

This Essential Skills Pilot and Research Initiative (ESP) proposes to turn off the tap that releases unskilled college graduates and apprentices into the BC labour market.

THE CHALLENGE

Roughly half of Canada's workers have literacy and numeracy skills below the level identified in the Essential Skills profiles for their occupations according to the scale used in the International Adult Literacy Surveys, in which level 1 is very low skills and level 5 is very high skills.

Level 3 is the minimum required for safe and productive employment, success in training and educational programs and full participation in society. Most Canadian entry level occupations require a minimum of level 3 essential skills, but Canada has a great shortage of level 3 workers, while it has a significant surplus of level 1 and 2 workers.

With minor variation the data is the same across the provinces, including BC, and includes college and trades-educated citizens. That is to say, graduation from a college or apprenticeship program does not mean that a person is significantly more likely to possess level 3 skills.

THE PURPOSE

The purpose of the Essential Skills Pilot (ESP), Turning Off The Tap, is to:

- Design, test and validate a systemic, structured approach to integrating Essential Skills training into post-secondary education and Industry training schools
- Provide students with the Essential Skills approaches and strategies to enhance their success in the educational system
- Ensure that college and industry training school graduates have at least level 3 skills that they can transfer to the workplace, no matter what kind of job they find
- Ensure that ES training throughout the province is of a consistently high quality
- Coordinate and standardize training across colleges and trades training schools
- Enhance the employability and success of college and trades learners

HOW THE PILOT WILL WORK

The initial Essential Skills Pilot will be conducted across 6 colleges and 5 trades training schools in British Columbia beginning in Fall 2013.

An advisory group made up of Essential Skills experts, stakeholders and representatives from the participating institutions to inform the project. This will ensure material developed for the initial study is customized to ensure it supports the specific programs that institutions choose for the pilot.

The Pilot Program Management team will train trainers from participating institutions in Essential Skills methodology, strategies and techniques.

Each institution will choose the programs in which to run the pilot and then run Essential Skills interventions in the chosen programs according to a core curriculum that is adapted for success in those programs.

The core management team will provide coaching and mentoring to each institution as they adapt curriculum to ensure it meets the research and essential skill requirements of the pilot.

The ESP management team will oversee the quality of the pilot and interventions and ensure the required data is and returned to the research team for analysis and review.

THE ESSENTIAL SKILLS PILOT WILL DOCUMENT SIGNIFICANT OUTCOMES

- Learning gains
- Educational and workplace impact on participants
- Practices that bring the highest return on investment.
- Impacts on drop-out rates
- Alternative approaches to student support

THREE POTENTIAL FUNDING MODELS FOR THE ESP

BC Colleges and Skillplan are pursuing 3 funding alternatives to support the Essential Skills pilot and research project. These models are all viable and would have significant impact on the implementation process and project scale should they be realized.

The first model allows us to get this project underway way and is funded entirely within the participating institutions.

Scenario 1. Participating Institution Self Funded

Member institutions contribute funds to support the Essential Skills Pilot.

Contributions will cover two distinct groups of pilot program activities.

1. Contributions to core fixed costs of the pilot. Activities included:

- Core research
- Curriculum development templates
- Training The Trainer development
- Facilitator mentoring
- Project and quality management

The estimated cost per institution is \$30,000. This amount will be contributed at the commencement of the pilot to the Central Project fund in order to support various subcontracts established by the management team to accomplish these activities.

2. The remainder of project expenses will be paid directly by the participating Institution. These costs will include:

- Facilitator/ institutional coordinator for program delivery,
- Travel expenses
- Administrative support
- Other miscellaneous expenses such as Participant testing at 3 intervals at \$21/test

Note: The staffing costs may vary by institution as per Collective agreements governing the type of Research activity undertaken.

The estimated costs for the Institutional delivery component ranges from \$70,000 to \$110,000 depending on size of sample, delivery staff and other internal variables.

We estimate that running the interventions in three programs with a maximum of 90 students will be the equivalent of one full-time position.

Scenario 2. LLMP Funded Core Design and Research

BC Colleges has applied for Labour Market Partnership funding for the core design and research and management elements of the ESP.

If successful in obtaining these funds, the project team would use this funding for the design, research and management components of the program.

Design capacity would be enhanced to ensure a solid, tested and repeatable consistent intervention model is created, it would ensure the development of robust quality management controls, and establish an efficient and comprehensive train the trainer program.

The ability to expand the research component would be greatly enhanced and a more comprehensive study and analysis will be possible.

If BC Colleges is successful in obtaining LMP funding, the Institutional contributions of the core program activities will be freed to either expand the institutional sample or to be utilized for other Institutional priorities.

Scenario 3. Pan Canadian OLES Funded Program

BC Colleges and Skillplan have also applied to the Office of Literacy and Essential Skills for research funding that would allow the project to operate on a Pan Canadian scale, allowing for collaboration with other provincial industry and post-secondary jurisdictions.

If this funding scenario is achieved, the project would take on a Pan Canadian perspective and the Research component would be significantly expanded to create in depth ROI reports, analyze sub sector and stratified population groups and link to other similar international data such as the upcoming PIAC survey on International Adult Literacy and Essential Skills

An additional goal at this level is to develop and share strategies to engage provincial and Federal policy makers in connecting funding programs to ladder resources and ensure gaps in access are addressed. This approach would attempt to build strategies to move towards eliminating the barriers between federal and provincial programs that limit training Institutions and systems from fully and effectively dealing with the skills crisis impacting Canadians.

The sample size of this expanded project would be significantly larger and opportunities to lever existing resources for expanded samples through matching funding would be explored.

Essential Skills Pilot Implementation Plan		
Month	Activities	Notes
2013		
May	Confirmation of participating Colleges and Industry Training Schools	
	Confirmation of Douglas College and SkillPlan as project leads	
	Confirmation of DataAngel as research lead	
June	Establish program management	
	Meeting with partners and researchers	
	Establish Advisory Group	
	Identify institutional project leaders	
	Identify trainers	Preferably with ES experience
	Identify faculty liaison	Works with deans and faculty of the identified programs
July	Review Essential Skills process	
	Set quality standards and management protocols	
	Develop terms of reference	
	Develop reporting requirements	
	Develop core curriculum templates	
	Develop research requirements and protocols	
	Develop training for partners	
August	Coordinate training and interventions schedules	
	Develop marketing and communication materials	
	Produce registration materials	
September	Identify programs within participating institutions for interventions	Requires negotiating with deans and faculty
	Begin training the trainers on Essential Skills methodology	
	September pilots begin for prepared Colleges and Trades Schools	Some institutions may be up to speed with ES and ready to go
October	Develop needs assessments for identified programs	Discussions with students, instructors, and where possible, employers
	Begin marketing to students in identified programs	
November	Adapt curriculum and materials for identified programs	
December	Conclude training the trainers	
	Ensure curriculum and materials are ready for implementation	
	Pilots that began in September conclude	
	Post-assessments	

Essential Skills Pilot Implementation Plan		
Month	Activities	Notes
2014		
January	New pilots begin	
	Trainer mentoring	
February	Trainer mentoring	
	Intervention trouble-shooting	
March	Pilots conclude	
	Post-assessments	
April through August	Analysis of data	
	Dissemination of results	