A MANUAL FOR SETTING UP AN
ESSENTIAL SKILLS PROGRAM
WITHIN THE UNION OR WORKPLACE

AUPE

Acknowledgements

Update note and acknowledgements

Please note that the terms Essential Skills and Literacy may be used interchangeably throughout the manual.

Table of Contents

Appendix

What are Essential Skills and why are they important?

The Government of Canada has identified nine essential skills needed for the workplace. They are important because these skills are used in every job to varying degrees and at different levels of complexity. They provide the foundation for learning all other skills, and enable people to evolve with their jobs and adapt to workplace change. These nine essential skills are: Reading, Document Use, Numeracy, Writing, Oral Communication, Working with Others, Thinking, Computer Use, Continuous Learning.

AUPE focuses on six of these essential skills:

Reading: The ability to understand reading materials in the form of sentences or paragraphs. We use this skill to scan for information, skim overall meaning, evaluate what we read and integrate information from multiple sources. For example, we read emails, charts, notes from co-workers, magazines, letters that come home with children from school, equipment instructions, recipes, and website pages.

Writing: The ability to write text and documents. It also includes non paper-based writing such as typing on a computer. We use this skill when we organize, record, document, provide information to persuade, request information from others and justify a request. For example, we write emails, entries in a chart or a log book, notes to co-workers and family members, and fill out forms of all kinds.

Oral Communication (Speaking and listening)**:** The ability to use speech and listening to give and exchange thoughts and information. For example, we use this skill to greet people, reassure, persuade, seek information, resolve conflicts, and understand, both at home and on the job. We use this skill to learn, to gain knowledge, and explore ideas.

Numeracy (Math): The ability to use numbers and think in quantitative terms. We use this skill when doing numerical estimating, money math, scheduling, budgeting math, and analyzing measurements or data. For example, we pay bills, figure out bank accounts, budget for materials on the job, schedule shifts, take measurements, and calculate vacation leave.

Critical Thinking (Problem solving and Decision making)**:** The ability to engage in the process of evaluating ideas or information to reach a rational decision or solve a problem. We use this skill when we solve problems, make decisions, think critically, and plan and organize job tasks. For example, we figure out shifts and workloads taking into account several variables, like time and resources. We figure out solutions to any number of workplace, family and community problems. We make family and career decisions, make retirement plans, vacation plans, and other plans of all kinds.

Computer Use: The ability to use different kinds of computer applications and other related technical tools. We use this skill when we operate cash registers, use word processing software, send emails, and create and modify spreadsheets. For example, we email co-workers and family members to send or request information, search the internet for information, check news from Facebook friends, use spreadsheets for home budgeting and workplace purposes, make PowerPoint presentations for meetings, and use online learning management systems to take courses online. The use of computers in our home and work lives is expanding every day!

We use these essential skills every minute of every day, and that is why ensuring we are able to use them effectively is so important. We may find ourselves needing to enhance our skills to keep pace with the change that is happening all around us.

Note: This information has been adapted from ABC Life Literacy Canada http://abclifeliteracy.ca/nine-essential-skills

Glossary of Essential Skills terms and acronyms

[A]

Action Plan – a strategy that describes what steps will be taken and when they will be taken in order to carry out the objectives of the essential skills initiative.

Assessment vs. evaluation – For the purposes of AUPE, assessment refers to a process to determine a person or group's learning strengths and learning needs. Evaluation refers to a process to determine how well a program or project is meeting or has met its goals.

Authentic documents – actual union or workplace documents that can be used as materials for improving reading, writing or math skills.

[C]

Communication Plan – a strategy that describes what messages you will communicate to whom, when and how. Communication plans are part of any essential skills needs assessment or essential skills program administration to ensure that stakeholders are regularly informed.

Curriculum development – the systematic creation of learning units or modules in a specific subject area.

[D]

Document literacy – the knowledge and skills required locate and use information in documents like forms and charts.

Drop-in Learning Centre – a centre that is staffed by a coordinator/facilitator and which can offer people, on a drop-in basis, essential skills training in a variety of ways, either computer based instruction, peer tutoring or small workshop, according to their preference.

[E]

ESL – English as a Second Language

Essential skills – In this manual, and for the purposes of AUPE, essential skills refers to reading, writing, math, oral communication, thinking skills, and computer skills. The Government of Canada identifies nine essential skills: reading text, document use, numeracy, writing, oral communication, working with others, thinking skills, computer use and continuous learning.

Essential Skills Needs Assessment (ESNA) – a process used to determine essential skills learning needs among a group of people in a workplace or union, for example.

Essential Skill Profile – a description of the way a person in a specific occupation uses reading, writing, math, oral communication and computers on the job.

[F]

Formative Evaluation Plan – a strategy developed at the outset of the essential skills needs assessment or essential skills program to ensure that progress is monitored on an on-going basis.

[I]

Integrated essential skills training – reading, writing, math, oral communication, thinking, or computer skills development that is woven into technical, union, or safety training and which enhances that training.

International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) – an international survey of 21 countries' citizens to determine literacy levels of adults in those countries.

[N]

National Occupation Classification System (NOC) – provides information about 30,000 occupational titles, describing general job tasks, education and experience requirements and opportunities for advancement.

[P]

Peer tutoring – an instructional approach whereby a trained tutor works with a co-worker to help that person improve essential skills.

Prose literacy – the knowledge and skills required to read, understand and use information in text, like emails, collective agreements and reports.

[Q]

Quantitative literacy – the knowledge and skills required to perform math functions, like balancing a cheque book or figuring out interest on a loan.

[S]

Stakeholders – the group of people who have a vested interest in the essential skills activity. In workplace essential skills initiatives the stakeholders are usually the employees/union members, the Union and the Employer.

[W]

Worker-centred programs – programs that revolve around the individual worker's goals, not company goals. The program content is not restricted to workplace content. Participants can enhance essential skills in the context of home and community, too.

12 Principles of Good Practice for Essential Skills Programs

Workplace essential skills programs have certain principles of good practice that ensure quality programming.

1. The union is a full partner from the outset in the initiative, including any needs assessment, program design, program evaluation, and program delivery.

2. The intent of the essential skills program is not to "fix" workers. The intent of the program is to provide them with the learning they want to meet their lifelong goals and potential.

3. Participants' progress is kept confidential. Information about individuals' progress in the program is not shared with the employer.

4. Participation is voluntary.

5. The program content is not restricted to workplace content. Participants can enhance essential skills in the context of union, home and community, too.

6. Program instruction acknowledges participants' prior learning and respects experience by building on existing skills and knowledge.

7. Programs respect the cultural and racial diversity of participants.

8. Programs are accessible to all. No worker is excluded and programs are delivered at times and place that allow everyone access.

9. Participants' varied learning styles are accommodated.

10. Essential skills programs are accepted as training that is like any other training, not segregated or stigmatized.

11. As part of any essential skills development philosophy, clear language is promoted within the company and the union so that documents can easily be understood by all.

12. Programs are evaluated on an on-going basis to ensure that the learning is meaningful and relevant.

Benefits of Workplace Essential Skills Programming

Several studies have been conducted over the past 20 years to assess the benefits of Workplace Essential Skills training. The studies repeatedly pointed to these beneficial outcomes of the training.

Improved workplace safety
The understanding of safety regulations and procedures leads to fewer injuries, which in turn leads to reduced insurance costs and less employee downtime.

Enhanced workplace efficiencies
Greater understanding of job demands and procedures facilitates communication and enhances workplace efficiencies. When literacy skills are enhanced, employees are better suited to meet the demands of the job and better prepared to assume greater responsibilities and seek promotion.

More vibrant and engaged workforce
An organization active in offering education and employment opportunities is more likely to engage and retain its employees.

Enhanced productivity
An engaged workforce feels a vested interest in improving the organization's growth and productivity.

More competent use of technology
Technology and computer skills are essential to most workplace operations, and so offering employees the opportunity to develop these skills has multiple benefits for both the employee and the employer.

Increased competitiveness
Enhanced literacy skills prepare employees for managerial and technological changes in the workplace, and position the company for greater competitiveness.

Improved employment opportunities
Greater literacy and numeracy skills improve chances of individuals finding work and attaining promotions on the job.

To hear leaders from business, unions, skilled trades and the literacy and essential skills sector make the case for essential skills training in the workplace, watch and listen to this video by clicking on the link below.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tnCD2JLxMAg

AUPE history of Essential Skills activities

2002 - 2003 Essential Skills Needs Assessment - Process

In June 2002, AUPE applied for and received funds from the National Literacy Secretariat to conduct an Essential Skills Needs Assessment. The goal of the needs assessment was to find out if AUPE members felt a need to improve reading, writing, math, oral communication or computer skills.

A survey was designed, and its distribution and collection took several forms:
• the survey was included in an issue of Direct Impact, and members who completed surveys mailed them to Bow Valley College;
• focus groups were held in conjunction with regular meetings of Locals;
• an online survey was created;
• the survey was distributed and completed surveys collected at the 2002 Convention.

Resolution at the 2002 Convention

With the needs assessment well underway by October 2002, the Membership Services Committee put forward a resolution that was accepted by the Convention delegates:

WHEREAS we often portray Literacy and English as a Second Language as simply acquiring basic English reading, writing, mathematical and speaking skills; and

WHEREAS Literacy and ESL should be far more in order to provide training which is empowering and be delivered in ways that are independent of getting and keeping employment; and

WHEREAS this training can help remove barriers that prevent our members from fully participating in their Union, workplace, community, political system and personal life;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the AUPE develop a plan to help our members implement a cooperative education program with employers, labour, public and community institutions to help our members participate in day to day life; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that AUPE develop a plan to help our Locals/Chapters/Councils to deliver Union sponsored Literacy and ESL training to our members.

2002 - 2003 Essential Skills Needs Assessment - Results

A total of 403 members completed and returned surveys. Learning preferences and priorities were:

1. Oral communication skill development

2. Computer skill development

3. Writing skill development

4. Reading comprehension skills development

5. Math skill development

A full report of the needs assessment process and results is available.

After reviewing the findings of the needs assessment, the steering committee created six recommendations to move forward an Essential Skills agenda within the union:

1. It is recommended that a workshop for AUPE union officers be offered to further their knowledge and understanding of essential skills as an issue for their members.

2. It is recommended that a needs assessment take place in a healthcare facility to determine members' learning needs at that particular worksite so that a training program can be offered in response to those specified needs.

3. It is recommended that a video be created to further raise the awareness of AUPE members, union officers, and employers about essential skills as an issue.

4. It is recommended that a "How-to" manual be created to provide information and direction to those locals that wish to mount essential skills programs for their members. (This is that manual.)

5. It is recommended that AUPE promote essential skills at a major AUPE event, such as Convention or Labour Education School.

6. It is recommended that a one day event be created to allow AUPE union leaders to meet with public education providers for an exchange of information about members' essential skill learning needs and services that are available from educators in response to those needs.

All of these activities, with the exception of the needs assessment at a healthcare facility, were carried out between 2004 and 2006.

Essential Skills Validation - 2009 Process

For several years, the AUPE Essential Skills agenda was set aside while the union focussed on other issues. However, in 2009 the Human Rights Committee (HRC) took responsibility for the issue, and mandated a validation of the essential skills learning preferences, to confirm members' preferences and so ensure that subsequent programming would be relevant. The committee also requested that the manual be reviewed and updated as a part of the validation process. Banshee Consulting (Patricia Martin) was contracted to undertake the work.

Major steps in the Validation Process included:

• establishing a Validation Committee to guide the validation process;
• reviewing all of the materials from the 2003 Essential Skills Needs Assessment;
• developing the validation instrument (survey), a background and context document, and instructions for distributing the validation instrument (responsibility of HRC members); all documents reviewed by HRC, then finalized;
• researching and describing current Essential Skills training developments and program models.

Essential Skills Validation 2009 - Results

Validation data was gathered from 98 participants in five workplaces by five members of the Human Rights Committee.

The results of the validation survey and the 2003 survey turned out to be quite similar in many ways. In both surveys members indicated that personal growth was the chief motivation for developing skills; in both surveys they said that their preferred method of learning is face-to-face in a classroom with a teacher. The 2009 survey asked a new question about the essential skills they used most frequently on a daily basis. The top three were Speaking and Listening skills, Computer skills, and Problem Solving and Critical Thinking skills. (It should be noted that Problem Solving and Critical Thinking skills was added in as an essential skill on this validation survey, and did not appear in the 2003 survey.)

The results of the validation survey and the 2003 survey differed, most importantly, in essential skill learning preferences and priorities:

Ranking	2003 Survey	2009 Validation
1	Oral communication (Speaking and Listening)	Computer skills
2	Computer skills	Problem Solving - Critical Thinking
3	Writing skills	Oral communication
4	Reading Comprehension skills	Writing skills
5	Math skills	Reading skills
6		Math skills

It is clear that computer skills and speaking and listening were then high priorities for the respondents. Problem solving and reading skills are highly rated as well. The advantage to this prioritization is that problem solving can be addressed through computer-based applications, as can reading and writing skills. Program developers therefore must focus on a curriculum and an instructional design that addresses the top priorities in an integrated fashion.

Manual Updating Recommendations - 2009

Recommendations for updating the manual included:

• Updates to the AUPE history of Essential Skills Activities to include the 2009 Validation;
• Updates on the International Adult Literacy Survey and a description of subsequent, related studies;
• Updates of the Nine Step Process, capitalizing on the 2003 paradigm.

These recommendations have been incorporated into this 2014 manual update. A full report of the 2009 Essential Skills Validation project is available.

Essential Skills Needs Assessment, Local 048 - 2013

In April 2013, the Human Rights Committee proceeded with the Essential Skills agenda by suggesting that it might be useful to pilot an Essential Skills needs assessment validation and program within a single Local to gauge members' need and interest. Local 048 – Continuing Care Providers South in Calgary agreed to participate in this project.

An Essential Skills needs assessment was conducted between October 28 and December 31, 2013 to determine Local 048 members' essential skills learning interests. Surveys were mailed out to members and placed online at the AUPE website.

In total, 161 surveys were returned, representing a 5.55% return rate. Once again, members reported that personal growth is the primary reason for their interest in developing skills and that they preferred learning in a classroom with an instructor. Local 048 members' learning preferences and priorities closely mirror the 2009 Validation survey, and were:

1. Computer skills
2. Problem solving and critical thinking
3. Speaking and listening
4. Writing
5. Math
6. Reading

The unfortunately low rate of return called into question whether mounting an essential skills program for Local 048 members might be productive at this point. It was further decided to update the manual to ensure it remains current and relevant, to continue the formative evaluation of the 2013 Essential Skills project, and to create a Directory of Essential Skills Programming by various providers across Alberta so that people could make informed learning choices in their communities and regions.

International Literacy (Essential Skills) Surveys over the years

For the past several years, the international community, including Canada, has been conducting a series of surveys to collect quantitative and qualitative data about literacy/essential skills performance of its citizens. All of the studies were organized and published by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. A brief description of the studies is given here, with links to information about the reported results of each study.

International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS), 1994

During the autumn of 1994, a large sample of adults (ranging from 1,500 to 8,000 per country) in Europe (Germany, Netherlands, Poland, Sweden, Switzerland) and North America (Canada, United States) were given the same wide-ranging test of their prose literacy, document literacy and quantitative literacy skills. The results of this important, first international literacy/essential skills survey are presented in a series of three analytic reports: Literacy, Economy and Society (1995), Literacy Skills For the Knowledge Society (1997), and Literacy in the Information Age - Final Report of the International Literacy Survey (2000). The first two publications are out of print and unavailable online; however, the final report is available at http://www.oecd.org/edu/skills-beyond-school/41529765.pdf

International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey (IALSS), 2003

The International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey (IALSS) is the Canadian component of the Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey (ALL), an international comparative survey, and follow-up to IALS. The main purpose of IALSS was to find out how well adults used printed information to function in society in four skill domains: prose and document literacy, numeracy and problem-solving, but also looked at skills gain and skill loss. Survey highlights can be found at http://abclifeliteracy.ca/files/ialss_summary_nov_05_0.pdf ; full results are available on a CD-ROM by request at Statistics Canada.

ALL survey results are presented in two reports: Learning a Living - First Result of the Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey (2005) found at http://www.oecd.org/edu/innovation-education/34867438.pdf , and Literacy for Life: Further Results of the Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey (2011) found at http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-604-x/89-604-x2011001-eng.pdf

Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC), (2011)

PIAAC provides a highly detailed survey of skills in: literacy, numeracy, and problem solving in technology-rich environments (PS-TRE) among adults between the ages of 16 and 65, in 24 countries and sub-national regions along with all of Canada's provinces and territories. These core skills form the basis for cultivating other, higher-level skills necessary to functioning at home, school, and work, and in the community.

A press release from the Canadian Ministers of Education provides some highlights of the Canadian results.

International Report Shows Canadians are Adapting to the Digital Skills Era

TORONTO, October 8, 2013 – A major international study released today by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) shows that Canadians are increasingly embracing information and communications technologies (ICT) and are well positioned for the society and economy of the 21st century.

The Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) is OECD's first-ever international study of skills needed for today's world. PIAAC measures skills in literacy, numeracy, and problem solving in technology-rich environments (PS-TRE) among adults between the ages of 16 and 65, in 24 countries and sub-national regions. In Canada, more than 27,000 people were surveyed to allow findings at both the pan-Canadian and provincial and territorial levels as well as among off-reserve Aboriginal peoples, immigrants, and official-language minorities. PIAAC was sponsored in Canada by provincial and territorial ministries and departments responsible for education, under the aegis of the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC), Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC), and other partners. The survey was administered in Canada by Statistics Canada. As well as the OECD report, a companion pan-Canadian report is being released today.

"As the pace of technological change quickens, it is very encouraging to know that Canadians are engaging with information and communications technologies, and that we are among those most able to manage information and solve problems in a digital environment," said the Honourable Jeff Johnson, Chair of CMEC and Minister of Education for Alberta. "This is a clear global advantage at a time when the high-tech environment is becoming an ever more integral part of our everyday world."

The results show that Canadians are more likely than the OECD average to have higher levels of proficiency in the new category of "problem solving in technology-rich environments." Canada, along with only six other countries, scores above the OECD average in terms of the per cent of its population that can complete tasks which involve solving multi-step problems in computer environments using different applications. "It is rewarding to know that our education and training systems are preparing Canadians to be globally competitive," said the minister.

Moreover, the proportion of Canadians that could complete the computer-based assessment is higher than that of most other countries in the study: eight in 10 Canadian participants used a computer to complete PIAAC. This places Canada in the top tier of participating countries.

Literacy and numeracy in Canada
In literacy, Canada scored at the OECD average along with countries such as Korea, England/Northern Ireland, and the Czech Republic, and ahead of Germany, Denmark, and the USA. "I'm very pleased with our results in literacy, "said Minister Johnson. "But we can always do better."

Canada achieved this level of proficiency while having one of the most diverse populations in the study. Of the 24 participating countries, Canada has the second-largest proportion of immigrants, and the largest percentage of population whose mother tongue is different from the official languages of the assessment. While there is a gap between the literacy scores of immigrants and non-immigrants in Canada, this gap is narrower than the OECD average, and Canadian immigrants scored above the OECD average. In fact, Canada is one of only a few countries whose immigrant population is both proportionately larger than average and more proficient than average.

In numeracy, Canada's average score was slightly below the OECD average, suggesting that this is one area that could be targeted by policy makers for improvement.

"While Canada performs well when it comes to the crucial emerging area of digital skills, we must keep in mind that literacy and numeracy are equally important foundational skills for the knowledge economy," noted Minister Johnson. "Canada's results in numeracy are a particular focus for ministers of education. At our recent CMEC meeting in July, we examined the issue of the teaching and learning of mathematics. Over the coming months, ministers will continue to work across the country on efforts to improve numeracy and literacy in provincial and territorial education and skills training systems."

The education and skills connection
PIAAC results suggest a strong positive correlation between educational attainment and skills proficiency across most participating countries, including Canada. In particular, those with a university degree score higher on each of the three skills domains. The proficiency levels of Canadians with a bachelor's degree or higher are on a par with those of many of their counterparts in OECD countries.

Moreover, the difference in literacy and numeracy skills between younger and older Canadians is less pronounced for those with a postsecondary education, suggesting that those with a postsecondary education have more opportunities to put their skills to use and upgrade their skills as they age.

The importance of education is also made evident by the preliminary results for Aboriginal peoples living off-reserve in Canada. While, overall, Aboriginal Canadians do not score as high as non-Aboriginal Canadians in literacy, numeracy, or problem solving in technology-rich environments, initial analysis suggests that there is very little difference in proficiency between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians who have achieved similar levels of education. This suggests that continuing efforts to ensure Aboriginal students' access and participation in education are key to eliminating skills gaps.

The Canadian labour force
The study shows that the proficiency levels of Canadians in literacy, numeracy, and problem solving in technology-rich environments translate into an advantage for Canada's labour force and economy. For instance, the proportion of the Canadian labour force that has higher levels of proficiency in problem solving technology-rich environments is higher than the OECD average. At the same time, Canadians with higher proficiency in literacy are more likely than the OECD average to be employed.

While many of the benefits associated with skills proficiency are economic, the OECD study also highlights benefits in other areas. Individuals with higher levels of literacy and numeracy are more likely to be in better health, have higher levels of trust, and are more likely to participate in civic life.

With the growing participation in PIAAC expected to reach 35 countries by 2014, today's release is only a first look at the wealth of information being collected by PIAAC. OECD and Canada's PIAAC partners will be analyzing the data from the survey and issuing other reports to inform government policy and provide more information on skills to the general public.

27,000 Canadians took part in the survey.

Essential Skills Profiles of AUPE Members' Occupations

Essential Skills Profiles are descriptions of the ways in which a person in a certain job uses essential skills. Visit the links below to see some sample Essential Skills Profiles for a few AUPE members' occupations from the four AUPE sectors. You can find your career occupational Essential Skills Profile by going to the Government of Canada website http://www.jobbank.gc.ca/es_all-eng.do and finding your career using the alphabetical index. Click on your occupation, and then on the following page click on the "Expand all" button to get a detailed account of how you use essential skills on the job each day. If you cannot find your occupation, it is because a profile has not yet been created for it; however, tools are available to develop essential skills profiles for an occupation.

Mail, postal and related clerks
http://www.jobbank.gc.ca/es_view_profile-eng.do?prof_id=144&lang=eng

Correctional Service Officers
http://www.jobbank.gc.ca/es_view_profile-eng.do?prof_id=325&lang=eng

Purchasing and inventory clerks
http://www.jobbank.gc.ca/es_view_profile-eng.do?prof_id=155&lang=eng

Licensed Practical Nurse
http://www.jobbank.gc.ca/es_view_profile-eng.do?prof_id=55&lang=eng

Printing Machine Operator
http://www.jobbank.gc.ca/es_view_profile-eng.do?prof_id=351&lang=eng

Social Worker
http://www.jobbank.gc.ca/es_view_profile-eng.do?prof_id=182&lang=eng

Food Service Supervisors
http://www.jobbank.gc.ca/es_view_profile-eng.do?prof_id=94&lang=eng

Receptionist and Switchboard Operators
http://www.jobbank.gc.ca/es_view_profile-eng.do?prof_id=163&lang=eng

Essential Skill Profiles are tools that can be used in several ways. Employers may use them to ensure that they screen potential employees properly for a given occupation. AUPE members might use them if they wish to determine which skills to enhance for their present occupation or a new career to which they want to move. Members might also use the profiles as a tool to request training.

A 9-Step Process to Set Up an Essential Skills program

Here is an overview of the 9-step process.

Step 1 – Educate the employer and union members and get support for the program
This section of the manual contains information about essential skills issues and training for you to share with the employer and union members. People will be more likely to commit to this type of programming if they understand the issues and process for establishing a program.

Step 2 – Set up an advisory committee to guide the process
The nature of the committee will depend on whether the program is a joint union-management supported program or whether it is a union owned initiative. This section of the manual addresses this and other issues about establishing a program development committee.

Step 3 – Plan and conduct an essential skills learning needs assessment
This section of the manual will provide you with a process for conducting a needs assessment. The planning of the needs assessment will be done with the help of the steering committee.

Step 4 – Make decisions about programming based on the needs assessment findings
This section of the manual guides you and the steering committee through the process of making decisions about the type of program to offer, when to offer it and where to offer it.

Step 5 – Develop a Communication Plan to inform people about the program
This section of the manual guides the process of developing communication strategies that will inform people about the program and promote involvement.

Step 6 – Develop an Evaluation Plan
This section will guide the development of a plan for evaluating the program on an on-going basis.

Step 7 – Develop an Action Plan
This section of the manual will guide the steering committee through the creation of an Action Plan to carry out those decisions made in Steps 4 and 5.

Step 8 – Deliver the program
This section contains tips for administering the program delivery.

Step 9 – Sustain the program
This section discusses how to sustain the program.

Step 1 – Educate the employer and union members and get support for the program

One of the reasons why essential skills training is not on a company's training agenda is often because employers are simply unaware of the issue. They assume that because people attended school in their youth they have the skills they need. They do not realize that time and change can create a need for people to enhance or refresh their essential skills.

The union membership also needs some awareness about the issue. They need to be able to talk about how their essential skills have been impacted by change and be able to confidently participate in any essential skills training. A first step is understanding the issue.

Key areas for discussion and exploration with people could include the following topics:

1. What are essential skills and why do they matter? You may wish to use the information in this manual on page 4 about "What are Essential Skills and why are they important?"

2. What are the myths and realities surrounding literacy and essential skills? You can find a list of myths and realities on the ABC Life Literacy Canada here http://abclifeliteracy.ca/literacy-myths

3. What are the benefits of offering workplace essential skills programming? You may wish to use the information in this manual on page 7 to guide a discussion about benefits for your particular workplace. You might also want to read and discuss the highlights of this recent study entitled "UPSKILL: A Credible Test of Literacy and Essential Skills training. Highlights can be found here: http://www.srdc.org/news/new-study-shows-net-benefits-of-essential-skills-training-in-the-workplace.aspx

4. What is the process for investigating the need for an Essential Skills program? You can use this section of the manual to give people an overview of the process, and to discuss what these steps would look like in the context of your AUPE workplace.

As part of educating AUPE members and Employers, you might also want obtain the video DVD "The Essential Investment" (20 minutes) produced by AUPE in 2006.

Remember that throughout the education process it is critical to provide information in a variety of ways so that audiences with varying skill levels and learning preferences can be accommodated. Spend as much time talking with leaders, informal leaders and members as you do providing presentations and print materials. Use plain language at all times to communicate ideas and information.

If you require support to present at a meeting or special occasion, feel free to contact the AUPE Education Staff Advisor for help.

Step 2 - Set up an advisory committee to guide the process

"A committee is a group that keeps minutes and loses hours." ~Milton Berle

Committees, like meetings, have a bad name because they are often unproductive. The cause of that lack of productivity may be a lack of leadership, a lack of commitment on the part of the members, or disorganization.

Let's examine the qualities of an effective committee:

• The purpose of the committee is clear.
• The meetings are timely and necessary.
• The atmosphere is relaxed and informal to encourage people's comfort contributing ideas.
• There is respect among committee members.
• Effective leadership is provided.
• Members are interested and committed.
• The committee process is organized and purposeful.
• Recognition is given to members' contributions.
• Action results from decisions and plans.
• Stakeholders outside the committee are informed of its activities and achievements.

What is the purpose of an Essential Skills Advisory Committee?

The purpose of an Essential Skills Advisory Committee is two-fold:

a) to provide the essential skills facilitator with advice and resources;
b) to act as a liaison between the essential skills facilitator and the employer and union.

Who should be on an Essential Skills Advisory Committee?

Ideally, any essential skills initiative will be a process jointly supported by the union and the employer. In that case then, of course, representation on the committee must be balanced by the involvement of both parties. Usually, an essential skills committee consists of at least two union representatives and two management representatives. These representatives should be people who have a commitment to education. It may be that they do not know a lot about essential skills education specifically when they first come together, but the essential skills educator can help by providing an essential skills orientation workshop to the committee members.

What is most important is that the members are dedicated to education and wish to include essential skills training as part of the education agenda. If an education committee already exists, then the Essential Skills Advisory Committee could be a subcommittee of that committee. In any case, it is important that these two committees communicate often.

What will committee members be required to do and contribute?

1. Members will be required to meet face-to-face periodically. It's a good idea for the committee to look at the work that needs to be done and decide when meetings might be necessary and helpful. Electronic communication might be possible and most efficient, depending on committee members' access to computers and internet availability.

2. Members will be required to be sufficiently informed about the essential skills initiative to be able to respond to co-workers' questions on the topic.

3. Members will provide information to the essential skills facilitator about the culture of the workplace, products and services, organizational structure and issues that may affect essential skills programming, for example, shift work schedules.

4. Members will help plan and support the essential skills initiative, for example, help plan any needs assessment, the communication plan and evaluation plan.

Step 3: Plan and conduct an essential skills needs assessment

An essential skills needs assessment is critical to any essential skills programming because it establishes two things:

1. if there is a need for essential skills programming and an interest in essential skills programming among the workers;

2. if there is a need and an interest, what that program should look like in terms of content and delivery.

Here is a brief overview of the essential skills needs assessment process:

1. **Profile the workplace.** This strategy helps the essential skills needs assessment facilitator understand the workplace and the variables that will influence the needs assessment process.

2. **Design the needs assessment.** This step involves setting goals and objectives for the assessment, identifying audiences and mechanics (when, where and how) of the assessment, designing needs assessment questions, and creating a work plan, communications plan and evaluation plan.

3. **Communicate news of the needs assessment.** This step ensures that those involved in the needs assessment (likely workers, management and union officers) understand why it is being conducted, when it will be conducted, and how it will be conducted.

4. **Conduct the assessment.** This step involves gathering information according to the needs assessment design strategy created in Step 2.

5. **Analyze the information.** Analyze the information to determine interest, need (including particular needs for the unique workplace), and workplace issues that may impact training.

6. **Write the report.** Document the findings in both a full report and a summary report.

7. **Present the report.** Your communication plan will have determined to whom, when and how you will present the report. Revisit the plan to see if changes need to be made.

8. **Evaluate the needs assessment process and outcomes.** Write a short evaluation report.

Here is more detail about the process.

1. **Profile the workplace.** Developing a profile of the workplace is done by the essential skills facilitator and the advisory committee. The committee has the knowledge to complete the form and the facilitator will use this information to help design the questions to be asked during the assessment and to better understand the various audiences involved in the assessment. Use the form in the Appendix to profile the workplace.

2. **Design the needs assessment.**

   A. **Develop goals and objectives**. The first step in designing the needs assessment is for the Advisory Committee and essential skills facilitator to develop a set of goals and objectives for the needs assessment. Goals and objectives are not the same thing. Goals are broad; objectives are concrete, specific, actions that are taken to achieve that goal. Examine the example below to see the difference:

GOAL	To learn the history of AUPE
OBJECTIVE	Search the AUPE website for information relating to history
OBJECTIVE	Ask AUPE staff for documents that describe AUPE history
OBJECTIVE	Interview AUPE President for historical information

   All of the objectives are actions that are taken to achieve the goal. The goal "to learn" is very broad, but the objective verbs, "Search", "Ask," and "Interview" are very specific and active.

   It is also helpful to detail the outcomes of the achievement of the goal. See below for an example:

GOAL	To gather information about people's perceived Essential Skills learning needs from a broad sample of AUPE members.
OBJECTIVES	To conduct focus group discussions with a variety of employees in various occupations and worksites.
	To develop a questionnaire survey to allow people to give their ideas if they were unable to attend a focus group discussion.
OUTCOMES	Information about people's perceived Essential Skill learning needs in the context of their specific workplace and occupation.

Enhanced awareness by the membership, union leaders and employers of the issue.

Increased receptivity and thought about enhancing Essential Skills.

Enhancement of the AUPE Education portfolio.

B. **Decide how information will be collected and from whom.** The three common approaches to collecting information are surveys, focus group discussions and one-to-one interviews. If the target audience is large, then the use of a paper or on-line survey is typically most practical, however supplementing the survey with interviews and focus groups produces good narrative data. The essential skills facilitator and the Advisory Committee can make the decision about how data is collected.

The usual audiences for the collection of information are union members, union leaders and management representatives. Focus groups and surveys work well for gathering information from members; one-to-one interviews work well for gathering information from union leaders and management representatives. It is critical, however, that members who actually do the work provide information.

Ensure that all involved (the stakeholders) understand and are willing to comply with keeping the assessment information provided by everyone anonymous. Otherwise workers may be afraid to respond.

C. **Create the needs assessment questions.** Needs assessment questions are tailored to the nature of the workplace, but generally speaking essential skills needs assessment questions seek to:

- identify recent changes in the workplace
- identify how change has impacted people's use of essential skills
- identify what they often have to read, write, communicate about orally, or use math or computer skills for on the job
- identify what they may find challenging about using any of these essential skills
- find out what kind of employer-sponsored training is available to them
- find out what kind of union training is available to them
- find out what barriers may prevent them from taking training
- find out what motivates them to take training
- find out how previous training/learning programs were received and evaluated
- ask how they prefer to learn (one-to-one, small group, computer based)
- ask when it might be most convenient for them to participate in training
- ask where training should take place (union hall, workplace, etc.)
- ask them to rank their essential skills learning preferences

The same questions should be asked of all audiences – members, union leaders and employers alike. However, the questions may be phrased slightly differently to better relate to the different audiences. For example, on the topic of motivation, the questions might be asked like this:

Members: What motivates you to take training?

Employers: What strategies or incentives do you use to motivate employees to take training?

Union Leaders: Are you aware of any incentives or motivational strategies that the employer uses to encourage employees to take training?

Be sure to create the questions in plain language. This is especially important if you choose to conduct a paper or online survey that people will read and complete.

D. **Develop an action plan.** Once the goals and objectives have been determined, and it has been decided how to collect information and from whom, an action plan should be created that details a path, complete with timelines, for carrying out the needs assessment. There may be an adjustment to the action plan along the way, but it is helpful to determine at the outset a general plan or schedule.

E. **Develop an evaluation strategy.** It is important to develop the evaluation strategy as part of the design process because it allows the process to be monitored from the outset and the evaluation information collected will be included in the final report. To create an evaluation plan, first identify the audiences that will want information about the needs assessment process and results, and what kind of information each audience requires. Next, identify how best to collect or get that information. This means that the evaluation questions asked of members will be different than those for management or union leaders because each group had a different interest in the activity.

Some questions you might want to ask members who participated in the process:

Were you told about the assessment ahead of time? Was the reason for it clearly explained? What did you enjoy about being part of the needs assessment process? Was there anything about the questions or the process that made you uncomfortable? Have you any final comments about your involvement in the process?

Some questions you might want to ask union leaders:

In what way do you think the Union benefited from being involved in the needs assessment? How will the Union use the findings of the needs assessment? What would you have changed about the process, if anything? What unexpected things did you learn?

The same questions can be asked of management to get their perspective, as well as:

In what ways do you think the company benefited from the needs assessment? How will the company use the findings of the needs assessment? What would you have changed about the process, if anything?

During the assessment activities, you may wish to include an inquiry about whether a participant would like to see the outcomes and evaluation. You might, instead, tell them where and how they can see the assessment results and the evaluation of the assessment process.

3. **Communicate the needs assessment plans.** Communicating news about the needs assessment is important because it helps prepare people for the activity and helps diminish fear and suspicion by explaining why, when and how it will happen.

Create a communication plan that identifies the audiences and the best vehicles for conveying information. For example, the Advisory Committee might be able to suggest company or union newsletters that could carry information about the needs assessment if the publication timelines happened to be accommodating. Bulletin boards might carry information. Face to face explanations at regular meetings are very useful since people can have their questions answered as they think of them.

Think of all of the ways and places that information about the activity could be displayed.

4. **Conduct the needs assessment.** Because of the pre-planning, conducting the assessment is easy.

Some tips for conducting focus group discussions:

- Prepare a fact sheet that identifies the work group type and date of the interview. You may also wish to have people identify their occupation or position.
- Names are not recorded to ensure anonymity.
- Assemble a group from a common work area so there is a measure of reliability and validity to the statements made.
- Host discussions with people from a cross section of work areas in the workplace.
- Attempt to gather the ideal group size of 6-8 people.
- Provide a moderator to ask questions and guide the discussion and a note taker.
- Instruct the moderator to :
  - provide participants with background information and make clear the purpose of the discussion.
  - indicate that notes will be taken, but that people's names are not required to ensure anonymity.
  - ask permission from the participants to take notes, again assuring them of anonymity.
  - ask if there are any questions before proceeding with the discussion.
  - remain neutral during the discussion; that is, listen objectively without conveying opinions.
  - guide the discussion, ensuring that participants stay on topic and do not get sidetracked into discussing unrelated issues.
  - time the meeting by the amount of information requested of participants and the amount they have to give.

Some tips for conducting one-on-one interviews:

- Prepare a fact sheet that identifies the interviewee's position in the union or company and the date of the interview.
- Provide background information and purpose of interview.
- Ask if there are any questions before proceeding with the interview.
- Take notes.
- Throughout the interview encourage the person to provide examples of statements made.

- Do not lead the person by making a statement and then asking for an opinion, for example "Employees here don't seem to get much training. Why is that?" Instead, ask the question "What training do employees get at this workplace?"
- Allow time for the person to consider their answer.
- Wrap up the interview by explaining that you will be showing them a transcript of your notes once you have them transcribed so that they can check for accuracy.

Focus group discussions and one-to-one interviews are useful because they provide rich, narrative data. Quotes can be recorded that often provide context and depth in the final report.

Some tips for creating and conducting a multiple selection survey:

- Use the same questions that you used for the focus group discussions and interviews; simply re-phrase slightly if necessary.
- Look through your focus group discussion notes and identify the most common responses to the questions. Use these common responses to create a slate of response choices for each question.
- Develop a plan to distribute the survey, collect the completed surveys and tabulate the data.

Surveys are useful because they yield data that can be tallied and listed and those tallies used to clearly describe the outcomes by numbers and trends.

5. **Analyze the needs assessment information.** Write up the discussion notes and then review the notes looking for key words and concepts that recur. You'll want to count each instance of a key word or concept. Most word processing programs have a "search and find" feature that will find and count specific words and phrases. You can also use software tools such as SPSS and Atlas.ti to help sort the data and reveal patterns.

    After the findings have been analyzed for frequency of themes and responses, the Advisory Committee and Essential Skills Facilitator should create recommendations. The recommendations provide a blueprint for "next steps."

6. **Write the report.** The findings and recommendations need to be documented in a report. Report formats vary, but generally speaking the format is as follows: title page, table of contents, acknowledgements, introduction (which is usually background about why the needs assessment was done), methodology (how the needs assessment was carried out), findings, and recommendations. Sometimes an executive summary report is written so that people can read highlights, just the findings, of the activity. AUPE headquarters has a copy of the full report of the province-wide essential skills needs assessment that can be used as a model for writing.

7. **Present the report.** Ideally, your Communication Plan will have included a plan for how to present the report. Perhaps the report can be posted on the Local website and the company website. Perhaps an executive summary report, if one has been created, can be distributed at a Local meeting. The Advisory Committee likely has the best knowledge and advice about effective vehicles for presenting the report.

8. **Evaluate the needs assessment process and outcomes.** The usual audiences for the evaluation are the stakeholders who were involved: union leaders, members and management representatives. The evaluation plan developed during the needs assessment design phase will dictate how the evaluation is carried out and communicated to all the stakeholders.

Step 4: Make decisions about programming based on the needs assessment findings
Establish goals and objectives for the program
The first step is for the Advisory Committee members to discuss, from their varying perspectives, what goals and objectives they see and would like to establish for the program. Remember, goals are broad and objectives are concrete actions that will be taken to achieve that goal. For example, one goal of the project might be to involve a certain number of employees in the program. Objectives would state ways in which that goal could be achieved.

Delivery formats
The needs assessment participant responses shape what the programming should look like.

The findings should tell you what the majority of participants in the needs assessment prefer in terms of the type of programming. Common types of programming are:

> **One-to-one peer tutoring**
> This approach provides individualized instruction and maximum flexibility. Typically, a Learning Coordinator provides training to volunteer peer tutors and then matches a tutor and learner. The pair decide the learning path together, and when and where it is most convenient for them to meet. Pairs usually meet once or twice a week. The Learning Coordinator provides support to the pair.

Computer based essential skills learning and e-learning

Computer assisted learning can take many forms. It may consist of a piece of computer software, perhaps on a DVD, that the learner uses to enhance skills and knowledge at his/her own pace. Or it may involve a form of e-learning in which the learner joins others in a virtual classroom, with an instructor facilitating the class. Or it may involve another form of e-learning in which the learner can log in and out of a course and accomplish the learning independently, at his/her own pace (although, usually with tutor support as needed).

If computer-assisted learning is selected as the format for program delivery, the Learning Coordinator can help the Advisory Committee decide which form of computer-assisted learning is best.

Any of these computer-assisted learning forms can be incorporated into one-to-one tutoring, workshops or classroom settings, or a learning centre setting.

Small group workshops

Another format for delivering workplace essential skills training is by organizing occasional small group workshops, as required or requested. For example, an essential skills facilitator may post a notice for a budgeting (math skills) workshop, and people sign up if they are interested. This type of curriculum, as well as other essential skills curricula, are available for purchase and so need not be developed, unless there is a need for a curriculum customized to the particular workplace. Facilitators can be hired on contract or through post-secondary or literacy organizations.

Drop-in Learning Centre

A Drop-in Learning Centre is usually located in the workplace or at a union office. It is typically staffed with a Learning Coordinator, who helps identify individual learner goals and needs and guides the student through the learning. A Drop-in Learning Centre usually allows the student to work one-to-one with a volunteer tutor, to participate in small group workshops or to learn using computer-based programs. A Drop-in Learning Centre allows students to learn at their own pace and is very accommodating of individual learning styles and needs.

Where the program will take place

The location of the program is dictated by three things: by where needs assessment participants indicated they would most prefer, by the type of delivery chosen, and by the availability of space.

When the program should take place

When learning should take place depends on four things: on needs assessment participants' stated preference, on members' work schedules, on the type of delivery chosen, and on the production/service cycle of the workplace. For example, some workplaces have a high season and a low season. Take this into account as you plan when to offer programming.

Barriers that may prevent program participation

One of the key things that the needs assessment should address is barriers that may prevent people from participating in training. During the program planning process be sure to review the barriers and take issues that people have raised into account when planning the program. For example, lack of time is very often cited as a barrier; that is, people have too many life and family commitments to do training on their own time and are often too busy in their jobs to take training on company time. Travel may be another barrier. If people have to travel a distance to take training, that demands time and money. Try to minimize barriers when you plan the program.

Recognition

Decide how learning will be recognized. Consider creating a certificate of participation.

Staffing

The staffing of the program depends largely on the delivery format chosen. A Learning Co-ordinator is required for all of the formats described above, but if a peer tutoring model is chosen, then volunteer tutors are needed for staffing as well. The Learning Co-ordinator may be a half-time position or a full-time position, depending on the participation level.

Step 5 – Develop a Communication Plan to inform people about the program

Just as a Communication Plan was required in order to inform people about the Needs Assessment, so too is a Communication Plan required to inform people about the program. The Advisory Committee, whose members are familiar with company and union communication methods and tools, can provide a lot of information and advice, while the Essential Skills Facilitator can guide the communication planning process.

Take a persuasive and positive approach

The Communication Plan is also a promotional plan of sorts. At the same time that it informs people about the program, it should also promote the program, so there should be a persuasive element to the communication.

For example, to inform people and promote a reading comprehension program at one Alberta company, a flyer was created that asked:

"Want to read faster and understand more?"

Well, who wouldn't! That question took a positive approach to attracting people's attention by suggesting the benefits of the program – being able to read faster and understand more quickly and completely.

Avoid negative messages in your communications, such as "Do your reading skills need improvement?" People's most immediate response will be "no" because the message suggests they have a deficit. Moreover, even if they do acknowledge that their skills are lacking, they may be reluctant to come forward and sign up because of the negative, deficit association.

Some ideas for ways to communicate news of the program:

Article in company or union newsletter –You can create an article announcing the program, and then put subsequent, short update articles in each subsequent edition, so that people become familiar with it.

Luncheon presentation – You can make a brief presentation at noon in the lunch area talking about essential skills and describing the work of the program.

Company and Union meetings – You can make a brief presentation at these meetings to inform people.

Flyer – You can use a flyer posted around the workplace to tell people about the program. Be sure to include on the flyer a union representative's name and contact information and a management representative's name and contact information. Communicate creatively and communicate often!

Step 6: Develop an Evaluation Plan

Develop an evaluation plan at the outset of the program so that you have a strategy and timeline for monitoring its progress. The evaluation plan is very much shaped by the nature of the program and the format of delivery.

In the appendix is a sample evaluation plan for a program that offers periodic workshops or classes, but this plan might equally apply to a drop-in learning centre program. In the appendix is also a sample peer tutoring program evaluation.

Because computer assisted learning can take many different forms, an evaluation template cannot be provided here, but will need to be developed and tailored once a choice for this delivery has been made.

Step 7 – Develop an Action Plan

The action plan is shaped by the decisions made in Steps 4 and 5 and is a road map for getting the program up and running. Here is a sample action plan if a Learning Centre is the desired delivery model.

Sample Action Plan for Learning Centre Operation:

Task	Dates
Identify a suitable location for the Learning Centre, keeping in mind preferences stated by Needs Assessment participants.	
Identify human, material and equipment resources required and acquire them.	
Create a process for people to "enroll" or become engaged.	
Create a process for how people will progress through the program (program process model).	
Devise a participation tracking system.	
Communicate information about Centre openings, services, and "enrollment" process.	
Launch the Centre.	
Commence programming and on-going evaluation according to evaluation plan.	
Continue to communicate information about the Centre.	

Details specific to the actual activity can be added into this plan, but this provides a general framework.

Similar plans with some differences can be designed for other delivery models.

Step 8: Deliver the program

The instructional and administrative responsibilities for delivering the program vary with the model chosen, although there are some shared areas.

All program models require:

• that the instructor ensure that the curriculum and learning is relevant to the individual or group needs.
• that the instructor(s) teach in accordance with adult learning principles.
• that learning is recognized in some fashion (certificate of achievement).
• that individual participants' assessments remain confidential information.
• that individual participants' progress remains confidential.
• that program evaluation is conducted on an on-going basis.
• that administrative tasks such as budget management and record-keeping be maintained.

Variances related to program model chosen:

In a peer tutor program, the Learning coordinator will provide training for tutors to familiarize them with literacy tutoring strategies. The Learning Coordinator will also match tutors with students and maintain records for the matches made. Tutors may also need help identifying appropriate learning resources and developing individual instructional plans.

In a program that offers regular or occasional workshops, the Learning Coordinator will need to be responsive to the changing learning needs of members at a particular workplace. It is important to monitor workplace and organizational changes in order to ensure that workshops offered are responsive to new and emerging trends.

In a Drop-in Learning Centre program, the Learning Coordinator will need to be sure that the hours of operation are convenient to the various shifts of members to ensure that the facility is accessible to all. Moreover, because the Centre is "drop-in" it is important to record participation times and rates in order to make adjustments to the operation as required.

If computer assisted learning is incorporated with any of these three models, the Learning Coordinator will need to ensure that there is IT support for technologies, and essential skills computer training for those who require it in order to fully engage in computer assisted learning.

Step 9: Sustain the program

The issue of program sustainability is an important one and requires a continual commitment on the part of the union, management and members.

Five tips for sustaining the program:

1. **Evaluate, evaluate, evaluate.** On-going evaluation of the program provides for the opportunity to make responsible, timely changes thereby ensuring the viability and relevance of the program.

2. **Keep stakeholders involved.** The Communication Plan will have identified key points to address in updates and a specific schedule to follow for keeping stakeholders informed. Decision-making for ongoing improvement depends upon communications. Maintain regular Advisory Committee meetings which will, in addition, sustain stakeholder commitment and participation.

3. **Ensure that instructional resources, equipment and supplies are current.**

4. **Seek measures to ensure the program is adequately funded.**

5. **Document success.** By documenting the successes of the program you can build the case for continuance.

Appendix

Profiling the Workplace form

Sample Program Evaluation

Sample Peer Tutor Evaluation Plan

Links to Essential Skills Resources

Profiling the workplace

Type of workplace

☐ Healthcare Sector ☐ Government Sector ☐ Education Sector ☐ Boards and Agencies Sector

Organization name:

Product or Service:

Hours of operation:

Shift schedules:

Work location (one site, multi-sites):

Size of workforce

Total number of workers:

Total number of unionized workers:

Number of unions:

Change in workforce size past five years?

Change in workforce size anticipated?

Composition of unionized workers

Gender: Males (%): Females (%):

Age: under 25:

25 - 34:

35 - 44:

44 - 55:

over 55:

Countries of origin represented:

Languages spoken:

Education and skill requirements

Does the employer have a pre-requirement for hiring?	☐ Yes	☐ No
Did the company have a pre-requirement five years ago?	☐ Yes	☐ No
Does the existing workforce meet the pre-requirement?	☐ Yes	☐ No
Does the existing workforce need the pre-required skills to do their jobs?	☐ Yes	☐ No
Are there formal education requirements for new job openings?	☐ Yes	☐ No
If yes, do members meet those requirements?	☐ Yes	☐ No

What education and training does the employer provide?

Education and skill requirements *continued*

Are members satisfied with the employer-sponsored
education and training offered? Why or why not?

What is the process for selecting workers for employer-sponsored education and training?

Do members frequently access Union education and training?

Are members satisfied with the Union
education and training? Why or why not?

What is the process for selecting members for
Union education and training?

Does the employer offer training incentives (time off, bonus pay)?

Are members generally aware of this benefit?

What are some barriers that may prevent
members from taking training?

Employer profile

Is this employer: ☐ Local   ☐ Provincial

Does this employer have multiple locations?   ☐ Yes   ☐ No

What have been some recent changes in this workplace?

What are some anticipated changes?

Union profile

Who are the officers of the Local(s)?

What committees does the Local have?

What have been some recent changes in this Local?

What are some anticipated changes?

Management Structure

Draw a workplace organizational or department organizational chart here, showing executive management positions, departments, middle management positions, supervisory positions, etc.
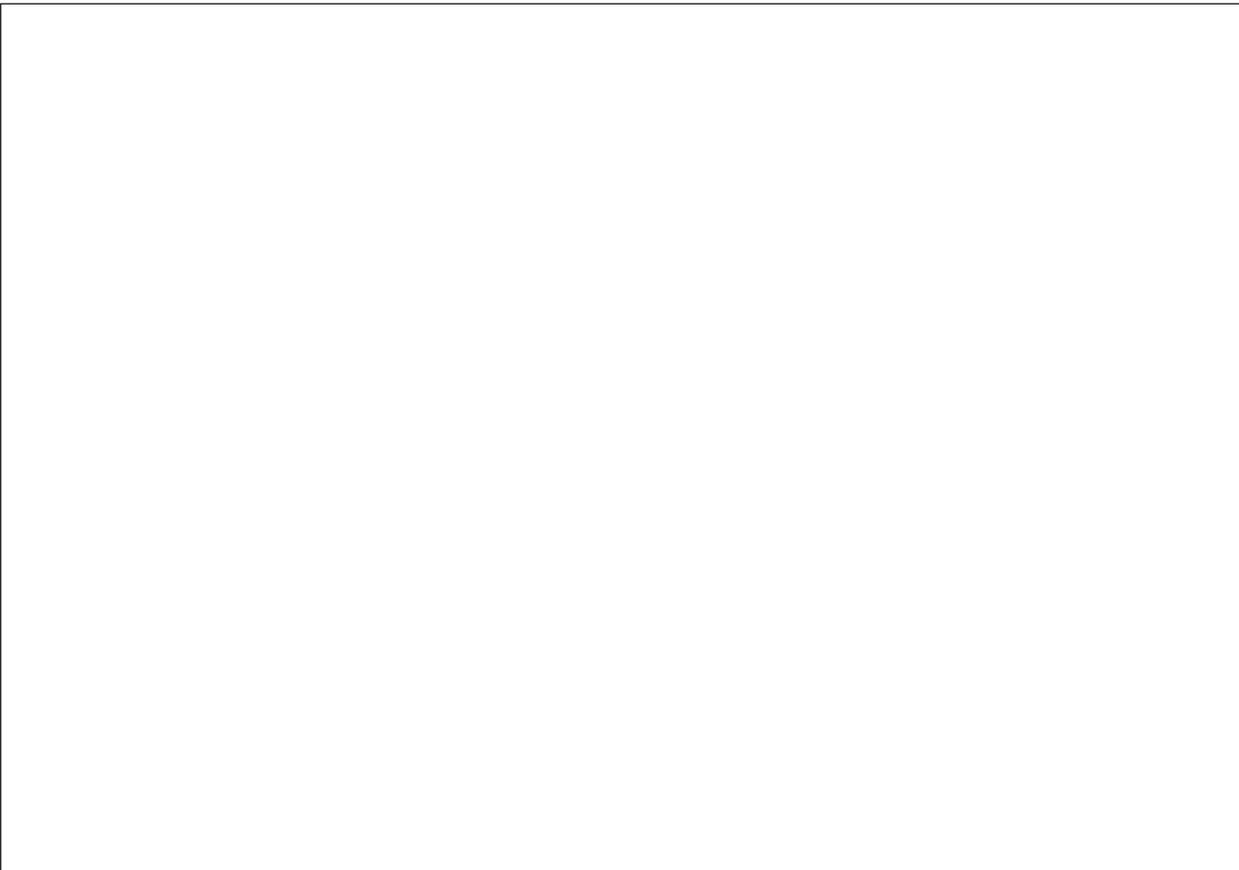
Sample Program Evaluation Plan

This plan assumes that the Essential Skills Program Coordinator will be responsible for evaluation activities.

Evaluation question/activity	Ask who	Ask when	How
Conduct workshop evaluation	Workshop participants	After each workshop	Brief questionnaire
Conduct impact evaluation (How are you using your new skills on and off the job?)	People who have taken a workshop	1 month after workshop, then 3 months after workshop	Interview
Conduct impact evaluation (Have you noticed any changes since person took workshop?) *	Union leaders and/or supervisors	3 months after workshop	Interview
Conduct mini-needs assessment to find out what other/new courses might meet needs and interests of members	Members, including those who have taken workshops	Regularly	In person, flyers, company and union newsletters, at company and union meetings
Ensure program is fulfilling goals and objectives	Advisory Committee members	Once per month	Review and discussion at monthly meetings
Track and document participation in workshops, workshops offered and training hours	N/A	On-going	Use database to record
Evaluate effectiveness of communication activities	Members, union leaders and management reps	Once per month	Random interviews, email surveys
Monitor financial and material resources	N/A	On-going	Maintain financial spreadsheet and inventory of materials
Write activity reports	N/A	Once per month	Submit to Advisory Committee at monthly meetings

* A word of caution: not all learning evidences itself on the job because often the job may not require extensive use of those skills. In fact, there may be no way for supervisors to note a change. The skill development may not be visible, but may yet be there.

Sample Peer Tutor Program Evaluation

This plan assumes that the strategy for collecting information will be personal interviews with tutors, students, union officers and management representatives. Evaluation should occur every three months. Below are sample questions for the different audiences. Note that responses to these questions may lead to additional questions on that particular topic.

There are also questions provided that relate to program administration, an assessment of which should be a part of the program evaluation activity.

Sample questions for Tutors

- Did the initial tutor training you received adequately prepare you for your tutor role?
- Is there any training you would like relevant to your tutor role?
- What is going well for you and your student?
- What difficulties are you experiencing?
- Are you satisfied with the progress your student is making?
- Are you satisfied with the learning materials that are available to you?
- What additional resources or learning materials do you require?
- How has the tutoring changed you as a person, if at all?

Sample questions for Students

- What is your particular goal for working with a tutor?
- Is the tutoring helping you toward this goal?
- What is your focus for learning?
- Are you satisfied with your learning progress?
- Are you satisfied with the learning materials?
- Are there other learning materials you would like?
- Can you think of any changes that you've noticed on the job or at home since you began the learning?

Sample questions for management

- Why did the organization support this program?
- In what ways does this program benefit the organization?
- What contributions has the organization made to the program?
- What additional contributions might the organization make?

Administrative questions

- Is the program meeting the goals and objectives that were set out?
- Are program records kept that document tutor-student matches, participation levels, tutor training activities, etc.?
- Is student progress assessed and documented?
- Is the resource collection catalogued and current?
- Is the program promoted according to the Communication Plan?
- Are monthly meetings held with the Advisory Committee?
- Is the program networked with the larger literacy community?
- Is the budget monitored and expenses tracked and supported by documentation?
- Are alternative funding supports explored?

Links to Essential Skills Resources

ABC Life Literacy

ABC Life Literacy Canada is a non-profit organization that connects and mobilizes business, unions, government, communities and individuals to support lifelong learning. Visit the webpage at http://abclifeliteracy.ca/ to find essential skills facts, statistics, and articles.

Alberta Workforce Essential Skills Society (AWES)

The Alberta Workforce Essential Skills Society (AWES) is a training and research and development organization that supports Industry and Labour's efforts to develop a skilled workforce. They offer Essential Skills workshops to business and labour groups, Essential Skills training for practitioners, and create tools and publications. To learn more about AWES, visit the webpage at http://www.awes.ca/.

Conference Board of Canada

The Conference Board of Canada is a not-for-profit applied research organization, specializing in economic and social development research. Education and learning is an element of their research, and includes essential skills research. Visit the website at http://www.conferenceboard.ca/ to find education and learning publications. Visit this webpage for a list of essential skills case studies at various companies across Canada: http://www.conferenceboard.ca/search.aspx?q=essential%20skills. You can also read articles and view webinar information related to workplace skill development on this page http://www.conferenceboard.ca/spse/default.aspx.

Government of Alberta, Innovation and Advanced Education

Alberta Innovation and Advanced Education supports Community Adult Learning Councils and community literacy organizations to provide adult literacy, family literacy, English language learning and other adult learning programs and services that are responsive to community needs. The webpage at http://iae.alberta.ca/post-secondary/community.aspx provides links to a list of Adult Learning Councils, a list of Family Literacy Programs, and a list of Volunteer Tutor Adult Literacy Programs from across Alberta. There is also a link to a variety of publications on these topics.

Government of Canada, Employment and Social Development Canada

Employment and Social Development Canada is responsible for literacy and essential skills through its Office of Literacy and Essential Skills. Information about funding, essential skills profiles, tools, assessments and training, videos, webcasts and webinars can be found at http://www.esdc.gc.ca/eng/jobs/les/index.shtml.

Literacy Alberta

Literacy Alberta supports literacy across the lifespan, working with individuals, predominantly adults, in Alberta's communities and workplaces. A leader in literacy and essential skills, Literacy Alberta provides tools and resources, training and professional development. Their main webpage can be found at http://www.literacyalberta.ca/. To download a catalogue of their Essential Skills tools and resources, many of which are instructional resources, go to http://www.literacyalberta.ca/essential-skills and click on Essential Skills Resource Guide.

Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development http://www.oecd.org/ provides an international leadership role for researching and publishing data about literacy/essential skills in relation to countries' and individuals' economic and social well-being. This organization has spearheaded the many international literacy surveys over the past years. See the webpage at http://www.oecd.org/general/searchresults/?q=literacy for publications related to literacy, and at http://www.oecd.org/general/searchresults/?q=essential%20skills for publications related to essential skills.v