

# The Workplace Essential Skills training process

A Workplace Essential Skills training process typically follows the steps listed below.

## Needs assessment

First, a practitioner will conduct a thorough needs assessment. A needs assessment could take a few hours to a few days, depending on the available time and resources. It could start with one department but should include all levels of the organization.

Assessors identify skill gaps through interviews, focus groups, job-shadowing, surveys and questionnaires. Learner assessments might also be conducted at this point.

The following resources are excellent tools for conducting a needs assessment: Opening Doors: a Literacy Audit Tool Kit for Customer Service Excellence ([www.literacyalberta.ca/sites/default/files/samplepgs.pdf](http://www.literacyalberta.ca/sites/default/files/samplepgs.pdf)) and Essential Skills Tools and Resources for Employers ([www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/workplaceskills](http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/workplaceskills)).

## Report

Next, a practitioner will prepare a report that synthesizes the needs assessment data.

A good report will outline which departments participated, while protecting the identity of the participants. It will summarize results, offer a list of training recommendations, a set of options for moving forward as well as suggested timelines.

## Developing the training

Most training programs can be customized from existing programs and materials. In some situations, new resources will need to be developed to meet the Workplace Essential Skills training needs, identified during the needs assessment.

Things to consider as you develop a program:

- Is this going to be a training initiative that focuses on employees?  
Or will it focus on building capacity by training trainers within the company?
- How will you get the employees to participate? Will they come on their own time, or on company time? Or will it be a 50-50 split?
- Can Workplace Essential Skills training be incorporated into existing company training? Or, if information in company documents is causing misunderstanding or miscommunication, is company-wide plain language training the better place to start?
- When will the training take place?
- Is there shift work to consider?
- Are there computer labs for e-learning possibilities, or will it all be face-to-face?

## Evaluation

Evaluation will measure the impact of the training through pre and post stories and data. A good practitioner will also have evaluation tools developed to measure the program, the learners, the trainers, and the training.

Look at Skills Development, Training and Employment Supports to get information and tools to help with your evaluations: [www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/workplaceskills/](http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/workplaceskills/)

Assess  
Interview  
Ask  
Integrate  
Synthesize  
Interpret  
Recommend  
Suggest  
Advise  
Tailor  
Design  
Customize  
Train  
Coach  
Mentor  
Apply  
Transfer  
Implement  
Evaluate  
Measure  
Exceed



# From Apprentice to Supervisor

A look at the progression of Workplace Essential Skills demands



As employees grow in their careers, they need higher skill levels. For example, supervisors need a more complex set of Essential Skills than a lead hand, journeyman or apprentice.

A WES practitioner understands Workplace Essential Skills complexity levels and can tailor training to meet your company's skill demands.

Complexity level	Career role	Thinking (Job Task Planning and Organization*)	Reading Text
Level 1	Apprentice	Carry out tasks as assigned by the journeyman.	Refer to WHMIS labels to identify safety precautions.
Level 2	Journeyman	Determine task sequence and establish their own work schedules. Assign routine tasks to apprentices.	Read memos about company-specific changes and bulletins about industry-wide news.
Level 3	Lead hand	Administer the day-to-day operations of machine shops such as tracking and reporting on work in progress, and planning and forecasting materials and equipment requirements. Plan tasks and schedules of teams. Provide input into budget development and long-term planning.	Read articles in trade magazines to learn about new machining equipment and technological advances.
Level 4	Supervisor	Re-prioritize work in light of interruptions, taking into account the extent to which many tasks must be integrated into the work plans of others, and the impact on organizational effectiveness and employee performance. Act instrumentally in communicating the strategic plan within the organization and play a key role in both the development and implementation of the plan.	Read a variety of manuals such as collective agreements, policies and procedures for personal leave, safety, training and accident reporting. Review process control procedures to meet quality standards.

\*Job Task Planning and Organization is a subskill of Thinking





# The benefits of **Workplace Essential Skills training**

## Safety

Workplace Essential Skills training reduces accidents, incidents and near misses. The workforce becomes more able to follow Occupational Health and Safety standards.

**82% of respondents associated increased health and safety with their workplace's Essential Skills program.**

– The Economic Benefits of Improving Literacy Skills in the Workplace, Conference Board of Canada, 2007.

## Productivity

Workplace learning has a direct correlation to increased productivity.

**79% of respondents to a Conference Board of Canada study said productivity increased because of Essential Skills programs in their workplaces.**

– The Economic Benefits of Improving Literacy Skills in the Workplace, Conference Board of Canada, 2007.

**Researchers have shown that every 1% increase in literacy skills boosts productivity by 2.5% and leads to a 1.5% increase in Canada's GDP. The report also states that raising literacy and numeracy skills for people at the lowest levels is more important to economic growth than producing more highly skilled graduates.**

– Coulombe, Serge and Jean-Francois Tremblay and Sylvie Marchand, 2004. "International Adult Literacy Survey: Literacy scores, human capital, and growth across fourteen OECD countries." Statistics Canada. Page 31.

## Retention

Investing in employees through training usually increases loyalty and employee engagement. Building skills enables employees to grow with the company by taking on more responsibility.

**14 out of 15 employees said they "love learning" and many would leave a job that didn't provide opportunities to learn.**

– Victoria READ Society, Bridging Employer and Employee Need in B.C.'s Capital Region: Phase 1 Report.

## Costs

Workplace learning has a direct correlation to a decrease in defects, errors and waste.

**In The Impact of Basic Skills Programs on Canadian Workplaces study, 66% of respondents saw reduced error rates in people's work. Additionally, 85% of respondents saw increases in the quality of people's work and 73% saw increases in work effort.**

– The Impact of Basic Skills Programs on Canadian Workplaces.

