in NWT

Identify what has been happening in the NWT in the area of workforce/workplace literacy and essential skills. This work would build upon the joint efforts of the NWT Literacy Council and the Nunavut Literacy Council that culminated in the 2007 report *Improving Essential Skills for Work and Community*.

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## 2. Models of and approaches to workforce/workplace literacy relevant to the North

Explore various options for workforce/workplace literacy and essential skills delivery models. This exploration would be based on an understanding of existing models from the NWT, from other territories and from northern communities, input from key stakeholders, and adaptations needed to take into account the particular context of the North.

The results of the review were to culminate in:

1. a draft action plan for a workforce/workplace literacy and essential skills framework
2. recommendations around workforce/workplace literacy and essential skills models that could potentially work in the NWT and with Aboriginal peoples

## **BACKGROUND ON THE CONTEXT FOR THE REVIEW**

*Towards Literacy: A Strategy Framework – 2008 – 2018* is the Northwest Territories' second Literacy Strategy. It describes how the GNWT intends to work towards attaining its vision for literacy which it sees as a lifelong learning process necessary for personal, social, political, and economic development.<sup>1</sup> Central to its strategy for working age adults is the implementation of innovative approaches to adult literacy programming including understanding the linkages between workplace competencies and adult literacy programming. The strategy also calls for efforts to increase awareness of and support for workplace literacy and essential skills programs.

Workplace literacy programs are seen in the Literacy Strategy as alternative supports for those who are already employed and may not be able to attend the Adult Literacy and Basic Education (ALBE) programs on a full-time basis. The Literacy Strategy asserts that these programs are most effective when they include a formal learning component which covers foundational skills. Included in the Literacy Strategy is a focus on workplace readiness programs. These programs include instruction in essential skills, workplace behaviour, and professionalism for those entering the workforce. Finally, the Literacy Strategy recognizes the importance of literacy to community development.

In addition to the NWT Literacy Strategy, the federal government has taken actions that affect workplace literacy and essential skills in the NWT.

First, the federal government and the GNWT have signed a Labour Market Agreement (LMA) which provides funding for NWT training programs for those people who are not eligible for Employment Insurance (EI) training. Among the key target groups are those who do not have

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grade 12 or have low essential skills. GNWT LMA initiatives aimed specifically at literacy and essential skills include:

- “Building Essential Skills” – a short-term training or education intervention offered to participants to obtain essential skills upgrading. The program also assists apprentices to obtain certification and progress in their chosen field.
- “Adult Literacy and Basic Education” provides adults, 18 years of age or older, with Mathematics, English, Social Studies, Science, Career/Life and Information Technology courses that are equivalent to the K-12 system. Adults who have left school have the opportunity to obtain credits towards an NWT Senior Secondary School Diploma, as well as the prerequisites to enter into post-secondary education or to become employment ready.
- “Community Initiatives” which supports community and regionally focussed activities aimed at engaging underrepresented groups in the labour market. Workplace education programming may be funded under this initiative.

Second, the Office of Literacy and Essential Skills (OLES), Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC), re-focused its attention towards efforts that enhance literacy and Essential Skills related to employment. This is a shift away from its previous focus that also included community and family literacy efforts. The NWTLC, which receives core funding from OLES, has been encouraged by OLES to become more involved in workplace and workforce literacy and Essential Skills.

Finally, HRSDC has placed a priority on the literacy and essential skills of Aboriginal people with two programs. The “Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy” (ASETS) provides funds to designated First Nations and Métis agreement holders to design and deliver employment programs and services best suited to the unique needs of their clients. A second program, the “Aboriginal Skills and Employment Partnership” (ASEP) program, was a nationally managed, project-based program that promoted increased participation of Aboriginal people in major economic developments. This program ended March 31, 2012.

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## **METHODOLOGY FOR COLLECTING INFORMATION FOR THE REVIEW**

The methods of data collection for this review were:

- a literature review
- key informant interviews
- focus groups.

A webinar was held with several adult educators who had been part of the interview process to validate the key findings of this report.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The consultants identified key documents for the literature review:

- with the help of the NWTLC
- through searches on the National Adult Literacy Database (NALD), the GNWT Web site, Google, web sites of organizations involved with literacy and essential skills
- through their own personal libraries.

A list of the documents reviewed can be found in Annex 2. Information from the literature review has been woven into the report and has contributed to the basis for recommendations made as part of the review.

The consultants reviewed the following types of documents:

- GNWT policy documents, research, reviews, and funding documents relating to literacy, essential skills and labour force development
- NWTLC workforce/workplace literacy and essential skills materials and reports
- Literature on models, approaches, guiding principles, and results of workforce/workplace programs
- Research reports
- Case studies of northern workplace programs
- NWT conference and roundtable reports on workforce and workplace development.

### **KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS**

The consultants worked with NWTLC staff to develop the interview questions and identify key informants for the review. Lisa Campbell of the NWTLC, with the support of the consultants, conducted the majority of the key informant interviews. In addition to interviewing stakeholders, interviews were held with learners, some of whom are currently employed while

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others had been employed in the past. A list of key informants can be found in Annex 3. Thirty-three interviews were conducted, mostly by telephone. Key informants were assured that their responses would remain confidential. A webinar was held with key informants from the education sector to review and validate the key findings of this report.

**TABLE 1: NUMBER OF INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED BY SECTOR**

Sector	Number of Interviews Conducted
Aboriginal organization representatives	4
Aurora College	6
Community Adult Educators	2
Labour representatives	1
Learners/workers	7
NWT Literacy Council staff and board members	2
Other	1
Subject Matter Experts	6
Territorial government representatives	4
Total	33

## FOCUS GROUPS

The consultants worked with NWTLC staff to develop the focus group agenda, objectives, and activities and identify potential participants. Lisa Campbell and Helen Balanoff of the NWTLC conducted the focus groups with support from the consultants. Focus groups were held in three communities with a range of participants attending; however, the focus was on the employer community. A list of focus group participants can be found in Annex 4.

The purpose of the focus groups was to provide an opportunity for information exchange on workforce/workplace literacy and essentials skills. The objectives were to build more awareness around the topic, share information on current initiatives, and get input on what kind of initiatives would be helpful in the NWT.

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**TABLE 2: FOCUS GROUPS LOCATIONS, SECTORS, AND NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS**

Community	Sectors represented	Number of participants
<b>Yellowknife</b> <b>Total = 11</b>	Service Mining Employer association First Nations NWTLC staff	5 1 1 2 2
<b>Hay River</b> <b>Total = 15</b>	Hospitality Other employers First Nations Non-profit organization Politicians/staff Adult education NWTLC Board Government	2 3 1 2 3 1 2 1
<b>Inuvik</b> <b>Total = 10</b>	Non-profit Banking First Nations Politician Municipal government Adult education NWTLC Board	2 1 1 1 1 3 1
<b>Total participants</b>		<b>36</b>

## WORKING DEFINITIONS

In this section, we outline our working definitions for:

1. Essential Skills
2. Workforce literacy and essential skills
3. Workplace literacy and essential skills
4. Workplace training
5. Literacy and essentials skills integrated into trades or workplace training

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## 1. ESSENTIAL SKILLS

The federal government defines Essential Skills as those skills needed for the workplace. These skills include 1) computer use, 2) thinking, 3) oral communication, 4) continuous learning, and 5) working with others. Essential Skills also include traditional literacy skills such as reading, writing, document use, and numeracy.<sup>2</sup> HRSDC has developed profiles of the Essential Skills required by each occupation.

The NWTLC has worked to re-frame essential skills in a Northern context. These are the basic skills needed for the ever-changing demands of home, work, and community life. Essential skills help people advance in the workforce, take advantage of new opportunities, take a more active role in their community, and successfully deal with daily tasks.<sup>3</sup>

In this report, capital letters will be used when referring to the nine HRSDC Essential Skills; otherwise the lower case will be utilized.

## 2. WORKFORCE LITERACY AND ESSENTIAL SKILLS

Workforce literacy and essential skills are generally associated with the skills needed by those adults trying to enter the workforce or those who are returning to the workplace after being laid off or injured.

## 3. WORKFORCE READINESS

The Literacy Strategy describes workforce readiness programming as including instruction in essential skills, workplace behaviour, and professionalism for those entering the workforce.

## 4. WORKPLACE LITERACY AND ESSENTIAL SKILLS

Workplace literacy and essential skills refer to the skills that adults who are already employed need to do their jobs more effectively, retain their jobs, obtain promotions, or move on to other kinds of work. Workplace literacy and essential skills programs are generally held at or near the workplace.

Although we use the term workplace literacy as part of our meta language to talk about workplace skills, this term is not used when working with employers and workers to set up programming. Instead, the preferred terms are *workplace education* and *workplace learning*. Specific workplaces and communities usually develop their own program name that is relevant and does not use the term “literacy”.



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## **5. WORKPLACE TRAINING**

Workplace training is different from workplace literacy and essential skills learning. Workplace training refers to job-specific skills training. For example, this might include fork lift training, safety training, or training in specific kinds of computer programs. Workplace training does not usually include a focus on learning literacy and essential skills such as document use, writing, math, and basic computer use.

## **6. LITERACY AND ESSENTIALS SKILLS INTEGRATED INTO TRADES OR WORKPLACE TRAINING**

In this approach, the literacy and essentials skills relevant to the topic of training are taught either before, alongside, or at the same time as the trades- or job-related training. This approach has been used successfully in pre-apprenticeship and trades training. An example would be pre-apprentices in a cook program learning the math associated with recipes and converting the quantities required. Another example is participants in an electrical pre-trades program attending an extra math class that is more individualized with extra support tailored and applicable to what they are learning in their trade. The model has also been used with employees taking Workplace Hazardous Management Information Systems (WHMIS), computer, or other skills training.

## **STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT**

Following the introduction, the second chapter outlines the state of workforce and workplace literacy in the NWT. The report provides a historical background on workplace literacy in the NWT. This is followed by an overview of current workforce and workplace literacy and essential skills programming as far as the authors were able to determine. The role of the GNWT in terms of policy and support is discussed followed by an analysis of the strengths and gaps.

The third chapter provides various approaches to workforce and workplace literacy and essential skills programming. First, the principles of good practice are outlined. Various models and approaches will be evaluated through these lenses. Northern models are then detailed, followed by models and approaches from other jurisdictions that might have the potential to be adapted for the NWT. The chapter concludes with analysis of the conditions needed for workforce and workplace literacy and essential skills programming to be successful in the NWT.

Annexes provide a list of acronyms, documents consulted, and key informants and focus group participants.

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## CHAPTER 2: THE STATE OF WORKFORCE/WORKPLACE LITERACY IN THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

### HISTORY

Historically, the 1987 “Continuing Education Policy”<sup>4</sup> provided the framework for literacy and Adult Basic Education (ABE). It identified Aurora College as the main provider of ABE.

In 1995, the National Literacy Secretariat (NLS), the NWT Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE), and Aurora College collaborated to develop a workplace literacy strategy. With project funding from the NLS to Aurora College, the two-year project<sup>5</sup> established partnerships through the development of a Workplace Literacy Advisory Committee. The Committee promoted the concept of workplace literacy, researched, designed and piloted workplace literacy programs, and developed a sustainable strategy for workplace literacy in the NWT.

In November 1996, the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) announced its first “Workplace Education Strategy”.<sup>6</sup> The overall goal of the strategy was to broaden literacy partnerships to include employers, labour, and community organizations to provide the opportunity for workers to further develop their literacy and essential skills. The strategy had three objectives:

1. To increase awareness about literacy in the workplace and the need for workplace education
2. To develop cooperative partnerships among employers, unions, educators, and government in order to meet the basic education needs of workers
3. To develop and support a variety of workplace education projects across the NWT.

ECE had planned several activities to meet these objectives:

- A promotion and public awareness campaign to promote the need for and benefits of workplace education

#### Key Events and Activities

- 1995 – NLS, GNWT, and Aurora College partner to develop a workplace literacy strategy
- November 1996 – GNWT announces a Workplace Education Strategy with funding to support needs assessments and pilot projects

- An advisory group with representation from stakeholders to guide the strategy and promote workplace education
- Funding and program support to employers, unions, and community organizations undertaking workplace needs assessments or developing workplace education pilot projects.

Aurora College was the main recipient of funds under the workplace literacy strategy. Its activities were supplemented by federal funding from the NLS. In fiscal year 1997 – 1998, Aurora College<sup>7</sup> received funding from the NLS to build its capacity to address workplace literacy issues in response to the GNWT’s “Workplace Education Strategy”. The College was to help train practitioners, develop and design workplace literacy programs, market the concept of workplace literacy to employers, establish a clearinghouse of resource material, and maintain partnerships with the GNWT and other key players.

Shortly after the announcement of the “Workplace Literacy Strategy,” the Western Canada Workplace Essential Skills Training Network (WWestNet) organized a forum in Yellowknife, in February 1997<sup>8</sup>. The forum provided an opportunity for NWT employers, labour leaders, Aboriginal and community organizations to develop a better appreciation and practical understanding of the potential for workplace education.

In 1997, Sue Folinsbee and Nancy Steel, two workplace literacy specialists, facilitated a Workplace Literacy Practitioners Training Institute. This responded to the need for trained practitioners to undertake the programming expected to be generated as a result of the strategy and various efforts.

#### **Key Events and Activities**

- February 1997 – WWestNet Workplace Literacy Forum – Yellowknife
- 1997 – Workplace Literacy Practitioners Training Session
- 1997 – ECE cancels the workplace literacy funding program

In 1997, ECE cancelled the workplace literacy funding program announced in the 1996 “Workplace Literacy Strategy”.<sup>9</sup> It is not clear why the funding ended.

Following the cancellation of the funding program, Aurora College received funding from the NLS in 1998 –1999 to build its capacity to deliver workplace literacy by developing a cost-recovery program that would become one of its core business lines. It was to do this by demonstrating the effectiveness of workplace literacy programs to business.

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In the late 1990s, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) changed how it paid for training. Rather than funding educational institutions directly to set aside training seats, HRSDC began to provide the funds to individuals who were eligible for Employment Insurance (EI) and asked the provinces and territories to take on delivery. In 1998, the GNWT signed its Labour Market Development Agreement (LMDA) with HRSDC, which transferred funds and responsibility for delivery to the GNWT. On a parallel track, in 1997 HRSDC created the Aboriginal Human Resource Development Agreements (AHRDA) for training Aboriginal people. Both these efforts may have diffused training efforts by establishing two different funding methods administered in two very different ways. Eligibility for the LMDA was restricted to those who were eligible for EI, a significant change from previous policy.

In 1999, ECE issued the “Adult Literacy and Basic Education Directive”<sup>10</sup> to provide a more current policy framework to its 1987 “Continuing Education Policy”. The directive expanded responsibility for Adult Literacy and Basic Education (ALBE) and literacy beyond Aurora College to include ECE, other providers, Aboriginal governments, and community agencies. The directive also affirmed the ALBE curriculum as the tool for standardizing services and receiving funding.

Aboriginal languages were given priority. Funding was provided in two streams – one to non-government organizations and the other for base funding for Aurora College. In 1999 – 2000, 83% of the literacy and ALBE budget went to Aurora College.

### Key Events and Activities

- 1999 – Adult Literacy and Basic Education Directive
- 2001 – *Towards Literacy, A Strategy Framework*  
2001-2005 sets aside \$2.4 million for literacy

*Towards Literacy: A Strategy Framework – 2001 - 2005*<sup>11</sup> was the first NWT Literacy Strategy. This strategy specifically recognized workplace literacy. Among the various actions in the strategy were calls for improved job-readiness skills, the development of workplace literacy programs in partnership with employers, recognition and rewards for innovative and effective programming, and the development of workplace literacy partnerships through the establishment of a Workplace Education Committee made up of stakeholders including business, labour, and educators. The strategy targeted funding to support workplace literacy in settings such as small business, bands, and hamlets. An annual budget of \$2.4 million was established for literacy, a portion of which was dedicated to workplace literacy needs assessments and wage subsidies.

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At this time, one of the largest and better-known workplace literacy programs in the NWT was begun. BHP Billiton Diamonds Inc. (now BHP Billiton Canada) ran a workplace literacy program from 2001 – 2008. Through signed agreements with the GNWT, the North Slave Métis Alliance, the Inuit of Kugluktuk, the Tli Cho Government, the Yellowknives Dene First Nation, and the LutselK'e Dene Council, the company had committed to Aboriginal hiring preferences. The “Workplace Learning Program” addressed employee needs that ranged from pre-literate to pre-apprenticeship levels. The program included individual literacy assessments and various delivery methods including one-to-one tutoring, group instruction, and computer-based literacy training. The program content was designed in collaboration with team leaders to ensure lessons were relevant to the worker’s job duties. Workplace documents were used in the program design. Both immediate and long-term needs of employees were considered.<sup>12</sup>

### Key Events and Activities

- 2001 – BHP Billiton Workplace Literacy Program begins
- 2002 – NWT Labour Force Development Plan (2002-2007)
- 2004 – Northern Workplace/Workforce Literacy Consortium meeting
- 2005 – Funding for workplace literacy cut by \$300,000

The Conference Board of Canada<sup>13</sup> found the “Workplace Literacy Program” at BHP Billiton Diamonds Inc. to be well-suited for northern or remote workplace sites with its flexible training schedule and customized curriculum. The program especially targeted Aboriginal workers who may have had limited experience with written language or formal education.

The NWT Literacy Strategy was embedded in the *NWT Labour Force Development Plan 2002 – 2007*<sup>14</sup> linking literacy and skill development to overall labour force performance.

The Northern Workplace/Workforce Literacy Consortium came together in April 2004 in Yellowknife to share information and aspirations for workplace and workforce literacy in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut. The Nunavut Literacy Council and the NWT Literacy Council took a lead role in initiating the development of the Northern Workplace/Workforce Literacy Consortium with financial support from the NLS, HRSDC.<sup>15</sup>

However, by 2005, the GNWT workplace literacy funding program’s annual budget was reduced by \$300,000, virtually depleting the entire allocation for workplace literacy. Apparently, too few employers had applied for funding. Afterwards, a new funding program was created, the “Community Literacy Development Fund” (CLDF).<sup>16</sup> The CLDF was comprised of four previously separate programs launched as part of the first NWT Literacy Strategy – “NWT Workplace

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Education”; “Community Skills for Work”; “Community Literacy Programs”; and “Literacy Programs and Support for Seniors”. Later in 2005, an “Essential Skills and the Northern Oil and Gas Workforce” conference was held in Yellowknife to try to encourage some of the larger employers to become involved in workplace literacy. WWestNet again came to Yellowknife to support the development of workplace literacy and essential skills. In May 2006, it hosted “Integrating Essential Skills into Training Materials”.

In 2007, the *NWT Literacy Strategy Summative Evaluation* evaluated the first five years of Literacy Strategy programming. While there were a number of observations and recommendations, none specifically addressed workplace literacy.

That same year, the Nunavut and the NWT Literacy Councils came together to examine workplace literacy and essential skills in the North. As with previous studies,<sup>17</sup> the report, *Improving Essential Skills for Work and Community, Workplace and Workforce Literacy*,<sup>18</sup> concluded that issues related to literacy and essential skills had to be dealt with in the context of their impact on Aboriginal people. The report called for a collaboration mechanism among stakeholders, an essential skills strategy, and incentives for employers to develop and deliver programs.

At the federal level during 2006 and 2007, literacy and other lifelong learning programs were amalgamated under the Adult Learning Literacy and Essential Skills Program (ALLESP) administered by the Office of Literacy and Essential Skills (OLES). This began the push towards privileging workplace literacy and essential skills over community-based or family literacy.

### Key Events and Activities

- 2005 – “Essential Skills and the Northern Oil and Gas Workforce” Conference
- 2007 – NWT Literacy Strategy Summative Evaluation
- 2007 – Nunavut and NWT Literacy Council publish *Improving Essential Skills for Work and Community*
- 2006-07 – The Adult Learning, Literacy and Essential Skills Program and the Office of Literacy and Essential Skills created with a workplace focus

Increasing concerns about training and skills required for the North led to the first NWT Training Forum being held in May 2007. Creating a foundation for learning (literacy and the skills needed to enter the workplace) was identified as a priority. Additional attention was also paid to these issues at the May 2008, Canadian Council on Learning’s Forum on Employer Investment in Workplace Learning held in Yellowknife. A number of themes emerged from the roundtable:

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- Raise literacy/foundation skills in the NWT
  - Improve access to learning opportunities for those living in remote communities
  - Promote awareness of learning opportunities in the general population and within organizations
  - Provide culturally-sensitive curriculum
  - Consider tax incentives to support greater investment by employers and workers
  - Focus on helping disadvantaged groups (Aboriginal people, persons with disabilities, women considering occupations in which they have been under-represented) and small- and medium-sized employers.

In 2008, the GNWT issued its second Literacy Strategy. *Towards Literacy: A Strategic Framework – 2008 – 2018* laid out a 10-year plan. Initially, \$2.4 million was allocated to the strategy. Several recommended actions pertain to workplace literacy and essential skills:

- Research linkages between workplace competencies and adult literacy programming
- Increase awareness of and support for workplace literacy and essential skills programs:
  - Explore the nature and feasibility of workplace essential skills curricula based on industry needs.
  - Establish a recognizable workplace essential skills credential.
  - Promote and support the delivery of workplace literacy programs.
  - Collaborate with stakeholders to identify incentives for work release and on-the-job training programs.

#### **Key Events and Activities**

- 2008 – Second Literacy Strategy issued – *Towards Literacy: A Strategic Framework – 2008 – 2018*

Although a committee monitors implementation of the strategy, unlike the previous literacy strategy, there was no provision for a specific stakeholder committee to act as champions for workplace literacy.

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In 2009, the GNWT signed a Labour Market Agreement (LMA) with the federal government through which the federal government transfers funds for training of those not eligible for training under the LMDA. Those without a grade 12 or with low essential skills are targeted groups under the agreement.

The increased focus on labour market issues was seen in the hosting of the “2009 Training Forum” and the publication of the *NWT Labour Market Review*. That review highlighted initiatives including “Building Essential Skills”, ALBE, “Community Literacy Development Fund”, “Skills Development,” and “On-line Essential Skills”, the latter developed by the NWTLC.

In 2011, the *NWT Labour Force Development Framework*, which reiterates the commitments of the Literacy Strategy, was the subject of discussion at the 2011 “NWT Labour Force Development Forum”. The Forum introduced the Framework and facilitated discussion on partnership, federal and territorial training and economic development programs and funding opportunities, labour market statistics, and Aurora College’s business and industries skill development initiatives.

#### **Key Events and Activities**

- 2009 – NWT signs the Labour Market Agreement
- 2009 Training Forum; Labour Market Review released
- 2011 Labour Force Development Framework released

Literacy and essential skills are not just the purview of those concerned with adult education; they are very much a part of the territory’s labour market development strategy. However, despite this policy focus, responsibility for both the Literacy Strategy and the labour market development strategy is shared among a number of GNWT divisions. This can make it difficult to ensure that literacy and essential skills remain a priority by all those involved in labour market development.

### **CURRENT ACTIVITIES**

A scan of the environment indicates that most of the work currently taking place in the NWT is about workforce literacy and essential skills with the goal of preparing people for employment. The need is perceived as great given the gap between the skills people have and the jobs available. Many adults seeking employment do not have a formal education and literacy is an issue for them.



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## **1. COMMUNITY LITERACY DEVELOPMENT FUND (CLDF)**

ECE's "Community Literacy Development Fund" (CLDF) covers both workforce and workplace literacy. Its purpose is to promote literacy in a variety of locations including the workplace. The funding granted annually covers program delivery, learning material development, outreach, awareness building, and a number of other areas. Hamlets, band councils, community organizations, registered non-profits, and libraries are eligible to apply. These organizations can re-apply for funding in a second year if they can show through an evaluation that they have been successful.<sup>19</sup> Government representatives noted that there is little uptake on the fund for workplace literacy. In 2010-2011, the CLDF provided grants to 40 projects across the territory.

## **2. BUILDING ESSENTIAL SKILLS**

ECE also has a program called "Building Essential Skills"<sup>20</sup> which funds short-term training for unemployed individuals to help them return to work quickly. Financial assistance is possible under the program for tuition, books/materials, living away expenses, dependent childcare, transportation, and special equipment. Participants are involved for a maximum of 52 weeks or less and may continue to receive EI.

## **3. WORKFORCE TRAINING**

Aurora College plays a key role in workforce training. The College offers a variety of certificate and diploma programs including pre-trades programs in carpentry and heavy equipment and a one-month program in environmental monitoring. These programs are geared to helping people advance to further training, get into the workforce, or move to better jobs.

The College also organizes and delivers various kinds of training on a fee-for-service basis. Private sector organizations and Aboriginal governments ask for different kinds of training and then the College finds the instructor and sets up the training. Examples of training programs offered include mining and industrial training, safety training, Transportation of Dangerous Goods, Chain Saw Safety, and First Aid.

## **4. WORKFORCE LITERACY AND ESSENTIAL SKILLS**

From a GNWT perspective, workforce literacy is a priority in terms of getting people ready for work. This training is funded mainly through Labour Market Agreement (LMA) money.

Between 2009 and 2011, ECE reported on projects funded under the LMA. While many projects may have included literacy and essential skills upgrading, the following project descriptions specifically mention this type of training.

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- Aurora College – Pre-Employment Construction Training

Program features basic upgrading and hands-on training (2 months) and was delivered in Tulita and Inuvik

- Aurora College – Workplace Readiness Program

A 6-week program that provides basic skills required for the workplace delivered in Hay River.

- Tulita Development Ltd – Work Project

A hands-on program that provided participants in Tulita with basic skills and work experience

Community adult educators working at Aurora College’s Community Learning Centres (CLC) prepare adults for entry-level work through adult upgrading to get jobs they normally would not be able to get. In some cases, they are trying creative ways beyond the traditional ALBE to support people to get employment such as including literacy in drivers training. They offer short courses with skills that employers want that can be added to their students’ résumés. In other cases, trades people get support to write their trades exam or work on the skills of finding a job.

A recent review of the ALBE program found that while the program continues to provide academic and personal benefits to students, some of its processes (e.g. tracking, performance review) are seen as out of date.<sup>21</sup> Modular courses, practical hands on courses with basic literacy, pairing skills and employment training with ALBE were all seen as possible future improvements. A committee has recently been struck to assist with implementation of the findings from the review.

The Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency (CanNor) recently announced<sup>22</sup> \$27 million in funding through the new Northern Adult Basic Education Program with funding to Aurora College, Yukon College, and Nunavut College. Funds will be used to develop a four-year strategic plan for adult basic education in the NWT. This is a great opportunity to embed tangible workplace skills into the program and use a more hands on modular approach.

Aboriginal governments are also focusing on workforce literacy programs to provide people with the skills to get employment. They sponsor people in programs and have offered workforce readiness programs that include a focus on literacy skills. There have been varying degrees of success with these programs with a need for a proper assessment process to identify a person’s educational needs. One First Nations Council interviewed reporting working closely

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with Aurora College and has seen success through pre-employment programs. Funding support generally comes from federal programs such as ASETS and ASEP.

## **READY TO WORK NORTH**

Aurora College offers an essential skills program called “Ready to Work North” (RTWN). This program varies in length from 70-100 hours. It can be a stand-alone program or embedded into other programs. It focuses on HRSDC’s nine Essential Skills as well as information management. Of interest is that the program has been used in a variety of settings – employer programs, programs at the College, in organizations doing skills training, and in adult literacy programs. The program was created to address the need to prepare adults seeking employment with basic employment skills. Smaller communities exposed to a wage economy for the first time and young people entering the workforce were the target. A gap was identified between the skills wanted by and expectations of employers versus the skills of the work force.

RTWN has been tailored to, and integrated with the College’s courses in underground mining and other pre-trades programs such as heavy equipment operator. Instructors travel to communities to deliver the program and then a technical instructor teaches the trades component. In the case of underground mining, RTWN focuses on themes and scenarios for mining such as answering the phone, reading safety messages, and filling out accident and incident reports. Key informants indicated there has been an excellent hire rate and good retention for those attending the underground mining RTWN program. The College is currently reviewing the program. The NWTLC was recently asked to work on revising RTWN as part of the CanNor initiative.

## **5. WORKPLACE LITERACY AND ESSENTIAL SKILLS**

The GNWT sees workplace literacy as part of the NWT Literacy Strategy but has not seen an interest from employers. Technically employers cannot apply for funding through the CLDF although Aboriginal governments can.

There appears to be little activity taking place with respect to workplace literacy and essential skills even though it is clear from key informant interviews and the focus groups that there is a need and an interest among employers.

The predominant approach to workplace literacy is informal one-to-one tutoring and coaching. Sometimes instructors from CLCs or other organizations go to a workplace, often a Band office, to help an employee on a one-to-one basis. The employer gives release time and the adult educator develops an individualized training plan. Some comments indicated that this approach has not been very successful because employers underestimate the time it takes to improve

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literacy skills or employees do not buy in. In addition, the employees can get behind in their work and sessions can be interrupted by work demands. However, in other cases, this approach has worked well to help employees build their confidence and improve skills and ability to accomplish tasks.

Aurora College offered weekly evening upgrading (Math, English, and ESL) to low skilled employed individuals in Yellowknife funded by the LMA. The College acknowledged that getting workplace literacy training off the ground was very difficult. Many reasons were cited for this with lack of employee buy-in as a main one. It was felt that although people might need to upgrade their skills there was no extra incentive for people to do the training because they already had a job. In one example, an Aboriginal government made training available to all its employees but there was no uptake.

Community adult educators indicated that workplace literacy programming is limited even though they get calls from employers for help. Some of the barriers include no direct funding to the College for this type of work and lack of time and staff. There is a need and an interest from employers but a need for funding to support programming.

## **GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES – POLICY AND SUPPORT**

As previously mentioned, the GNWT has developed two literacy strategies. The first one in 2001 included a workplace literacy strategy and funding, which built upon earlier efforts funded by the federal government. However, after a few years, the workplace literacy budget was reduced by \$300,000 and eventually rolled into the CLDF.

The GNWT indicated that it reduced the funding because employers were not accessing the funds. Even though a small number of organizations used the funding, overall there was not the buy-in. Key informants recalled some small projects involving tutoring and job coaching. Some key informants felt the purpose of the funding might not have been clear to employers. It was also difficult to get the information out. Even though newspaper advertisements were used, it might not have been clear or evident what workplace literacy was.

There was also a capacity issue. Many people, especially employers, do not have the time to apply for funding or to deal with reporting requirements. Some key informants indicated that the program required too much paperwork. Employers cannot afford to pay people to be part of a workplace literacy program, even if there is a subsidy. Another capacity issue may have been a lack of participants, difficulty creating and mounting a program, and finding an available instructor.

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Within ECE, there were some challenges with coordination. Key informants recall a period when there was no full time coordinator on staff to drive the issue. There was a tension between spending the funds on programs and spending funds on having a coordinator who could promote the program, work with employers, and provide the support needed. Key informants felt adult educators were needed to work with employers and bands to help them develop programs. “Workplace literacy does not work in the same way in the North – it is more than just going from school to work – you need to assist workers to help them remain working.” Key informants expressed concern that once it was evident that the program was not having the impact planned, the money was just given to other programs like the GED.

In 2005, workplace literacy became part of the CLDF. ECE found that its system of allocating the funds for the four Literacy Strategy programs did not work. First, each program had its own separate allocation and transfers between programs were not permitted. Second, funds were distributed regionally, some regions underspent and there was no way to re-distribute the funds. Pooling the funds was expected to avoid this problem by permitting the regions to spend in response to the mix of applications received. The new system also helped to reduce the number of applications prepared and submitted by non-government organizations. However, while workplace literacy continued as an eligible activity under the CLDF, private sector employers were no longer permitted to apply for funding directly; however, band councils and hamlets are eligible to apply.

In 2009 – 2010,<sup>23</sup> out of 42 projects, eight CLDF projects (19%) were identified as dealing with workforce or workplace literacy. In 2010 – 2011, the CLDF spent \$2,081,000 on 40 projects, six (15%) of which dealt with workforce readiness and workplace skills.<sup>24</sup> No figures were found for the previous period when there was an independent workplace education program for comparison purposes.

Aurora College is not eligible for CLDF funding; however, it does receive direct transfers from ECE for ALBE programming. Concern was raised during key informant interviews that the College and its CLCs were not able to access the CLDF.

In 2008, the new “Literacy Strategy” was released with an overall budget of about \$2.3 million. However, this was to cover all literacy activity from early childhood to seniors, all 11 official languages, and youth at risk. There are several areas of the Literacy Strategy that are not funded; ECE reviews the strategy each year and tries to make adjustments. There is no direct funding for the implementation of the Literacy Strategy. There is an advisory committee, chaired by the responsible Assistant Deputy Minister, that meets twice a year to give advice and share information on the strategy. The committee has regional representation, an Elder, an educator, and a representative of the NWTLC.

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Key informants had a vague understanding that there was a new “Literacy Strategy” or had a slight knowledge of what was in it. Few people mentioned they had actually read the strategy. College staff was more familiar with the strategy. According to key informants, there is a perception of a lack of commitment on the part of the GNWT to the Literacy Strategy as evidenced through the lack of personnel and funding to keep it in the forefront. It was suggested that there needs to be more direction, funding, dedicated staff, and authority to make it a success. On the other hand, others suggested that the GNWT had taken many positive steps such as having designated staff for the ALBE and the Literacy Strategy and creating the Advisory Committee. The issue was rather a lack of communication of what had been done.

There is no specific funding for workplace literacy in the most recent Literacy Strategy even though it contains objectives related to workplace literacy. From interviews, it is clear that workplace literacy is not a priority. This time there is no specific stakeholder group mandated to promote and encourage workplace literacy activity. One key informant felt the strategy would need champions to promote the issue since having a strategy on paper is not enough. It was suggested that employers need to speak about why they need this programming for their employees as politicians seem to listen to employers.

A concern was expressed about the historic inability of the GNWT and the College to respond to workplace literacy issues. In the past, Bow Valley College of Calgary, Alberta and private consultants stepped in to fill the void. If the College does not step up and become active, some key informants felt ECE would look elsewhere for support.

Key informants had other suggestions to make about the Literacy Strategy. The establishment of a credential that employers would recognize was seen as positive by at least one key informant. A dedicated ECE staff person with experience in workplace and workforce literacy would help. ECE has limited resources to deal with its large mandate and the challenge of dealing with so many isolated communities. There needs to be more active integration and evaluation between the Literacy Strategy and the “Labour Force Development Framework”. Literacy does not always need to have a workplace outcome, but there needs to be a connection. The Literacy Strategy’s outcomes are very broad and loose making it hard to provide concrete guidelines to (College) educators. The strategy needs to clearly articulate workplace literacy outcomes.

A weakness in the ALBE system, the centrepiece of the GNWT's adult literacy efforts, is accountability. The May 2010 Report of the Auditor General<sup>25</sup> found that ECE and Aurora College do not do very well at monitoring the ALBE program. This finding was echoed in the recent ALBE review that called for the development of an ALBE logic model and performance measures of student and program success.<sup>26</sup> This issue had been previously identified in the evaluation of the "2001 – 2005 Literacy Strategy" which found a lack of baseline data at the beginning of the Strategy and data collection and reporting problems.

In addition to the Literacy Strategy, the Labour Market Agreement (LMA), worth about \$3 million, supports, among other priorities, workplace Essential Skills and workplace experience. The NWTLC was funded to develop an interactive on-line Essential Skills tool. Other projects included basic upgrading and hands-on trades training, upgrading and English as a Second Language (ESL) for low skilled employed individuals, workplace readiness, and a hands-on program with basic skills and work experience.<sup>27</sup> The College, employers, and band councils run these projects. Key informants felt that the LMA projects offer the possibility of integrating literacy; several projects have already done so.

The LMA is supported by the "NWT Labour Force Development Framework".<sup>28</sup> The framework established priorities including workforce readiness (improve literacy and essential skills programs) and deliver innovative and flexible labour market initiatives that link to employment. It also commits to producing labour market information in plain language. The framework established a process for delivering LMA programs and services through the regional training committees (RTCs). Each region sets its own priorities and for some, workforce literacy is a priority, but as workforce readiness.

### **Regional Training Committees**

ECE, through its regional Service Centres, coordinates five regional training committees. These committees are charged with developing annual or multi-year plans to support the Labour Force Development Framework's strategic priorities and goals.

These committees provide for regional coordination of program delivery, development of local partnerships and networks, and strengthen linkages among stakeholders. Each committee aligns its plans to support the interests of Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy (ASETS) partners.

The five regions are North Slave, South Slave, Sahtu, Deh Cho, and Beaufort Delta Regions.

Partners generally include ECE, Aurora College, Aboriginal Governments, community organizations, and other stakeholders involved in education and training. The NWTLC is a member of the North Slave Regional Training Partnership.



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The “Labour Force Development Framework” established an annual Labour Force Development Symposium in order to track progress on the framework, to highlight best practices, and promote partnerships. ECE is developing a territorial-level coordinating body with all the RTCs and territorial groups such as the Chamber of Commerce and the NWTLC which would meet at the annual symposium. While people were encouraged that these conversations were taking place, most discussions so far have not focused on the workplace.

The “Labour Force Development Framework” is supported by some 20 agreements (many with the federal government) and initiatives. This allows the GNWT to use LMA, LMDA, Targeted Initiative for Older Workers, and Small Communities Support funds to provide skills and education for employment. It has also been able to use ASETS funds to maximize the impact of LMA funds. Key informants spoke positively about the comprehensive projects funded from these various sources that combined workplace and workforce literacy with counselling and lead to employment.

Key informants were asked what it would take to advance workforce and workplace literacy in the territory. Many of their responses echoed what was found in the literature review.<sup>29</sup> Some of their responses were:

- Integrate essential skills and a workforce approach into the ALBE curriculum.
- Have ECE take a leadership role. Roles and responsibilities of all the stakeholders in the Literacy Strategy need to be outlined.
- Create a stakeholder group – unions, chambers of commerce, private and public employers, small business, and Aboriginal governments – to help promote and educate about workforce/workplace learning.
- Create better linkages with the RTCs especially those that have already identified workplace readiness as a priority.
- Focus on smaller communities as a means of creating opportunities. Ensure the infrastructure for learning is there, such as wireless for all communities. Community economic development requires improved literacy and numeracy, and basic education. This will help create local jobs (and jobs for local people).
- Building on all of the “paper” (i.e., documents such as the Literacy Strategy, the ALBE Directive), find the political will to legislate mandatory literacy and essential skills training and support.



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- Train practitioners on workplace literacy and essential skills – there were practitioners able to do this five years ago, but not today.
  - Find ways to encourage the College to train their adult educators to support workforce and workplace learning. Right now, adult educators are overloaded dealing with ALBE issues; they need support, perhaps more people, and training to meet workforce demands.
  - Permit Adult Educators/Community Learning Centres to access funding for workplace and workforce literacy.
  - Develop best practices and case studies, especially those relevant to the North.
  - Offer funding and incentives for employers including payment of wages.
  - Ensure that government sets the example in its own offices.
  - Have a designated position for someone to go into communities to develop workplace literacy plans. Look at using the NWTLC's family literacy model which is community-based in order to promote workplace literacy.
  - Develop a process similar to the Manitoba and Nova Scotia workplace literacy models with dedicated staff promoting workplace literacy. "You need someone whose job it is to notice opportunities and connect people. What works is dedicated people who are there to help." Employers often do not know where to start, especially smaller employers. It is not just about money, it is also about time and expertise.
  - Integrate literacy with labour market development efforts in a developmental way, more than just managing funds but actively supporting community development.
  - Integrate literacy and essential skills into job training and workplace readiness programs.

The GNWT has the framework in place to promote literacy and has access to many sources of funding. The challenge will be to embed literacy into all activities, especially those related to labour force development.

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## **ANALYSIS OF STRENGTHS AND GAPS**

This section examines the strengths, gaps, and challenges with respect to the current state of workforce/workplace literacy in NWT. We start the section off by looking at what makes workforce and workplace literacy in the NWT unique.

### **THE UNIQUENESS OF WORKFORCE AND WORKPLACE LITERACY IN NWT**

In the fall of 2011, there were 43,485 people in the Northwest Territories with approximately half the population being Aboriginal. The population is spread over a large land mass of 1,171,918 square kilometres.<sup>30</sup> The territory also has 11 official languages. Currently, about 6% of the population is comprised of immigrants with a motivation to take training. They are getting jobs.

Many factors make workforce and workplace literacy and essential skills unique in NWT. A major factor is that the NWT has a low literacy rate making it difficult for local people to get jobs even though there is an abundance of jobs especially in oil and gas and mining. As one informant said, “There are so many jobs but people can’t access them.” The high school dropout rate is high, especially for Aboriginal people. In addition, even people who have their Grade 12 may not really have the skills up to that grade level. There is the feeling among stakeholders that the education in the North is not equivalent to that found in the south. In addition, there appear to be people working who need to enhance their skills to be able to fully function in their position. There is a sense that people are put in jobs they are not necessarily qualified for causing frustration for both employees and employers.

Another unique factor is that workforce and workplace literacy and essential skills is seen as a community issue not just an issue for individual workplaces. The focus on community means that people are looking for broader transferable workforce essential skills that will help them not only with employment but will help them contribute to the viability of their community.

In terms of offering programs to meet the needs of participants, a blending of skill development and literacy and essential skills is seen as an approach that works in terms of workforce readiness and workplace upgrading. Learning needs to include culturally relevant materials and address the learning styles of participants which may be more “hands-on”. One-to-one tutoring or small group learning is seen as a good approach. Credentials for learning are important as they contribute to feelings of achievement and give participants concrete recognition for their work.

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In the NWT, communities are more remote and isolated making it harder to access learning. Resources and instructors may not always be available making it difficult to do workplace literacy in some places. The only program available may be ALBE.

### **UNIQUE NEEDS OF ABORIGINAL PEOPLE**

Feedback from key informants indicates that workforce and workplace literacy in an Aboriginal context must be examined within a larger context of poverty, trauma, social issues, residential school experiences, and colonization. Adult educators need to have more of an understanding of this context. Often counselling is a needed component of a program for good results.

Aboriginal people coming to a learning program need supports such as funding, childcare, and counselling opportunities. Realistic goals need to be set for learning. In addition, they may speak their own Aboriginal language and find learning in English challenging.

The approach that works seems to be to combine skill based, hands-on learning with academic upgrading, materials that are culturally relevant, and a respect for existing skills and different learning styles. For example, in one situation land claims materials were used with workers who wanted to participate more in band council meetings.

In workplace literacy programs, job coaches have been used successfully to orient and mentor people in their own Aboriginal language to the new context of the workplace. A broader approach that is workplace focused along with personal development needs should also be used.

The information from the key informants echoes the recommendations of the House of Commons Committee on Human Resources Development in its recommendations about Aboriginal literacy. That committee recommended an approach, based on consultations with provincial/territorial governments and Aboriginal communities that incorporates a holistic approach, respects Aboriginal languages, traditions and values, and is funded a level commensurate with the seriousness of the problem of low literacy among Aboriginal peoples.<sup>31</sup>

### **UNIQUE NEEDS OF IMMIGRANTS**

Key informants spoke about the growing number of newcomers coming to NWT, particularly in regional centres. Some have high levels of education and need English speaking skills while others do not have literacy in their own language. Immigrants are seen as highly committed to learning often working two or three low skill jobs.

There are some language programs available through the federal “Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada” (LINC) and those who fit the guidelines can take the course. Often the

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LINC program is full and there is a wait list. Others may join ALBE programs and go on to other Aurora College programs. It appears there is not enough support for new immigrants in terms of orientation to the culture of the North and programming for people who have literacy needs in their own language.

## **STRENGTHS**

The GNWT's Literacy Strategy with objectives for workplace literacy is positive. In addition, there is the opportunity to meld literacy with the LMA and other initiatives. For example, the LMA money covers workforce and workplace literacy and essential skills and is targeted to those who cannot access EI, are underemployed and have no certification. The RTCs develop multi-year plans to support the labour force development framework. These plans also help ECE determine how to allocate the \$3 million in LMA funds. Often ASETS money can be combined with the LMA money. The RTCs provide a partnership framework with key stakeholders that is already in place throughout the territory. This partnership framework provides a built-in vehicle for examining workforce and workplace literacy needs and finding relevant solutions.

In February 2012, Prime Minister Harper announced that the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency (CanNor) is providing \$27 million over five years to adult basic education programs in the three territories. "By improving access to adult basic education, we are giving Northerners the tools they need to seek higher education and secure employment in sectors that contribute to Canada's economic growth," said Prime Minister Stephen Harper in his announcement from Iqaluit. Key stakeholders see this funding as an opportunity to improve access to educational opportunities for adults as well as to examine and make changes that might improve the program such as focusing more on workforce skills and credentials to help adults gain employment. These skills could be embedded into the curriculum with adult educators receiving training to do this. The funding is also an opportunity to offer more effective programming to smaller communities.

This review found a great deal of creativity and informal work on the part of adult educators to build essential skills and skills training into their ALBE programs to deal with those learners who have employment goals. There have also been some successful strategies to address the needs for workforce literacy through programs like "Ready to Work North". There is however a need to find ways for adult educators to share their strategies with one another.

In addition, there has been a lot of work on the part of Aboriginal organizations and governments to upgrade the skills of their members and employees through both formal and informal approaches to workforce literacy and essential skills.

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The focus groups offered as part of the review were both educational and consultative. Due to a growing understanding of what some possibilities were, there was more interest generated on the part of the employers and community partners in what some of the possibilities were for going forward.

Overall, there is an obvious need to focus on workforce and workplace literacy and essential skills and a growing number of stakeholders who want to see something happen along with a number of initiatives that show great possibilities.

## **GAPS**

Perhaps the most obvious gap is that there is no dedicated government staff person, dedicated funding or resources for workforce and workplace literacy as part of the NWT Literacy Strategy. Right now workforce and workplace literacy are not high priorities within the Strategy.

We heard that workforce and workplace literacy needs to have more emphasis within the Strategy and have its own focus area. In addition to a good policy framework, there needs to be a commitment in terms of stakeholders and champions to move workforce and workplace forward. More advocacy for workforce and workplace literacy through pressure on both politicians and employers would be helpful. There is a need for more relationship building between government and employers.

One strategy that would help would be to have a territorial committee made up of government, employers, unions, and others to provide direction to a workforce and workplace literacy and essential skills strategy.

Better links between RTCs and those few deliverers of workforce and workplace literacy is also a gap that needs to be addressed. RTCs are organized on a regional basis and their activities appear to vary from region to region. While in theory the RTCs are a good mechanism for advancing action related to workplace and workforce literacy and essential skills, the variations in approaches to regional coordination, the age of the RTC, and the level of knowledge of the literacy and essential skills issues create an unevenness in outcomes.

Hand in hand with the previous concern is the fact that there is no workplace coordinator on the ground in communities with expertise in workplace literacy and essential skills to work with employers and other community partners. People do not know where to start and there is no infrastructure to get workplace initiatives going. Education expertise can be the bridge between the workers and communities that need jobs and the employers that need workers.

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Another gap is that learning outcomes are not tracked. Workforce and workplace literacy programming outcomes for both the workforce and employers need to be clearly articulated, tracked, and measured through ongoing program evaluation.

ALBE needs to have concrete workforce/ workplace literacy outcomes embedded though the inclusion of workforce development and essential skills. The focus could be on resources, mining, office work, and traditional occupations such as land skills like hunting and fishing.

Another gap is that some CLCs could benefit from having more staff. Often adult educators are overwhelmed with what they are supposed to do. Moreover, CLCs need adult educators who are trained in workforce and workplace literacy planning and programming. An added challenge is that often adult educators are isolated and their job is seen as transitory.

There are significant challenges around lack of employer commitment and buy-in to workplace literacy and essential skills. There are several reasons for this. One reason is that employers do not understand what it is or do not know how to get help. Another is that small employers do not have the time or capacity to do workplace literacy and essential skills programming. These employers may have never written a funding proposal before and need help with proposals. Others suggested that employers feel it is not their job to pay people to learn or want results that are difficult to measure or attribute to a literacy and essential skills program.

NWT employers often have difficulty recruiting and retaining employees. Most indicated that they were supportive of their employees' skill development but many felt that people should have gained their literacy skills through the school system before coming to the workplace.

They pinpointed areas for upgrading such as language skills for newcomers, customer service skills, writing, and thinking skills. Computer skills were an issue with long-term employees but not as much with younger ones. The point was made that people have well-developed skills without formal education and may be caught between a more traditional and modern sense of what literacy skills are important in today's society. It is important to start where people are at and focus on where they want to go.

Employers need more information on what programs are available to address needs around literacy, language, and essential skills and what has already been successfully offered. They need to understand the program and see the value of it. While employers could see the benefit of offering workplace literacy programs, there were a number of barriers. Barriers include lack of time, knowledge, resources, paperwork to get funding, as well as attitudinal ones. Barriers for employees getting involved include the fact they already have a job or the stigma and fear attached to literacy.

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Some employers, particularly small business owners, are interested in how they might work in a partnership group in their community to offer a workplace literacy program.

Some indicated that the GNWT, employers, and Aboriginal governments all need to commit and work together to invest in and build the capacity of northern workers. This commitment includes release time and enough time for training. Sometimes there is a misunderstanding that literacy upgrading can happen in one or two workshops.

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## **CHAPTER 3: APPROACHES TO WORKFORCE/WORKPLACE LITERACY AND ESSENTIAL SKILLS**

This section examines approaches to workforce and workplace literacy and essential skills from both the literature review and key informant interviews. The first section examines good practice principles and success factors. Then approaches have been used in workforce and workplace literacy in the NWT and elsewhere are presented. Finally, possible effective approaches to workplace learning for a northern context in the NWT are analysed.

### **EFFECTIVE PRACTICES IN WORKFORCE AND WORKPLACE LITERACY AND ESSENTIAL SKILLS PROGRAMS**

This section reports on what conditions have to be in place for workforce and workplace literacy programs to be successful based on the literature review and supporting information from key informant interviews.

In 2007, the NWT Literacy Council and the Nunavut Literacy Council published a research report on workforce and workplace literacy called *Improving Essential Skills for Work and Community: Workplace and Workforce Literacy*. Overall it found that both workforce and workplace literacy programs need stable resources to be successful. These resources include stable ongoing funding, skilled instructors, needs assessment tools, physical space, and relevant program materials.

Common success factors for workforce and workplace literacy and essential skills program are described below.

#### **1. GOVERNMENT INCENTIVES AND INFRASTRUCTURE SUPPORT**

Government infrastructure support is clearly identified as the most important condition under which both workforce and workplace literacy and essential skills programming can flourish. For example, the provinces of Nova Scotia and Manitoba have had successful workplace literacy and essential skills initiatives for the last two decades. This has been attributable to well-developed good practice. This includes ongoing government funding, well-developed infrastructure, and consulting support to workplaces which includes planning and conducting an organizational needs assessment, setting up customized programming, and evaluation of outcomes.<sup>32</sup>

Plett in *Programs in the Workplace: How to Increase Employer Support* “government funding was a fundamental condition to offer workplace literacy training.”<sup>33</sup> Employers also need more information, awareness, and support to deliver programs. They also wanted to see government



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programs that were accessible and required a minimum of paperwork in terms of funding applications and reporting requirements.

In 2011, the Ontario Literacy Coalition (OLC) conducted an evaluation of its large-scale workplace literacy and essential project with 14 organizations and 29 programs. The OLC's findings confirm those of Plett. An important finding was that the government contribution of funding for instructors, participants supports, and project infrastructure support through learning advisors (workplace coordinators) who supported and mentored the projects was deemed by employers as "positive and necessary". Employer and union partners also noted that the support of learning advisors was key to the success of developing partnerships and programs at the workplace. Another finding was that governments need to ensure that their paperwork requirements for funding are not too arduous.

Some NWT employers and other key informants confirm the literature review findings. Lack of employer awareness about workplace literacy and what is available is one challenge. Connected to this challenge is confusion and misunderstanding about both workforce and workplace literacy and essential skills. Key informants suggested there should be ongoing promotion and awareness about workforce and workplace literacy and essential skills as part of infrastructure support.

Another issue is not having the resources to develop programs on one's own, especially for small businesses, and not having the instructors or capacity to deliver these programs in communities. The need for a knowledgeable, credible, and experienced workplace coordinator who could support workplaces and communities to get programs going was emphasized by key informants.

## **2. EMPLOYER COMMITMENT AND SUPPORT**

Employer commitment to learning and workplace literacy and essential skills programs in particular is paramount for success. A literature review conducted by the Centre for Literacy<sup>34</sup> identifies employer support as critical to the long-term success of programming. The review also suggests that employer commitment to workplace learning through encouragement and recognition of employees leads to improved confidence, enhanced performance, ability to take on new responsibilities and better teamwork. Time for employees to participate in program planning, needs assessments, and the programs themselves was identified as important.<sup>35</sup>

In the North, employer commitment includes paid time for workers to attend training, identification of a champion from senior management, and a linking of learning to organizational goals, priorities and plans. Employers may need to work in partnership arrangements and share resources and responsibility for funding.<sup>36</sup>

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This idea was backed up by key informant interviews. Smaller employers may not be able to offer a workplace literacy and essential skills program on their own but might be able to do it with other small employers in a community project if funding were available. Large companies may have the resources to offer programming on their own.

In the design of workforce programs that include an essential skills component, consultation and commitment from the employers in the target sector is critical both in terms of getting the program right and ensuring that people who successfully complete the program get jobs. In many cases, the jobs do not require high school and the training is developed around the educational backgrounds that the participants bring.

### **3. WORKER/LEARNER COMMITMENT AND BUY-IN**

In workplace literacy and essential skills programs worker buy-in comes from knowing that the workplace is a safe and comfortable place to learn with their peers, learning is meaningful, participation is voluntary, and their progress and sometimes their participation is confidential.

Although workers sometimes will attend programs on their own time, a key success factor is to have at least 50% release time to attend.<sup>37</sup> The OLC found that workers would not have been able to attend the programming they did had it not been provided at the workplace at no cost to the workers.<sup>38</sup>

Adult learners in the NWT who have worked previously but are not working currently confirm the principles related to worker buy-in for workplace learning. While almost all said they would be interested in workplace learning, they were clear that they would like paid release time, topics of interest to them and, for some, a credential. A few people said they would like to have a person in the workplace who would mentor and help them. It appears that the concept of “essential skills” may be more appealing for those involved in workforce upgrading than “literacy” which still has a stigma attached to it.

Some College representatives and adult educators confirmed the need for credentials for learners. They are trying to be more innovative in ALBE programs to meet the needs of their students by incorporating driver education, CPR, WHMIS training, First Aid, chain saw safety, boat and marine safety, and other short courses. This gives students credentials that they can put on their résumés. These short courses seem to work well with adults committing to them.

### **4. COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIPS**

All the reports examined on what works and good practice in workplace literacy and essential skills point to the need for all stakeholders to be involved from the beginning of planning

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through to delivery and as part of the program evaluation. This includes management, workers, government, education and non-profit and community organizations. Because of strong partnerships, ownership, trust, and buy-in are developed. Resulting programs are better able to meet the needs of all stakeholders.<sup>39</sup> In some cases, a committee of stakeholders may direct program planning at a workplace.<sup>40</sup> The Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) emphasized the need to have the union as an equal partner in setting up workplace literacy and essential skills programs.<sup>41</sup>

In the OLC's *Collaborative Development Approaches* (CODA) project, findings showed that a critical success factor was the provincial leadership from the project's long term Provincial Advisory Committee (PAC) of employer groups, labour representatives, training and education representatives, and literacy organizations. This success factor also holds in the Nova Scotia and Manitoba workplace education models.<sup>42</sup> This strong partnership ensured the smooth and effective running of the project and demonstrated capacity for a workplace literacy provincial model.

In the NWT, key informants emphasized community partnerships for learning opportunities. RTCs provide the mechanism for planning and coordinating training in different regions of the territory through local partnerships. Adult educators consult with companies and Aboriginal governments in their communities to find out what kind of workforce and workplace programs they want and attempt to deliver on those needs.

## **5. PROGRAM PLANNING AND DESIGN**

Another key success factor identified in the literature is careful and thorough program planning.<sup>43</sup> There must be adequate resources and a thorough workplace need assessment, which includes management and worker perspectives. Program planning was highlighted in the NWT and Nunavut Literacy Councils' research on workforce and workplace skills. In addition, Belfiore<sup>44</sup> emphasizes the workplace needs assessment as a key feature of all the good practice statements she reviewed. The needs assessment allows the workforce to have a say in identifying what educational programs are appropriate and whether they will be supported. The workplace needs assessment also allows for the design of customized programs and for clear program goals and objectives. The planning stage is also a place where issues such as release time and the identification of program providers need to be resolved. The OLC CODA evaluation showed that the workplace needs assessment and groundwork at the beginning of program planning helped identify common areas of interest from the perspective of managers and workers and contributed to the programs running smoothly.

Learner assessment is also an important part of program planning to identify individual needs and design a program tailored to participants. Individual needs assessment is a contentious

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issue in the literature. Governments are calling for more standardized tests that are administered pre- and post-training and that measure individual gains. The OLC's workplace literacy and essential skills project evaluation showed that the required mandatory pre- and post-tests were problematic for workers attending programs. There were three main concerns: the tests were not congruent with identified principles of good practice, they did not align with employer expectations with respect to a return on expectations, and they did not tie back to the workplace needs assessment. However, at the same time, workers were very interested in knowing their strengths and weaknesses indicating that a more appropriate assessment tool was needed.

In the NWT, some workplaces have used the Test of Workplace Essential Skills (TOWES) has been used. Comments indicated that its use has been divisive with employers supporting it but workers not favouring it.

In the NWT, adult educators do community needs assessments in their communities and try to deliver on what is needed. Communities are adult educator dependant and will have different offerings. Learner assessment in terms of a diagnostic tool was identified as important and a key area for development for adult educators so they could identify the skills that an individual needs most that could be addressed in the short term.

## **6. CONTEXTUALIZED AND WORKER-CENTRED LEARNING**

All reports reviewed highlight the need for relevant and contextualized learning. This includes using workplace materials as a basis for learning and in the North integrating culturally appropriate materials and traditional teachings. CUPE and northern best practices emphasize a focus on the whole person and meeting their needs not just for work but also for their families and communities.<sup>45</sup> Both workers and management see contextualized learning as favourable.<sup>46</sup> Belfiore describes a customized curriculum that meets the needs of workers and management as a key ingredient of a workplace literacy and essential skills program. The OLC evaluation also noted that a key success factor was contextualized learning where learning was relevant to people's lives and experiences. Program instructors saw this element as key to the success of their programs.

These principles also hold true for workforce training programs that include literacy and essential skills according to key informants. One comment indicated that the programs need to fit the needs of the client group rather than the other way around. For example, adults from First Nations attending workforce readiness programs may tend to be hands-on learners. Programs then need to be geared to the learning styles that participants bring. Also key is to ensure that workforce essential skills programs reflect a northern culture and an employment context that is particular to the North. One program offered by the College, "Ready to Work

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North” is currently under review and is being revamped to address these factors. In the past, it had been targeted to the mining sector with good success in that participants got employment. In other communities, programs focus on pre-trades, and working to sell and market one’s products. Comments indicated that the ALBE program is seen as out of date and not working well to address the employability needs of learners. People want short programs that give them a credential they can put on their résumé.

## **7. WORKFORCE AND WORKPLACE LITERACY AND ESSENTIAL SKILLS INSTRUCTORS**

The literature sees instructors as a key ingredient to the success of workforce and workplace programs. A northern perspective indicates the need to look for a flexible instructor who understands the needs of workers and the issues operating in workplaces. In addition, there is a need to develop a communications strategy between the instructor and workplace stakeholders. The OLC also called for adaptable instructors who understand the workplace. The OLC found that an orientation for inexperienced workplace instructors was needed in terms of professionalism, understanding the culture of workplaces, and how to communicate with stakeholders, as well as understanding that there is no pre-set curriculum.

Ongoing professional development for instructors in the NWT was identified as necessary. Funding is needed to provide training in areas of instruction, curriculum design, and working with and identifying the needs of specific employers. Some key informants suggested that having to deliver the ALBE limited their ability to deliver customized workforce/workplace literacy programs and wondered if the two functions – ALBE and workforce/workplace literacy – might be best divided between two adult educators in a community. Adult educators need ongoing development to be able to design and develop relevant workforce and workplace literacy and essential skills programs that address the needs in their communities. In addition, comments suggested that potential instructors themselves are difficult to find.

## **8. MEASUREMENT OF PROGRAM OUTCOMES AND RETURN ON EXPECTATIONS**

Program evaluation is identified as a key component of planning and designing workforce and workplace literacy and essential skills programs. The NWT and Nunavut Literacy Councils’ research on workforce literacy recommends developing a system to evaluate programs and measure both quantitative and qualitative outcomes.

The Nova Scotia and Manitoba workplace education initiatives collect information from a range of stakeholders in their program evaluations including employers, union representatives, learners, instructors, and project teams. They use a range of data collection methods. Nova Scotia is now focusing on a stronger evaluation approach to show impacts for employers and the public. Since the economies of both provinces are dominated by small and medium

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businesses, evaluation processes need to be flexible and respectful of time and resource constraints.<sup>47</sup>

Program evaluation is seen as a critical component of workforce and workplace literacy and essential skills programming because it allows stakeholders to see the value of programming and how well it is meeting its objectives. Evaluation planning and design, as with other aspects of program planning, should include the stakeholders. A case in point was the OLC's CODA evaluation, which was successfully planned and carried out by a subcommittee of the OLC's PAC. This allowed for the identification of outcomes of interest to employers, unions, and literacy organizations.<sup>48</sup>

Of great importance is both the formative and summative evaluation. Formative evaluation provides ongoing feedback and reflection on how a program is doing and allows for improvements to be made. Summative evaluation looks at how well a program met its goals at the end. Having both types of evaluation is considered good practice. Evaluation can make the case for continuing a program and making needed changes to it.<sup>49</sup>

## **APPROACHES FROM THE NORTH**

This section examines approaches to workforce and workplace literacy that have been used in the NWT and other parts of northern Canada. Approach refers to the set-up of the program, the approach to delivery, and any distinctive features.

It is clear from the literature review that there is no evidence that one program model is working better than another is. What is important is that the model addresses the needs of workers and employers and that there is a right fit between the program model and the needs of the stakeholders.<sup>50</sup>

### **1. APPROACHES TO WORKFORCE LITERACY AND ESSENTIALS SKILLS: PREPARATION FOR TRADES AND JOB RELATED TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT**

Program participants learn literacy and essential skills that will support them in trades or job specific training with employment as the goal.

#### **EXAMPLE 1: READY TO WORK NORTH**

One prominent example of a workforce literacy and essential skills for training and employment readiness is "Ready to Work North" developed by Aurora College. The program focuses on essential skills, and knowledge and attitudes needed in NWT industries such as resource and mining and local governments. It is 70-100 hours long and can include certificate training such as First Aid, CPR, and WHMIS. The program is geared and tailored to the occupational training

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with which it is aligned. Its purpose is to increase retention and success in job-related training and on the job.

### **Program set up**

The program set up is very flexible to accommodate the needs of different organizations and situations. It has been:

- Integrated into college courses for the mining industry
- Used by organizations doing skills training
- Integrated into a single company's job specific training and orientation
- Integrated into upgrading or literacy training programs.

### **Program delivery approach**

- Group classroom situation through the College, specific company, or organization
- One-to-one tutoring.

### **Success factors**

- High retention rate
- Participants gain employment after course completion.<sup>51</sup>

### **EXAMPLE 2: NORTHERN WOMEN IN MINING, OIL & GAS PROJECT**

The Northern Women in Mining, Oil and Gas Project (NWMOG) was “specifically designed to determine if the number of northern women in industrial/trades occupations can be significantly increased through a dedicated and strategic information and training initiative. Women, particularly Aboriginal women, are significantly under-represented in these occupations as well as in the overall workforce.”<sup>52</sup>

The project began with an assessment of barriers to participation by women such as childcare, funding, transportation, housing, family issues, and essential skills such as Math, Science, English and mechanical aptitude.

### **Program set up**

The program was designed to 1) increase interest in trades through information sessions (exposure courses), 2) increase participation through acquisition of knowledge and skills, and 3) increase retention through wrap-around supports and employment assistance. **Exposure courses** were offered for carpentry, heavy equipment operations, and summer airport maintenance. A 12-week full-time course **Builder Trades Helper** with hands-on learning,

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academic upgrading, and Ready to Work North was offered. A 20-week academic course **Trades Access Program** was also offered that challenges women to enter the Trades Entrance Exam. In addition, a full range of supports are provided such as counselling, financial assistance and childcare.

### **Program delivery approach**

- Group classroom situation and hands-on experience through College program.

### **Success factors**

- Program addresses barriers specific to northern and Aboriginal women
- Program is women-centric.<sup>53</sup>

### **EXAMPLE 3: COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTRES: INTEGRATING ALBE AND SKILLS TRAINING**

In CLCs, adult educators have been integrating academic skills with skills training in the areas of cooking, carpentry, and sewing.

### **Program set up**

- Participants spend half a day on academics and the other half on skills training
- Participants take short courses on topics such as First Aid, safety, driver education, chain saw safety, and marine safety; literacy is included and taught along with the content.

### **Program delivery approach**

- Small group with adult educator in Community Learning Centres.

### **Success factors**

- Better retention of students – courses are short and geared to employment
- Students get credentials they can add to their résumés.

## **2. APPROACHES TO WORKPLACE LITERACY AND ESSENTIALS SKILLS**

### **EXAMPLE 1: BHP BILLITON WORKPLACE LEARNING PROGRAM**

BHP Billiton is located several hundred miles north of Yellowknife. The company is committed to hiring northerners and Aboriginal people and recognized that their employees would need literacy and essential skills upgrading to enhance safety and productivity and for individual goals. Start-up costs were provided through the NWT Literacy Strategy while the ongoing cost



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of the program was financed by the company. There was a contribution by ECE of approximately \$120,000 to help bring on an instructor to work with people preparing for apprenticeship training and those in apprenticeship programs.<sup>54</sup>

The program came about as a result of Impacts and Benefits Agreement requirements, hiring practices favouring Aboriginal workers, the need for literacy upgrading of adults in the NWT, and socio-economic agreements signed with the GNWT.

### **Program set up**

BHP Billiton offered many different kinds of learning opportunities and all employees were welcome to join. It began its Workplace Learning Program (WLP) by offering structured classes and programs geared to participants learning to read and write, interested in completing high school and going on to trades training. As a result of the success of these original programs, the WLP expanded to include workshops on managing finances, starting your business, and a class on oral Tlicho Yati language. Workers could join small groups or work with tutors. The program was customized to the needs of the individual and the workplace using authentic workplace materials and situations. The company also made connections so that participants could continue learning in their own communities. The program no longer continues although other workplace training programs are support by the company.

### **Program delivery approach**

- Structured classes with an instructor on different topics
- Workshops with an instructor on different topics
- One-to-one tutoring
- Follow-up learning opportunities in communities where participants were from.

### **Success factors**

- Senior management support
- Collaboration of program design—workers and supervisors together
- Paid release time to attend programs
- Flexible course offerings
- Experienced and approachable instructors with understanding of the workplace.<sup>55</sup>

### **EXAMPLE 2: LA RONGE MOTOR HOTEL**

La Ronge Motor Hotel is located in a small northern Saskatchewan community with 65 local employees. It is two-and-a half hours north of the nearest city and is the last full-service hotel on the road north. The hotel, owned by the Lac La Ronge Indian Band offers service to a diverse

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clientele. Hotel management wanted to take a positive approach through training to upgrade skills especially in customer service and also to change attitudes.

### **Program set up**

Management and workers developed the workplace program called “Workplace Training Puzzle” (finding solutions to training needs) together. The overall program focused on work, home, and community priorities addressing the realities of personal time and career goals of employees and challenges of working in a remote northern situation. The Puzzle Program was open to all employees including managers and was customized to the workplace and employee needs. The employer contributed a dedicated space for training, a part-time instructor, a computer, and other resources.

There were many learning opportunities as the program expanded from its initial offerings. The company partnered with the local college and others to offer the program. There were classes, self-study, and one-to-one tutoring available. Training capitalized on the oral traditions of the employees who were mostly Aboriginal before focusing on reading and writing. As part of the program, a housekeeping video was developed and produced in First Nations languages. In addition, the Puzzle Program developed a program of national certification to help employees receive this certification for achieving industry standards. The company also held a graduation to recognize successful employee-students.

### **Program delivery approach**

- Classes with an instructor
- One-to-one tutoring
- Self-study
- Special projects developed as part of overall program
- Recognition of success.

### **Success factors**

- Employer support and commitment
- Puzzle Program developed by workers and management together
- Program met the personal development needs of individuals and the need to work to industry standards on the part of the employer
- Employees had a positive approach to training.<sup>56</sup>

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### **EXAMPLE 3: RANKIN INLET'S WORKPLACE LEARNING PROGRAM**

Another delivery model used in the North is that of a community-wide workplace literacy and essential skills program where business and other employers come together with other partners to offer programming through a community learning centre led by the adult educator.

From 1995-1998 Nunavut Arctic College offered a three-year learner-centred pilot workplace literacy program in Rankin Inlet with government funding from the GNWT and financial support from Nunavut Arctic College. The program was offered through the hamlet's Community Learning Centre and managed by its adult educator.

#### **Program set up**

The project had a steering committee made up of government representatives, management and workers, the College, the hamlet, private business, the Chamber of Commerce, and the Union of Northern Workers. The project began with an organizational needs assessment. The goals of the resulting program were:

1. To promote the value of workplace education in the community
2. Educate employers as to its benefits
3. To provide individualized instruction to employees from different workplaces in English and Inuktitut
4. Build capacity in Rankin Inlet for the upcoming Nunavut territory
5. Provide release time for employees attending.

The program coordinator/instructor worked with individuals and small groups from different workplaces. Some participants were unemployed and wanted to get work. Participants worked on:

- Reading skills to prepare for apprenticeship
- GED preparation
- Inuktitut keyboarding skills
- Math and literacy for sewing
- Inuktitut as a Second Language
- Individual needs around workplace reading and writing.

This project allowed small non-governmental agencies and businesses to participate. Key challenges included balancing worker and employer needs, and supporting adult educators in

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community learning centres who do not have the time or skills to develop workforce and workplace programs.

### **Program delivery approach**

- Small group with an instructor
- One-to-one tutoring with an instructor
- Participants were from different workplaces and employment situations
- Learning happened in English and Inuktitut.

### **Success factors**

- Flexibility to meet the needs of different workplaces
- Program was relevant to the culture and lives of participants
- The program and workplace education were promoted on an ongoing basis
- Long-term funding for continuity
- Appropriate space for program and housing for instructors.<sup>57</sup>

### **EXAMPLE 4: COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTRES: TUTORING INDIVIDUALS IN VARIOUS WORKPLACES**

A common way of delivering workplace literacy and essential skills in communities in the NWT is to respond to the needs of individual employers especially band offices by working with individual employees on work-related essential skills usually to do with administrative tasks. This approach can be challenging if tutoring sessions are interrupted by work activities and employees feel reluctant to participate.

In some cases, businesses send employees to the College for training in business writing or computers. While the employer would provide release time for the employee, the course would not be customized to the specific workplace.

### **Program set up**

The adult educator in a community learning centre gets a request from an employer to work with an employee who needs support with basic skills around work-related skills such as reading, document use, writing or computers. The adult educator develops an individualized plan for the employee.

### **Program delivery approach**

- The employee works one-to-one with the adult educators in his/her work setting
- Focus is on specific skills development for one employee.

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## **Success factors**

- Allows for workplace literacy and essential skills support in communities that do not have the capacity (both instructor and employer) for a full-blown program
- Can build confidence and the mastery of tasks for an employee.

## **OTHER APPROACHES WITH POTENTIAL FOR ADAPTATION**

This section examines and describes approaches to workforce and workplace literacy and essential skills that show potential for adaptation in the North. These approaches consider and build on what has been successfully used in the NWT and might appeal to Aboriginal people, small businesses, and small communities.

### **1. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT APPROACH – RURAL MANITOBA**

In rural Manitoba, the workplace consultant from Workplace Education Manitoba partners with a variety of businesses and community-based organizations. The goal is to meet the essential skills need of small businesses. The consultant works to identify the needs of the community and offers short courses based on these needs. These short courses or workshops are customized to the needs of the clients. Workshops have been offered to First Nations organizations and health units. The consultant builds the capacity of local instructors to deliver the training. This approach works because the consultant has flexibility to meet local needs using non-traditional methods. The approach serves the needs of organizations that cannot afford to go to urban centres for training.<sup>58</sup>

#### **APPLICABILITY TO THE NWT:**

This approach builds on the work that adult educators are already doing with Aboriginal governments and small businesses in their communities. They could use their community needs assessment process to identify essential skills needs of employers and employees. If adult educators were trained in workplace literacy and essential skills development, they could train other instructors in essential skills and other community members as mentors and tutors. Additional short courses could be offered building on what is already happening in communities. With additional trained instructors, mentors and tutors, there would be more capacity to deliver these kinds of programs.

### **2. COMMUNITY-DEVELOPMENT APPROACH – BRITISH COLUMBIA**

In Port Alberni, BC, the Tseshaht First Nation developed a workforce literacy and essential skills program with PTP Adult Learning and Employment Programs as part of its “Social Education and Employment Development Services” (SEEDS) for Tseshaht members living on reserve receiving

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social assistance. The program was offered four half days a week. It focused on workforce and soft skill development. Part of the program included the completion of projects identified by participants such as building a picnic table, enhancing the learning area, hosting a fundraiser, and purchasing food for a program in the building.<sup>59</sup>

**APPLICABILITY TO THE NWT:**

This approach has a unique feature of hands-on projects through which essential skills such as numeracy, oral communication, team building and document use can be taught. The benefits include building essential skills for employment in “real life” situations but also building and completing projects that have a community-wide positive impact. In addition, such a program works because it is participant-centred.

Adult educators could use this approach in their ALBE courses or as part of short workforce readiness programs they already offer in their communities.

**3. WORKFORCE ESSENTIAL SKILLS: INTEGRATING LITERACY AND ESSENTIAL SKILLS INTO TRADES TRAINING – BRITISH COLUMBIA**

“Concrete Words” run by SkillPlan is a trades qualification refresher course for cement finishers who have been on the job for more than 20 years and who have to get their trades qualification by passing a multiple choice trades exam. In this program, the adult educator works with the trades trainer to help people as they are learning test taking skills, technical vocabulary, and note taking skills. The adult educator models note taking skills and the trades trainer reviews the notes with the participants going over key points again. Participants learn the value of note taking. Participants also have the opportunity to work with a tutor to further learn technical terms, review notes, etc.<sup>60</sup>

**APPLICABILITY TO THE NWT:**

Adult educators or trained tutors could work inside the classroom with trades or technical trainers to support participants in learning essential and study skills or how to take tests. Adult educators could also offer those who need to take trades qualification exams a workshop to help prepare them and build their confidence.

**4. PEER TRAINING—BRITISH COLUMBIA FORESTRY INDUSTRY**

The International Woodworkers Union developed “Readiness Training” with Tracy Defoe, Education Consultant and President of The Learning Factor, Inc. “Readiness Training” is a worker-centred program that ran as a pilot in a dozen sawmills in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia. It integrated essential foundation skills with wood products manufacturing content

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in a five-day re-entry program into formal learning for forestry workers. The program was developed by two locals of the International Woodworkers Union and their forestry employers building on workers' own knowledge of manufacturing wood products and supporting essential skills learning. Peer trainers team taught the program with co-trainers (adult educators). Extensive research and development phases preceded the actual program implementation.

Collaboration was a key feature in all three phases of the project: workers, union representatives, supervisors, managers worked together with adult educators to plan, design, develop and deliver "Readiness Training". The curriculum included work content, personal development and support for essential skills and used a wide variety of training methods to allow a diverse group of workers to maximize their learning. The project included training for learning advocates at the mills, training for peer trainers to deliver the program, and a manual with curriculum and multi-media learning materials.

Sawmill workers facing layoffs experienced a positive re-introduction to learning. Workers were encouraged through questioning (rather than lecturing) to tell their stories, express their fears, and recognize their skills. The program was connected to the next phase of job search and job training at union halls and educational institutions.

Essential to the success of "Readiness Training" was the "power of co-workers" to break down learning barriers, speak the language of their peers, bring trust and credibility to the training, and continue offering support and encouragement afterwards.<sup>61</sup>

#### **APPLICABILITY TO THE NWT:**

This approach uses workers in the development of the "Readiness Training" program to transition into more formal learning. It uses training methods that respect the experience that workers bring and uses peer trainers supported by adult educators. In addition, it uses oral traditions and storytelling from participants' experience in the training. This would be a useful program to develop for industries like mining and the resources sector that are growing in NWT. This approach to workforce readiness would be a powerful tool in communities that are moving to a wage economy. Also powerful is the capacity development approach in terms of peer trainers.

### **5. DEVELOPING A MENTORING NETWORK IN THE WORKPLACE – AUSTRALIA**

Australia's Industry Training Organization has developed best practice guidelines for developing a formal mentoring network in the workplace to support literacy and numeracy development. Mentoring can be informal or formal. In a formal arrangement, employees would work with a

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designated mentor on learning goals at a designated time. Good mentors build a trusting relationship, are motivating, share their experience, and maintain confidentiality.

To develop a formal mentoring network there are several steps. An outside workplace coordinator experienced in mentoring needs to work with an organization that is committed to this approach. Mentors need to be identified, trained and receive supporting materials. They need ongoing support from the coordinators as needed.<sup>62</sup>

#### **APPLICABILITY TO THE NWT:**

This is another approach that builds capacity in a workplace or community. This approach could be used in a workplace or in a whole community. By training mentors, local talent is used and capacity is developed. Skills and knowledge are shared and developed in a community.

#### **ANALYSIS**

This environment scan shows clearly from the literature review and responses from key informants through interviews and focus groups:

- A clear set of conditions needed for workforce and workplace essential initiatives to be successful in the NWT
- Successful approaches developed in the NWT, other parts of northern Canada and internationally for workforce and workplace literacy and essential skills and other potential approaches
- Opportunities to do further work.

#### **CONDITIONS NEEDED FOR WORKFORCE AND WORKPLACE LITERACY ESSENTIAL SKILLS INITIATIVES TO BE SUCCESSFUL IN THE NWT**

##### **INFRASTRUCTURE SUPPORT**

At the present time workforce and workplace literacy and essential skills programming is offered on an *ad hoc* basis in the NWT. In order to grow and flourish, it needs clear policy direction and resources from the GNWT through infrastructure support. This infrastructure support includes a clear funding stream that focuses on:

1. promotion and awareness building
2. partnership development and leadership development at a regional and territorial level
3. program planning and needs assessment



- 
4. programming
  5. professional development and resources for adult educators and other instructors
  6. tools to document northern approaches.

Key informants indicated that the GNWT needs to put money into infrastructure support for workforce and workplace literacy and essential skills and not just funding for programs. A champion for workforce and workplace literacy and essential skills is also needed inside government. There was the sense that this area has not received a lot of attention or resources. More resources are needed to develop continuing education programs that will prepare people for work and better jobs. Programs need to be innovative and flexible. Workforce and workplace literacy and essential skills were seen as important to the territory because of the abundance of jobs available and the need for skilled workers to fill those jobs locally.

With this condition met, it would then be possible to develop the other success factors needed. A systematic approach to promotion and awareness with a dedicated workplace coordinator will build employer buy-in over time. Collaboration and partnerships with all key stakeholders through a territorial advisory committee and RTCs will allow for a common territorial vision and regional and local solutions. Ongoing training for adult educators and other instructors in program planning, development, instruction for workplace and workforce literacy and essential skills will build quality programs that meet the needs of workers, employers, and communities.

#### **CONTEXTUALIZED LEARNING**

While there are some common resources that could be developed for employment preparation and guidelines and supports that could be developed for workplace literacy programs, the key to success is tailoring and customizing programming to the needs of a particular sector or workplace. Based on best practice and a review of successful models, there is no one workplace curriculum that can serve all the diverse needs of workplaces in the territory. What would be more useful is a how-to guide that shows instructors how to use and develop learning around authentic materials from workplaces and industrial sectors so they can deliver literacy and essential skills training in a context. This would include sample lessons common to a northern environment that adult educators could adapt. What is equally important to include in the guide is direction on how to build partnerships among employers and workers and how to conduct a community/workforce needs assessment.

What is also critical is that a thorough evaluation on any ensuing work takes place. Ongoing evaluation will allow for the identification of positive outcomes and impact from a workforce and workplace literacy and essential skills strategy perspective and at the level of programming.

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Evaluation will also identify the challenges and barriers that still need be overcome. Evaluation results will create more awareness and buy-in and provide information that will improve a workforce and workplace literacy and essential skills initiative at all levels.

### **SUCCESSFUL APPROACHES TO WORKFORCE AND WORKPLACE LITERACY AND ESSENTIAL SKILLS**

There have been an abundance of approaches to workforce and workplace literacy and essential skills that have been tested over the last fifteen years or more in a northern context. Adult educators, Aboriginal organizations and others are creatively trying to address the needs of adults who need to enhance their skills to obtain and maintain the good jobs that are available and move on to promotions and other positions. Certainly, in small communities and small organizations these efforts and their sustainability have been hampered by lack of government infrastructure support and lack of funding.

There are many places to build on the work that has already been done. “Ready to Work North” has proven successful and could be expanded and enhanced to meet the need for adults preparing for employment. The ALBE program could be revised to better meet the needs of adults seeking employment building on the work that key informants have described.

The additional approaches chosen for inclusion in this report were selected because they could build on the work that has already been accomplished in the NWT. With resources and infrastructure there would be opportunities to work with different kinds of employers and communities to try out some of the approaches that have been successful and expand on them. For example, one-to-one mentoring has been used as an approach in the workplace. This approach could be expanded to develop peer trainers and mentoring networks. Community approaches could address the needs of smaller organizations in northern communities.

The important message the review reveals is that it is not so much the approach that is used but whether the approach meets the needs of stakeholders and is attentive to well-established conditions and success factors under which successful programming can take place.

### **OPPORTUNITIES TO DO FURTHER WORK**

The context for the NWT where there is an abundance of jobs but not always people with the skills to fill them creates a need and an opportunity to develop a comprehensive strategy for workforce and workplace literacy and essential skills. Many employers, workers, Aboriginal organizations, educators, government representatives, and others are interested in doing something but need more understanding and awareness, resources, and direction to take this on.

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## CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### CONCLUSIONS

Encouraging workplace literacy and essential skills activities has been a challenge in the NWT. The challenges arise from a number of factors:

- The large number of small employers who lack the means to mount programs
- The lack of champions, dedicated ECE staff, or outreach coordination
- A sense that the greater issues lie in the education of youth and in getting jobs for the unemployed
- The apparent separation of literacy and essential skills from programs that prepare people to enter the workforce.

The NWT Literacy Strategy provides a solid foundation. However, the strategy is meant to deal with all aspects of literacy, from cradle to grave. The challenges of dealing with the quality of youth education and the capacity to deal with eleven official languages are critical to the strategy's success. Nevertheless, the strategy must deliver more in the area of workforce and workplace literacy than it can given current resources. Without leadership from the GNWT, and specifically ECE, and an infusion of resources, workforce and workplace literacy efforts will fall to the side.

The GNWT has developed a holistic approach to labour force development with its framework and its pooling of various funding sources and federal/territorial agreements. The creation of RTCs with their mandate to plan for training to communities means there is an infrastructure in place. The Labour Market Agreement with its target group of those with low essential skills is another positive element. Embedding literacy and essential skills will in turn permit the NWT Literacy Strategy to be fully implemented.

Time and infrastructure support are key to ensuring the success of the NWT Literacy Strategy. Partnerships take many years to form, practitioners need to be trained and supported, employers and labour require assistance to mount training. Employers in particular are unaware of what is possible, a situation that can be addressed through awareness and promotion. Short-term or quick solutions will not work. Promoting good practice, clarity in expected outcomes, research and program evaluation are critical to success.

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Aboriginal governments and organizations have access to funds for skills training. Many are already including literacy and essential skills in their programs or could easily adapt their training programs to consider literacy and essential skills as well.

Literacy and essential skills are still seen as distinct from labour market development and training activities. Integrating essential skills into the ALBE, offering services from dedicated adult workplace educators to communities, advising Aboriginal and other training projects on how to embed literacy and essential skills are all ways to move forward. What is critical is that literacy and essential skills be fully integrated into labour market development.

The NWT Literacy Strategy highlighted four specific actions related to workforce and workplace literacy. The first was the development of an essential skills curriculum. Two existing initiatives could be adapted to meet this task. The first is the ALBE curriculum. The curriculum should be adapted to include work-related skills for those who have an employment goal. The second platform is Return to Work North. This program holds much promise and can be adapted to be more responsive to community labour market needs as well as the needs of the individual learner.

Evidence based on good practice indicates that workplace literacy programming needs to be contextualized to each workplace. Training practitioners to understand each workplace, develop contextualized programs, and work with authentic materials are critical for success. Generic guides for various industries and practitioner resources serve as the foundation for customized learning. A one-size-fits-all curriculum would not be suitable for workplace literacy programming.

The second item from the NWT Literacy Strategy is the development of an essential skill credential. Discussions that took place as part of this review indicated the desire of many learners to have their skills and learning acknowledged. Most mentioned having a certificate particularly for workplace skills such as First Aid. Employers also want to be assured that potential workers have the skills required. This all speaks to the possibility of a non-academic credential. However, this step ought to be carefully analysed before taking any decision. A specific investigation into credentials – both academic and non-academic – should be conducted to ensure, at the very least, that any credential has value, is recognized, and does not inadvertently penalize anyone.

The third action item was promotion. There can never be too much promotion of the value of literacy and essential skills. However, without the requisite infrastructure to support training, promotion efforts will fail. Making a difference in workforce and workplace literacy and essential skills will require dedicated staff who can facilitate program development, support employers and workers, and have the expertise to deliver quality programming.

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The final item in the NWT Literacy Strategy is incentives. Clearly, for workplace literacy programs to be successful there needs to be incentives to the employer and to the worker. For workforce programming, learners will need supports including transportation, childcare, and subsidies. They also need personal supports such as counselling and job coaching.

Employers, especially small employers, need support as well as incentives to provide literacy and essential skills training. Models do exist in Manitoba and Nova Scotia that provide the necessary infrastructure support and guidance. Incentive programs, such as the Quebec payroll model and the Manitoba and Nova Scotia grants to employers could be investigated further for applicability to the NWT<sup>63</sup>.

As one key informant stated, “in the North, community trumps workplace.” This means that all efforts must be based on a model that works for the community. Community development – social, economic, and political – relies on strong individual and collective skills.

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## RECOMMENDATIONS

The NWT Literacy Strategy recognizes the importance of workforce and workplace literacy elements. In order to successfully meet the objectives, the GNWT and its partners will need to carry out a number of steps to ensure that workforce and workplace literacy receives sufficient attention. A framework for workforce and workplace literacy and essential skills includes adequate funding, awareness and promotion of the issue, practitioner training and development, a designated coordinator, support to employers and other partners, and research and program evaluation. This framework is graphically depicted in Annex 5.

1. Embed literacy and essential skills considerations in all programs operating under the Labour Market Agreement and the NWT Labour Force Development Framework

In order for people to be successful in labour force training and development, they need a good foundation in literacy and essential skills. Integrating literacy and essential skills into labour force development programming helps to ensure success by teaching literacy in tandem with workplace skills.

2. Adjust the Community Literacy Development Fund (CLDF) to highlight workforce and workplace literacy and essential skills funding, include employers as eligible project recipients, and track and promote workforce/workplace projects

The CLDF has the capacity to respond to workplace and workforce literacy and essential skills needs. Successful workplace literacy efforts require the participation of employers and the promotion of good practice. Special efforts should be made to encourage community partnerships to access CLDF funds and to use Community Learning Centre services to deliver programs.

3. Provide Community Learning Centres with targeted resources to support workforce and workplace development.

CLCs understand communities' needs and so are the appropriate agents for workforce and workplace literacy activities. However, this cannot be done using existing resources.

4. Fund and evaluate demonstration projects that address workforce and workplace literacy and essential skills.

Demonstration projects will allow sufficient time for practitioners to bring employers on-side, for projects to be developed, and for results to be observed. The demonstration projects should include a research and evaluation component to enhance the knowledge.

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5. Track and evaluate workforce and workplace literacy and essential skills activities, not only those undertaken under the CLDF but also those resulting from labour market programming.

ECE should work to improve its tracking and evaluation of workforce and workplace literacy and essential skills activities, not only those undertaken under the CLDF but also those resulting from labour market programming.

Tracking of activities will demonstrate outcomes and will form a base to build upon. Effective tracking will assist in assessing Return on Expectations and build a case for ongoing funding and support.

6. Investigate in collaboration with the literacy partners including NWTLC and Aurora College the feasibility of offering incentives and infrastructure support to employers to mount workplace literacy and essential skills programs.

All the research shows that employers need support from government in terms of incentives and support on how to mount workplace literacy programs. With the support infrastructure in place, ECE can promote workplace literacy and essential skills training to employers, labour, and workers.

7. Provide Regional Training Committees (RTCs) with orientation and training on workforce and workplace literacy and essential skills.

RTCs are a strong existing network that can aid in supporting small employers and communities to respond to workforce and workplace literacy needs. Orientation and training will build on their existing knowledge base so they can reflect these issues in community programming.

8. Provide dedicated support, required to make the workforce and workplace literacy elements of the NWT Literacy Strategy a reality, through dedicated staff within ECE (however, not necessarily full-time) and by a dedicated workforce/workplace coordinator.

Within ECE, a dedicated support person would act as a champion within government to integrate workforce/workplace literacy and essential skills in all aspects of training and learning. Externally, there is a need to support the development of programs, assist employers and learners, and train practitioners.

9. Embed workforce literacy and essential skills principles and practices in the Adult Literacy and Basic Education (ALBE) curriculum.

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The ALBE curriculum is the main platform for adult learning. The CanNor review of Adult Basic Education with the participation of ECE, Aurora College and the NWTLC, could be the method for doing this.



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## ANNEX 1: ACRONYMS

ABE	Adult Basic Education
AHRDA	Aboriginal Human Resources Development Agreement
ALBE	Adult Literacy and Basic Education
ALLESP	Adult Learning, Literacy and Essential Skills Program
ASEP	Aboriginal Skills and Employment Partnership
ASETS	Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy
CanNor	Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency
CLC	Community Learning Centre
CLDF	Community Literacy Development Fund
CPR	Cardiopulmonary resuscitation
CODA	Collaborative Developmental Approaches
CUPE	Canadian Union of Public Employees
ECE	Education, Culture, and Employment
EI	Employment Insurance
GNWT	Government of the Northwest Territories
HRSDC	Human Resources and Skills Development
LINC	Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada
LMA	Labour Market Agreement
LMDA	Labour Market Development Agreement
NALD	National Adult Literacy Database
NWTLC	Northwest Territories Literacy Council

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OLC	Ontario Literacy Coalition
OLES	Office of Literacy and Essential Skills
PAC	Provincial Advisory Committee
RTC	Regional Training Committee
RTWN	Ready to Work North
SEEDS	Social Education and Employment Development Services
WHMIS	Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System
WLP	Workplace Literacy Program (BHP Billiton)
WWestNet	Western Workplace Essential Skills Network

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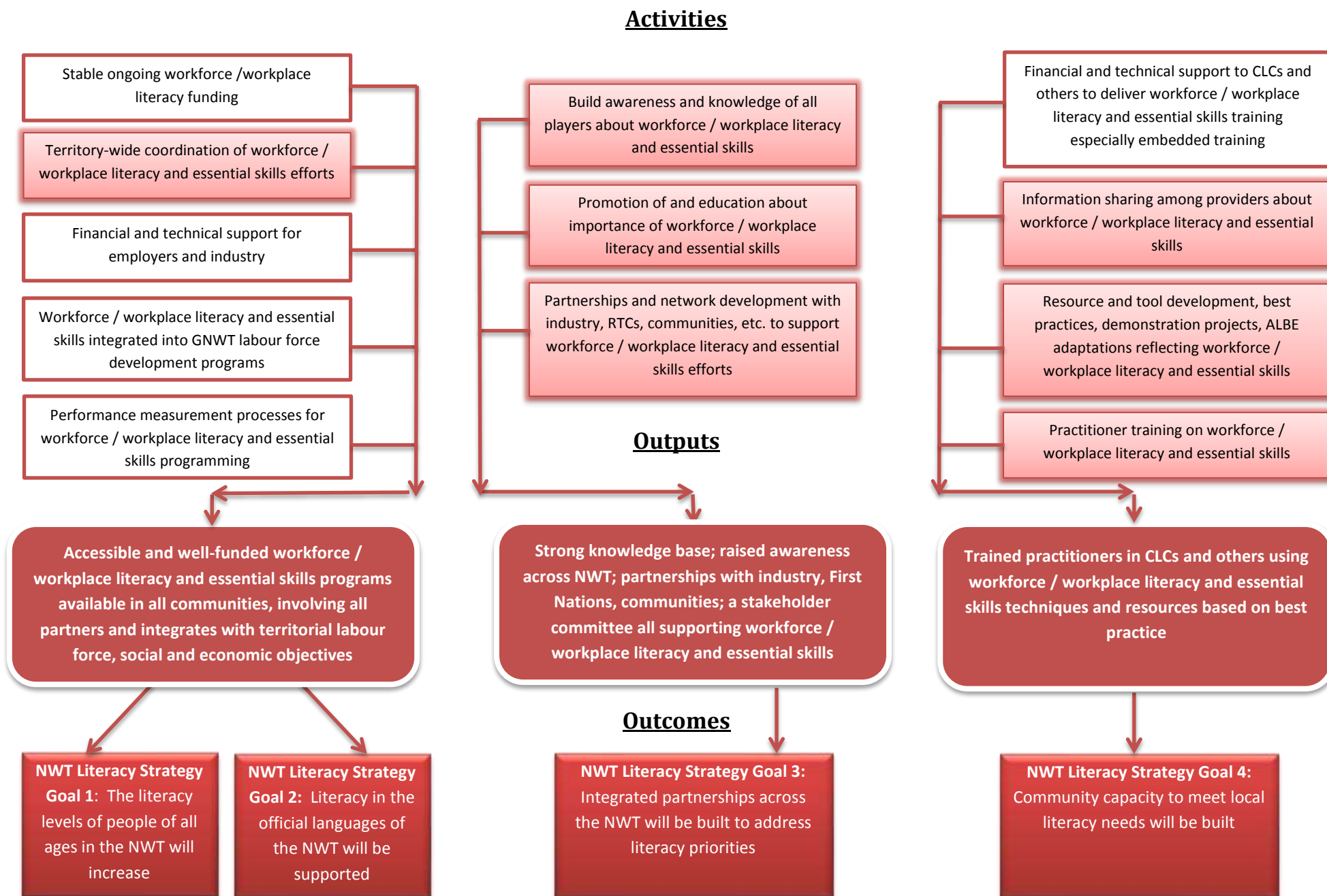
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## ANNEX 5: FRAMEWORK FOR WORKFORCE AND WORKPLACE LITERACY AND ESSENTIAL SKILLS IN THE NWT



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## ENDNOTES

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- <sup>1</sup> Northwest Territories, Education, Culture and Employment. *Towards Literacy: A Strategy Framework – 2008 – 2018*. p. 4.
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