



**Work Readiness Skills**

**Final Report**  
**Making Learning Accessible to Achieve Employability**  
**Evaluation and Lessons Learned**

Completed in partnership between  
The Coalition for Persons with Disabilities and Harry Cummings & Associates Inc  
February 2008

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## Executive Summary

The Work Readiness Skills Program seemed to increase the employability skills of all of the participants on at least one of the employment readiness dimensions.

The evaluation found that:

### Individual Learning Plans

- All participants of the Work Readiness Skills program completed individual learning plans.

### Goals

- Most of the participants had employment goals and were aware of the skills that they would need to reach their goals by the end of the program.

### Employability Skill Enhancement

- *Communication* was the skill area that the majority of the participants reported improving upon through the program.
- Group one participants had significantly higher average ratings of their *ability to ask questions* by the end of the program. Group two participants had significantly higher average ratings of their *ability to organize work time* and *set goals* by the end of the program.

### Confidence to Find and Keep a Job

- All group one participants increased their *confidence in their ability to find and keep a job* by the end of the program. Only a couple of group two and group three participants increased their confidence by the end of the program. A few people reported lower levels of confidence in their abilities.
- Overall, group one participants had a more positive attitude about their future success than group two and group three participants.

### Work History

- Group one participants reported having a *good work history*, though a lack of consistency in maintaining positions. Group two participants also reported having a good work history and seemed to have more *consistency in their ability to maintain positions*. Only two group three participants responded, but they did have a good work history and job consistency.

### Challenges to Employment



- All participants indicated that they were aware of the challenges that they face to employment. *Flexible work hours* were by far the biggest challenge for participants in all groups. The fact that group one and three participants reported fewer barriers by the end could indicate that the Work Readiness Skills program helped them learn how to overcome challenges. Conversely, group two reported more barriers to employment by the end, indicating that they may have increased their awareness because of the Work Readiness Skills program.
- All of the participants in groups one and two were aware of some challenges they may face to obtaining employment and had social supports that they could draw upon for assistance. Fewer people in group three responded to this question, but those who did reported having a social support network.

### **Progress on the Path to Employability**

- By the end of the program, two of the group one participants had success in *maintaining* employment and another person had *obtained* part time employment. There was one person who lost their part time job. Group two participants did not have the same level of success and all remained unemployed at the end of the program. Within a few months after completing the program 2 of the group two participants achieved their employment goal with the assistance of job developers. By the end of the program, at least two of the group three participants had improved their employment situation and one had *maintained* their part time job.
- The Work Readiness Skills program is a step on the path to employability. Some of the participants have gone on to find new jobs, participate in other employment interventions, develop clearer goals, and participate in supported employment workshop environments.

### **Work Readiness Skills Program Modules**

- A total of 80% of participants felt that the content of the Work Readiness Skills program learning modules was good or excellent.

### **Mentorship**

- Mentoring information was provided to project participants on the program website and through a mentorship brochure. There were 2 group two participants who were matched with a mentor.

### **Blended Learning**

- A number of key factors contribute to the success of a blended learning program for persons with disabilities. These include the need for small group work opportunities, small instructor to participant ratios, using real life situations for learning with practical skill applications, and access to computers with accessible learning modules. It is important to address the



fundamentals of internet use and provide learning activities such as Webquest to enrich online skill development. Assessments help the learners identify key areas for improvement that can be built into personalized learning plans. Learning opportunities are maximized when learners are provided with individualized accommodations.

## 1.0 Introduction

### 1.1 Background

Beginning in May 2005, the Coalition for Persons with Disabilities engaged in a project to research the effectiveness of a *blended learning approach* in teaching *employability skills* to person with disabilities.

The *blended learning approach* uses a combination of teaching styles including group work, peer support, one-to-one counselling and online learning.

*Employability skills* are the basic skills, attitudes and behaviours that are needed to find and keep employment. Employability skills can be put in to three categories:

- Basic skills: the ability to communicate, think and learn.
- Interpersonal skills: positive attitudes and behaviours, responsibility and adaptability.
- Teamwork skills: the ability to work with others on a job and achieve results.

The Pilot Project was financed by Human Resources Skills Development Canada's (HRSDC) Office of Learning Technologies (OLT) fund and the Coalition.

A total of 22 persons with disabilities participated in the Work Readiness Skills program. Of these, two left the program just before finishing. While they did not fully complete the program, they did take part almost to the end.

### 1.2 Original Goals and Objectives

- Complete a map of community resources which persons with various disabilities can use to access employability skills development services and programs that are accommodating to their needs.
- Modify employability skills e-learning tools to accommodate a variety of learning styles and disability related accommodation needs along with developing blended learning options that enhance persons with disabilities successful acquisition of employability skills.
- Provide persons with disabilities with blended learning opportunities for increasing employability skills.
- Provide persons with disabilities with access to on-line industry mentors to assist them in their acquisition of employability skills and in conducting successful job searches.

### **1.3 Activities of the Project**

This project carried out the following activities between 2005 and 2008:

- ✓ Mapping of hundreds of employability skills development resources in the community through an accessible, online web-based tool.
- ✓ Created and tested 2 full and 3 smaller streams of access for online learning.
- ✓ 11 Work Readiness Skills Modules in Atutor.
- ✓ 1 Module in Moodle offered through Alpharoute.
- ✓ 1 Communication Module with ASL.

There were a variety of lessons learned through the piloting of this blended learning model, some of which are described in section 3.0.

### **1.4 Evaluation of the Work Readiness Skills Program**

The Work Readiness Skills Program is a pilot project with the goal of researching the effectiveness of blended learning models for persons with disabilities. In order to assist with this research, an independent research firm of Harry Cummings and Associates Inc (HCA) was retained.

HCA have worked in partnership with the Project Coordinator and other program stakeholders since 2005 to develop a plan for monitoring and evaluating the pilot. An evaluation plan was drafted by HCA with input from the Project Advisory Group (PAG). Data collection tools and information management systems were also developed.

The Project Coordinator implemented the ongoing monitoring of the pilot project with ongoing advice from HCA between 2006 and 2008.

This report was written by HCA in partnership with the Project Coordinator. It represents both an objective, outside evaluation of whether the project outcomes were reached, as well as an insider's perspective on key lessons learned.

## **2.0 Methodology**

### **2.1 Procedure**

#### ***Direct Observation***

The Project Coordinator was directly involved in all aspects of the Work Readiness Skills Program. They have recorded some key observations about the different activities of the program so that others might learn from them.

#### ***Baseline and Follow-up Participant Surveys***

In order to measure effectiveness of the project and help determine whether outcomes can be attributed to the project, a baseline survey and a follow-up survey were developed and administered to all participants.

The survey questions were designed using the Conference Board of Canada's Employability Skills Profile, as well as the five dimensions of the Employment Readiness Scale (ERS) as guides.

The surveys were drafted in a plain language format in partnership with HCA and the Project Coordinator. They were pre-tested at the beginning of the program with a couple of program participants and modified based on feedback. They were also modified slightly for each group based on changes in the program over time.

The surveys were delivered to the participants by the Project Coordinator, who assisted persons with literacy issues in completing the survey as necessary. The results were compiled into an information management spreadsheet by the Project Coordinator and provided to HCA for analysis. The Project Coordinator also assisted with interpreting results.

#### ***E-Learning Survey***

An e-learning survey was delivered to capture learner's comments and feedback about their experiences with online learning in order to improve the program.

The survey was drafted in a plain language format by the Project Coordinator and reviewed by HCA. It was delivered to the participants by the Project Coordinator at the end of the program. Group one did not receive the survey, as the program was still in an early stage of development at that time.

#### ***Case Studies***

A total of six of the Work Readiness Skills Program learners were selected for anecdotal case studies. The purpose of the case studies was to illustrate a

variety of successes and experiences of participants in the program, or in other words, to tell the stories of some of the participants. For example, the case studies highlight some of the participants who were successful in obtaining employment through the program, as well as participants who went from a particularly low level of employability to be able to complete all of the modules.

The Project Coordinator selected the six case studies and completed the write-ups.

## **2.2 Participants**

### ***Group One Profile***

There were a total of eight participants who were recruited to start the Work Readiness Skills Program in the first group. They participated in the program from October 2006 until the end of January 2007. One person decided to leave the program early on and another left later in the program near the end due to a housing crisis. There were seven people who completed the baseline survey and just six who did the follow-up.

Of the six people in group one who completed the program, four were women and two were men. They ranged in age from 19 to 34 with an average age of 26 years old. There were three people who had a college education with diploma and two who had gone to college, but did not obtain a diploma. One other participant had a high school education. The participants were all from Peel Region with four who resided in Brampton and two who were from Mississauga. Most of the participants identified themselves as Canadian, with just one person who was Portuguese. They all spoke English as a first language. They reported having a variety of disabilities including language impairment, autism, spinabifida, a brain aneurism, and learning disabilities.

### ***Group Two Profile***

There were eight participants who started and finished group two of the Work Readiness Skills Program. While the baseline survey was completed by all eight participants, one person did not respond to most of the profile questions on the baseline survey and another person did not complete the follow-up survey due to disability related factors.

Of those who responded from group two, four were men and three were women. The participants ranged in age from 28 to 66 with an average age of 44. There was a wide range of educational backgrounds among the participants including two people who did not graduate high school, two who are high school graduates, one person with a college diploma and two people with university degrees. There were two participants from Halton Region (North Halton) and the other five were from Peel Region (two from Mississauga and three from



Brampton). The participants came from a variety of cultural backgrounds including Jamaican, American Cherokee, French and Canadian. All spoke English as a first language, except one person who preferred to speak French. The participants had a variety of disabilities including physical disabilities, brain injuries, Aspergers, visual impairment, and learning disabilities.

### ***Group Three Profile***

A total of nine people were recruited to take part in group three of the Work Readiness Skills Program, which ran from September 2007 to December 2007. Two of these participants were asked to leave the program. One participant found employment and left the program very close to the end.

Of the six people who completed the survey, five were female and one was male. They ranged in age from 26 to 41 with an average age of 35. All of the participants were high school graduates, except one person who had not graduated high school and one person who did not respond. The group three participants were all from Halton Region and lived in Oakville. They all identified as being Canadian and spoke English, except for one person who was East Indian. The participants had a variety of disabilities including developmental disabilities, Down syndrome, OCD and learning disabilities.

### **2.3 Limitations of the Evaluation**

It is important to keep in mind that because of the small sample size of participants in each group of the Work Readiness Skills Program, the data gathered from the baseline and follow-up surveys can be easily influenced by outlying response, unanswered questions and drop outs. The results also cannot be generalized to the greater population. However, the descriptive statistics do show general changes in participants from baseline to follow up.

## 3.0 Key Lessons about Project Activities

### 3.1 Mapping and Website

The website for this project [www.disabilityaccess.org/work\\_readiness](http://www.disabilityaccess.org/work_readiness) contains maps of employability skills development services and programs, as well as additional disability and employment related information for persons with disabilities in the community. The resources were compiled and the website was launched in May 2006.

The mapping process began with existing lists of services and programs provided by project partners. Online community databases and searches with key words were used to find other resources for the maps. The Project Coordinator attended various meetings with service providers to promote the map. Initial emails were sent to those identified and added to the database with the subject line Get on the Map! This allowed the most interested organizations to get involved. It also allowed the project organizers to inform identified organizations that a questionnaire would be sent to them.

The questionnaire (Appendix 1) was sent to organizations to identify whether they had community based computers and/or employability support services. It also asked the organization to comment on the accessibility of its location.

Community organizations with multiple sites and programs were asked to submit separate responses for each program that they offered. Individual responses were also requested for each library branch. Web-based / online programs were categorized separately since they are not regionally specific. An information sheet that pertained to accessible technology and web-links was included with the questionnaire to inform organizations about how they could test the accessibility of their sites. It also provided links to freeware etc. software. The questionnaire acted as a form of marketing for the website, as it reached hundreds of individuals and organizations.

Emails were sent to all organizations on the map to announce the launching of the website. The content and the maps were updated every 6 to 8 weeks. Organizations could also update their information through the use of a “submit updates to your page” link on the website.

The natural progression that these maps could take includes expansion provincially. The community maps could be improved through a more accurate representation of accessibility features of each location. The questionnaire had a self reporting component about the accessibility features of locations and computers. It would be preferable to have accessibility audits to ensure more accuracy. It would also be beneficial to have resources devoted to extend this community map to include greater representation of actual accessibility and a

wider geographic area. This plan would be consistent with Ontario's plan for achieving accessibility for Ontarians with disabilities by 2025.

Content has been added to the website on an ongoing basis including various templates for resumes, cover letters, etc. Agencies have continued to provide updates as well. The Project Coordinator has also presented to agencies on the benefits of using the maps as a tool for clients and service providers. Emails have been circulated through networks to solicit feedback and the online self updating system is being used.

## Website Features

The four main features of the website include:



Disability Resources



Employability Resources



Community Maps



Adaptive Technology Information

Figure 1 shows the main mapping page of the website. It has several geographic locations to choose from and clicking on any region opens up a separate more detailed map.

**Figure 1: Main Mapping Page**

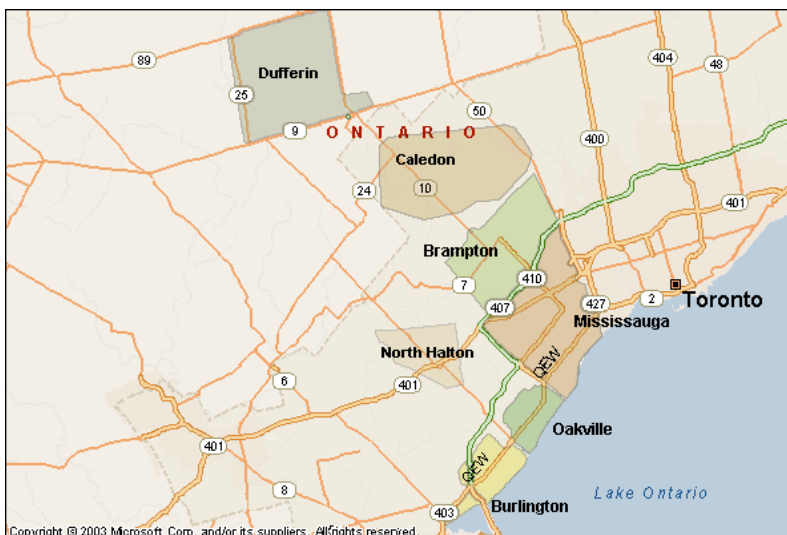


Figure 2 is an example of a separate more detailed map. Clicking on the magnifying symbol details several services in a condensed geographic area. Dots represent locations that offer employability skills support or community based computers.

**Figure 2: Sample Detailed Map**

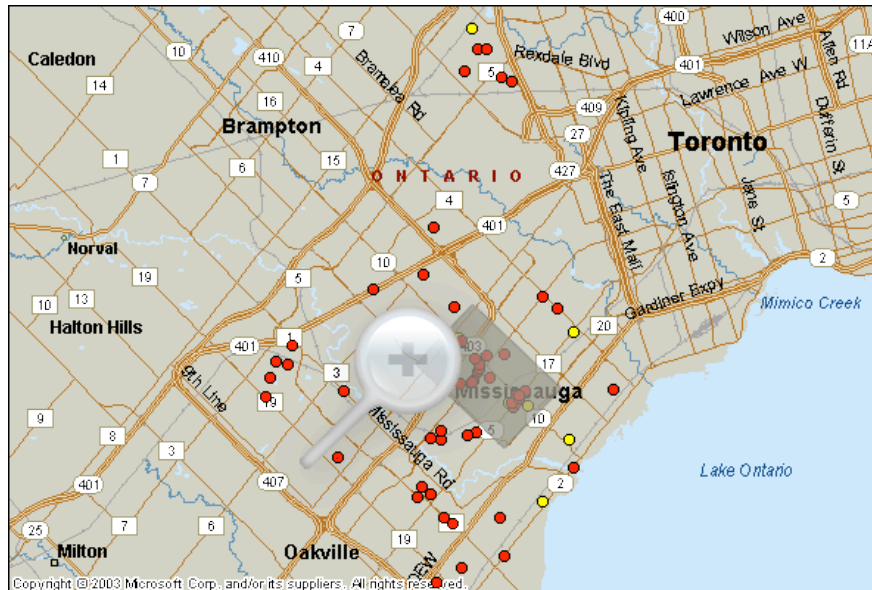
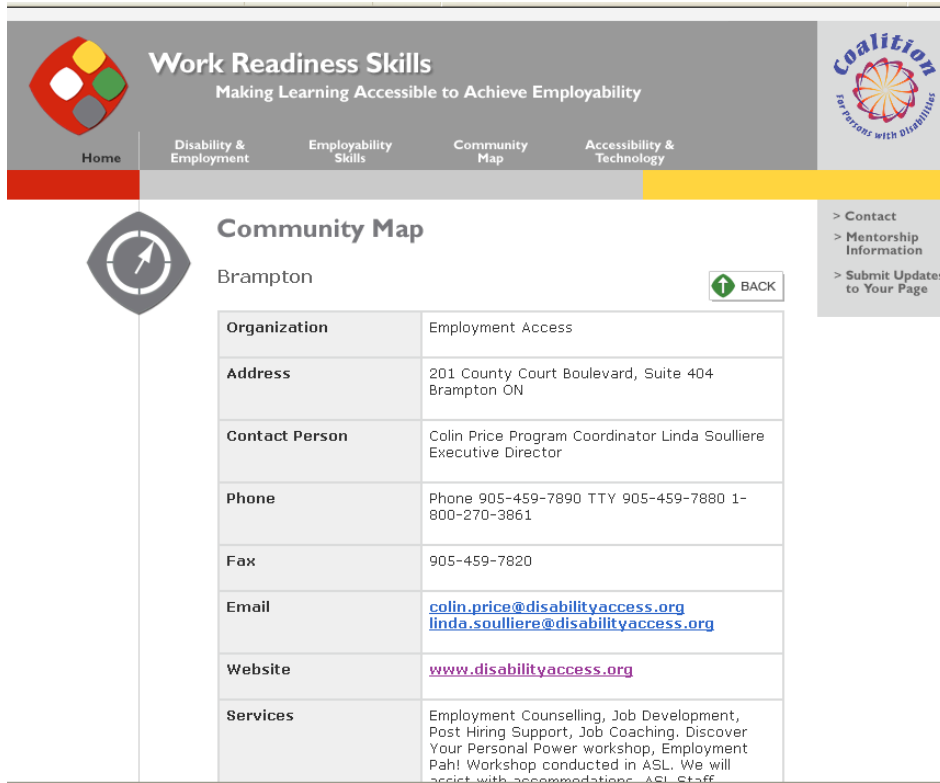


Figure 3 is an example of the information that is displayed by clicking on one of the locations on the map. It displays information about the specific organization that offers employability skills support or community based computers. This information was gathered from the community mapping survey. The image in Figure 3 shows only a portion of the available information.

**Figure 3: Sample Information Page for Organizations on the Map**



The screenshot shows the 'Community Map' section of the Work Readiness Skills website. The page header includes the 'Work Readiness Skills' logo and tagline 'Making Learning Accessible to Achieve Employability', along with navigation links for Home, Disability & Employment, Employability Skills, Community Map, and Accessibility & Technology. A 'Coalition for Persons with Disabilities' logo is also present. The main content area displays information for 'Brampton' with a 'BACK' button. A table provides contact details for 'Employment Access'.

Organization	Employment Access
Address	201 County Court Boulevard, Suite 404 Brampton ON
Contact Person	Colin Price Program Coordinator Linda Soulliere Executive Director
Phone	Phone 905-459-7890 TTY 905-459-7880 1-800-270-3861
Fax	905-459-7820
Email	<a href="mailto:colin_price@disabilityaccess.org">colin_price@disabilityaccess.org</a> <a href="mailto:linda.soulliere@disabilityaccess.org">linda.soulliere@disabilityaccess.org</a>
Website	<a href="http://www.disabilityaccess.org">www.disabilityaccess.org</a>
Services	Employment Counselling, Job Development, Post Hiring Support, Job Coaching, Discover Your Personal Power workshop, Employment Pah! Workshop conducted in ASL. We will assist with accommodations. ASL Staff

### 3.2 Online Learning

The main components of the online learning included:

- Webquest
- Internet Employment and skills development resources
- Email use and Etiquette
- Online Modules
- Forum discussions, online journals and quizzes (MOODLE environment only)

More information about each of these components is outlined below.

#### Webquest

Participants were exposed to the internet through activities such as a Webquest. The Webquest activity, presented in a Word based document, had learners working independently or in groups and used the [disabilityaccess.org/work\\_readiness.ca](http://disabilityaccess.org/work_readiness.ca) site to identify the meanings of various icons used on the site.

This activity helped the learners become familiar with the web based resources collected through the mapping. They were able to locate services in their

communities related to skills development or employment or disability related supports. They also visited external sites during the exercise which further developed their internet search skills.

### **Internet Employment and Skills Development Resources**

A wide range of resources were provided to the learners via the website and through their learning plans (see appendix 2 and website) These were not only used during the span of their involvement with the program, but are available to the participants to continually access for ongoing learning and skill development.

### **Email Use and Etiquette**

Learners were introduced to the basic common etiquette related to email and internet use. This is imperative to a successful job search, where resumes and cover letters are sent using this technology. For pilot groups one and two, any learners that did not have access to email were supported in acquiring an email address and provided with one-to-one instructions and tutoring to support this learning curve.

### **Online Modules**

These modules allowed learners from the first two user groups to have control over when and where they accessed their learning. This flexibility regarding time and place was well suited to the needs of an adult learner. Pressure to succeed was reduced when they could set their own pace. Learners were able to make choices about what to focus on and were able to revisit a particular topic or issue for review until they reached a comfortable level of understanding.

Learners in group one and two were encouraged to email their learning activities as attachments for feedback. This became an additional learning opportunity for those who had little or no experience in this common task. Learners were therefore able to practice writing, sending and receiving appropriately written emails. This skill is very useful for job searching in sending cover letters and resumes. This is an example of another transferable skill that learners could practice as a result of a blended learning program.

The learning activities that were embedded within the modules were Microsoft Word based. This allowed for additional transferable skill development as they were utilizing common word processing tools.

Clear symbols for navigation within a simple layout with verbatim audio track were some of the accessibility features. These modules were offered as websites and were not contained within a learning management system

### 3.3 Curriculum

There were nine focus groups carried out with persons with a variety of disabilities in order to develop and revise the curriculum so that it would best meet the needs of participants.

Table 1 represents the core curriculum that the pilot groups were based on. This content was modified based on the needs of the learners within each group. The modifications affected the language that was used and how the activities were delivered. In every circumstance the key fundamentals and the themes of the learning activities were maintained.

A natural progression for future projects would be the development of a train the trainer program based on this adaptation.

Due to the need for more concrete learning opportunities, the third pilot group had work tasks assigned on a weekly basis. The group helped identify the task and write the “job” descriptions as a group activity. The tasks included such things as taking attendance, break reminders, cleanup duty, computer logon and logging off. The group had clear expectations for the tasks and were provided with ongoing feedback on their ability to complete the work required.

Moving outside the framework of the workshop showed that using real life situations was a powerful learning tool for the pilot groups. This allowed participants to take the theoretical concepts covered in the workshops such as problems solving, assertiveness and conflict resolution and use them in a practical way. The participants presented situations in which they required assistance and the peer group helped to problem solve. As an example, a young woman with an intellectual disability in group three had her money taken from the vending machine without receiving her product. This was turned into an assertiveness exercise. She asked the Project Coordinator to contact the vending company. Rather than doing this the group worked together to plan effective ways of how this woman could communicate assertively to the vending machine company. The group role played the situation and the woman phoned the company during the workshop and arranged to recoup her money.

In another situation in group two there was some disagreement on the length and timing of breaks. This allowed for real problem solving activities such as brainstorming possible options, listing pros and cons and coming to a resolution as a group.

**Table 1: Base Work Readiness Skills Curriculum**

Module Type	Name of Module	Learning Objectives	Highlights	Source of Content
1:1	Assessments	To explore the skills, learning style and Employment Readiness	WEAVE Partners will provide individualized series of online assessments and develop learning plans	WEAVE Partners Assessments  Employment Readiness Scale™
Group	Orientation	To provide an overview of activities and anticipated outcomes of their involvement and roles and responsibilities	Intro to other learners, website, eLearning, evaluation plan, Q & A.	Various by Allison Jones Project Coordinator
Group	D.Y.P.P™	To increase awareness of the thought process and impact of our own attitudes on our personal and professional success.	Exploration of how beliefs are formed, overcoming self-imposed limitations, disclosure,	Discovering Your Personal Power for Employment Success™  (Employment Access)
Group	Personality Dimensions™	To explore and better understand their behaviours, skills, needs and motivations as well as those they interact with.	Overview of Temperament Theory and assessment of own personality type.	Personality Dimensions™ Material provided and facilitated by Caledon Community Services- Jobs Caledon

Module	Name of	Learning	Highlights	Source of
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Type	Module	Objectives		Content
Group	Interpersonal Skills Workshops	To improve communication, assertiveness and conflict resolution skills in a group setting	Interactive activities in active listening, communication using “I: statements and more	Employability Skills Curriculum and Action Read material adapted by Allison Jones
	Health and Safety 101		WSIB	
Online Learning	How do you rate your skills for work?	To improve ones understanding of capabilities, strengths and how they demonstrate their skills Basic Skills Teamwork Skills Interpersonal Skills	Exploration of Employability Skills through the Conference Board of Canada  Edited by CLAD Clear Language and Design	Originally by Conference Board of Canada Module 2
Online Learning	Positivity	To reinforce the importance of attitude and positive workplace behaviours that	Accountability, turning challenges into opportunities.	Positive works II Province of Alberta
Online Learning	Goal Setting	To learn how to set and achieve realistic goals.	Planning and coping with challenges using SMART goals	A Dream that Walks II Garlic Press Action Read
Online Learning	Problem Solving and Creative Thinking	To develop strategies to creatively think, analyze and solve problems	Challenges as opportunities for learning	Allison Jones



Module Type	Name of Module	Learning Objectives	Highlights	Source of Content
Online Learning	Working with Others	To develop an understanding of	Teamwork and workplace culture	Making it Work: Garlic Press Action Read
Online Learning	Assertiveness	To explore more about how to exercise one’s own rights constructively	What assertiveness is and isn’t.	Making it Work: Garlic Press Action Read
Online Learning	Conflict and Resolution	To learn more about our approaches and perceptions about conflict	Positive aspects of conflict and	Making it Work: Garlic Press Action Read
Online Learning	Stress Awareness and Management	To learn about stress and its impact on health, and practical ways to reducing and coping	Recognizing and dealing with stress	Allison Jones
Online Learning	Disclosure	To learn about talking about disabilities with employers and coworkers	If, When, How and to whom	Allison Jones
Online Learning	Finding and Keeping a Job	To develop strategies for finding and keeping the right job.	Resumes, cover letters, interviews	Adaptation of Essentials for Persons with Disabilities

### Key Lessons Learned about Delivery of Curriculum

The following list summarizes the key lessons learned through the delivery of the three pilot blended learning program for persons with disabilities:

- Need for small group work opportunities: A learner commented *“I really enjoyed the fact that we only had 8 members. It made it easy to participate and felt more personal”*.
- Need for small instructor to participant ratios to allow for appropriate levels of support. Individuals with cognitive impairments, intellectual disabilities or low literacy levels could benefit from ratios of four learners to one support person when working on the computer. A learner commented *“I like the way the things were explained and the extra help I received”*.
- Job activities can be used as practical and observational assessments while allowing for skill development.



- Need for practical skills assessments when traditional assessment tools are not appropriate.
- Connecting people to services in their communities by taking people on field trips to libraries and resource centres.
- Using real life situations for learning.
- Role playing is an effective way of practicing employability skills.
- Working with community partners through the sharing of resources, expertise, creative ideas and mutually supporting clients leads to the effective delivery of a program. The best example from this project includes the collaboration with Community Living Oakville and the Halton Catholic District Schoolboard; Continuing Education, Literacy and Basic Skills. Computers and technological support was offered by the Schoolboard, space and staff support were offered by CommunityLiving and The Work Readiness Skills project offered the delivery of the program.
- When clients identified existing community supports, every effort was made to meet with the individual and their supports to share information about the participants' learning plans and goals. These are the supports that would exist for the learner beyond the span of the program. Often these supports were disability specialists or family members. It is important to maximize the continuity of support by opening this type of communication. In situation where learners were not receiving supports, attempts were made to connect them to appropriate services to meet their needs.

### **3.4 Work Readiness Skills Modules in Atutor**

In keeping with the principles of accessibility in this project, all of the modules were contained within Atutor. This is a free, open source learning content management system (LCMS) that meets the highest level of internet accessibility standards. As a result of the level of accessibility it allows learners and instructors, including those with disabilities, to access the system using assistive technologies.

There were 11 modules contained in this system and the format was best suited for use with screen reading software such as JAWS. These versions are primarily text based but do include the animated scenarios that were created for social simulations. The audio content is used as an important learning resource. These modules were tested by two women who are visually impaired using three

version of JAWS software. Since adaptive technologies can be a financial challenge, it was important for us to test the effectiveness with various versions of JAWS software.

Feedback from tester: *“JAWS had no problems reading the material and buttons on your online course. I pressed on the animated demonstration button and JAWS and the animated sounds had no problems. I found JAWS worked while the animated demonstration is still in progress. I was surprised I never seen that before. All the animated demonstrations worked very well with JAWS. After the animated demonstrations are done we close that page and it resumes you on the animated demonstration link and you can continue on your module”.*

It seems that these modules work best with the newest version of screen reading software as there are some challenges with outdated JAWS. The benefits of using an accessible LCMS include access to chat functions, collaborative work features and solid administrative tracking functions for facilitators

### **3.5 Module in Moodle offered through Alpharoute**

The Project Coordinator participated in Moodle training along with 20 Literacy and Basic Skills practitioners. Moodle is a course management system (CMS) Free-Open source software to help educators create effective online learning communities

The objective of the course was to engage AlphaRoute literacy learners in an asynchronous online course in meaningful learning experiences and to provide knowledge of online course tools, resources and skills.

The Project Coordinator developed a four week online course based on the principles and concepts in Discover Your Personal Power (part of the Work Readiness Skills curriculum). This course had the highest enrolment and retentions rates of the AlphaRoute courses offered in February 2008. Approximately 200 learners registered and participated in online surveys, quizzes, journals, forum discussions and engaged in video/audio based learning activities.

Statements from some of the learners include:

*“I like that if I have a question I can ask my class mates and then they can answer me and they make me feel good about my self”*

*“I have been applying what I have learned at home and practise those skills so when I enter the workplace I will have better skills that will benefit me”*

*“I am new to computers and the internet, finding out about this online course and being able to be a part of it has been educational and enlightening, thank you”*

This opportunity demonstrated that it is possible to take material that has been traditionally used in a highly interactive workshop and transform it to an effective online learning class for Literacy and Basic Skills Learners.

It is also possible to reach large numbers of learners across large geographical areas as this course had participants from at least three provinces.

### **3.6 Communication Module with ASL**

This module is an adaptation of the Communication Module of the Work Readiness Skills program that was used in the three pilots. The modules that were initially used were all developed in English. Through our focus group research we learned that many Deaf learners prefer to learn in ASL and with appropriate Deaf Culture understanding.

ASL is a more appropriate language to deliver online learning in for Deaf learners. In recognizing there are challenges for some in the Deaf community in the areas of Workplace literacy, it was important to offer English text within the module as a learning tool. This module (in final stages of development at the time of this report) offers ASL based learning with the use of high quality video to replace existing animation scenarios.

The use of animated avatars was explored however this is time consuming and has its limitations in its delivery of ASL. The filming, directing and script adaptation was done by Deaf/ English Bilingual/Bicultural individuals with an entirely Deaf cast.

### **3.7 Workshops**

Learners were encouraged to practice their communication, assertiveness and team work skills through interactive, highly participatory workshops. This assisted with skill development and with improving self awareness of skills, abilities and personalities.

Participants were required to take part in discussions, group problem solving activities and exercises that allowed them to improve listening and communications. Peer supports began to develop as learners created connections and friendships with one another.

Community connections were a large component of the workshops. Field trips to local employment resources centres and community libraries allowed for an opportunity to develop and understanding of other existing supports.

### **3.8 Accessibility**

In order to achieve the goal to “Make Learning Accessible to Achieve Employability”, all aspects of accessibility had to be a high priority with the intention to be as inclusive as possible.

Often, the accommodations of persons with disabilities are overlooked by our communities at large, usually unintentionally. With over 20 percent of the world's population having disabilities, including nearly 5 million Canadians, technology must become more inclusive. Progressively this is happening through advocacy, research and development initiatives.

The reality is that information technology is increasingly used in communication, training and education programs. As many of us are progressing in this highly technological world, persons with disabilities are being excluded from the increasingly knowledge based society.

This program provided persons with disabilities a blended learning program that allowed learners to make effective use of the Internet to navigate, and engage with tools, browsers and media that integrate the functioning of adaptive technology in an accessible learning environment.

Based on research of accessibility standards it was determined that the website for the project also required some accessibility upgrading to meet optimum levels. This work began in the final stages of the project.

**Accommodations Discussions:** Discussions with project learners and their supports are imperative in developing the right accommodations to ensure success. This process can also prepare the participants for the world of work where accommodation discussions would be necessary with employers.

**Access to Computers:** Getting physical access to a learning location can be challenging. Learning in a home environment is a benefit of e-learning and also to those who have transportation barriers. However some persons with disabilities may not have access to home computers, the internet or even current accessible technology. When learners required computers in the community, the Project Coordinator worked with them to find the most suitable location. Often this was a local employment resource centre or a setting where they received additional supports such as a mental health or autism support. Community maps were used to identify resources as well.

**Language Level:** Providing material written in clear language can increase the ease of understanding for participants. Working with Clear Language and Design writers to adapt material to be more accessible for a variety of literacy levels is a great way to reduce barriers. For smaller amounts of material such as a few paragraphs, online resources such as Reading Effectiveness Interactive Assessments tool can determine some language barriers.

Through testing of the pilot modules it was determined that there are existing barriers in terms of the language. The level is still too high for some users. We found that the content proved to be particularly challenging for people with intellectual disabilities and individuals with level 1 literacy levels. Those without literacy issues or disabilities of this nature reported no difficulty with comprehension.

Upon identifying these language and literacy barriers the Project Coordinator is working with Clear Language Editors to further increase the accessibility by decreasing the literacy level. There is a need by some people with cognitive or intellectual disabilities to have more concrete examples of new ideas or terminology.

**Audio:** Learners with lower literacy levels or who have a primarily audio based learning style benefited from a verbatim audio track. Users had control over the volume on the screen and with the speakers they were using.

**Transportation:** Bus tickets were provided to those in financial need. For the third pilot there were learners who were not capable of taking public transportation independently. These learners were provided with taxi services.

**Location:** When supporting persons with disabilities in accessing community based learning programs and other resources it is imperative to have knowledge of the physical barriers that exist.

Choosing a location for the Work Readiness Skills program that was physically accessible and on a main transportation route was challenging. The first pilot was held in a location that had automatic doors and obstacle free pathways. The washrooms on site also had automatic doors and relative ease of access.

The community mapping tool was a starting point to find another accessible locations. Despite the usefulness of this tool, it does have its limitations. It is possible that people lacking accessibility experience could report unintentionally inaccurate accessibility results simply because they may not be familiar with accessibility issues. For optimum reliability it would be beneficial to have officially audited accessibility information to increase the accuracy of the community map.

With cooperation and support of the agency's staff an accessibility audit was conducted for the location used for the Work Readiness Skills program and it

was determined that the location had too many barriers for people using mobility aids such as wheelchairs.

An alternative location was found that had some features of accessibility. However the accessible washroom was on a different floor than the program itself. The learner that would be using the washroom was consulted in advance of the program to explore their comfort level with this. It is important to notify participants of basic accessibility features including:

- Accessible parking spaces near entrances
- Appropriate curb cuts
- Physical features such as automatic doors and obstacle free pathways at entrances, in meeting rooms and washrooms
- Washrooms that have accessible stalls, and features (sinks, toilet paper, etc that are accessible to people with various disabilities)
- Doors
- TTY
- Path of travel such as slip resistant floors,
- Elevators that can accommodate persons who use motorized wheelchairs and scooters.
- Accessible signage for persons with visual impairments. This could include high contrast and tactile signage
- Emergency planning for fire and safety issues

It is imperative to note that this is not an exhaustive list of features that would create accessible spaces, but has been included to offer an initial understanding of things to consider.

**Costs:** People with disabilities are often at an economic disadvantage due to higher rates of unemployment or limited income because of reliance on disability benefits. It was imperative that there was no cost for participation. The learning program was free.

### **3.9 Assessments**

For the administration of assessments and the development of learning plans, Weave Partners was contracted as a result of their extensive experience and capacity to work effectively with persons with disabilities facing employment barriers.

Weave Partners contributed to the development of the learning material and were therefore well informed about the curriculum and expectation of learners. Weave Partners' contributed the following information to the discussion of process and lessons learned:



**Assessments:** A blended-learning strategy was implemented to administer assessments. Assessment consultants delivered on-line assessments and collected additional information during face-to-face interviews with each learner.

The assessments measured skills, knowledge and behaviours related to:

- Career Interests
- Employability (e.g. self-sufficiency in goal-setting, employment skills)
- Numeracy
- Literacy

The following assessment tools were utilized:

- BrainBench ([www.brainbench.com](http://www.brainbench.com))
- ESPORT™ ([http://www.esportfolio.com/project\\_site/index.cfm](http://www.esportfolio.com/project_site/index.cfm))
- Job Futures Quiz ([http://www.jobfutures.ca/pls/jf-ea/dpt.page\\_one](http://www.jobfutures.ca/pls/jf-ea/dpt.page_one))
- Building Excellence Learning Styles Survey (<http://www.learningstyles.net/index.php>)
- Multiple Intelligences Survey

**BrainBench Career Interest Inventory:** The career interest inventory was administered on the first 3 groups of learners. The tool is designed to evaluate the fit between a candidate and a specific job type.

The comprehensive report assisted in the identification of the personal motivations that point to career success and satisfaction.

**ESPORT™:** ESPORT was administered on the final group of learners. The application is an essential skills and career planning tool. It was utilized to measure the following skill areas:

1. Computer Use
2. Decision Making
3. Document Use
4. Finding Information
5. Job Task Planning
6. Numeracy
7. Oral Communication
8. Problem Solving
9. Reading Text
10. Writing

**Job Futures Quiz:** The Job Futures Quiz was administered in order to determine areas of interest. The quiz also assisted learners in identifying the degree to which they enjoyed working with data/information, people and things. Once completed, the system generated a list of occupations that matched the results, including the National Occupation Codes (NOC).

**Building Excellence Learning Styles Survey:** This 81-question survey assessed learning preferences, emotionality, sociological factors and physiological factors. Explanations of each of these components are provided below.

Learning preferences: immediate environment: sound, light, temperature, and seating design.

Emotionality: motivation, persistence, responsibility/conformity and need for internal or external structure.

Sociological factors: learning alone, with a partner, as part of a small group or team, with peers, with an authoritative or collegial adult, and/or in a combination of ways.

Physiological factors: auditory, visual, tactile and/or kinaesthetic perceptual preferences; food or liquid intake, chronobiological energy levels, mobility needs.

**Multiple Intelligences Survey:** Learners completed surveys to identify their Multiple Intelligences (MI) profile. This included items such as: Visual/Artistic, Auditory, Musical/Rhythmic, Linguistic, Mathematical, Interpersonal, Intrapersonal, and Naturalist. The associated report provided information on each learner's top 3 MI's.

### **Observations from administering assessments**

The ease with which learners completed assessments depended on their comfort level with technology and their ability to understand questions. Assessment consultants were present while learners completed assessments to provide support and direction and to answer questions.

The length of time required to complete certain hardcopy assessments (e.g. Multiple Intelligences and Building Excellence Surveys) was too long. Certain learners experienced cognitive overload and therefore had difficulty completing these assessments. As a result, the Building Excellence Survey was broken down in to several modules and administered over 7 days.

### **Observations from reporting**

All assessment platforms provided informative reports. The assessment consultants added anecdotal information as well as their own observations of skills, knowledge and behaviours. As a result, the reports were a combination of system generated data and information collected by the assessment consultants.

Although the reports were informative, differences in language proficiency between project learners and facilitators was such that different reports were required. As a result, reports needed to be revised to ensure that they could be understood by project learners.

### **Lessons Learned and Recommendations**

Computer assessments provide objective measurable data on a candidate's skills, knowledge and behaviours. However, the reliability of the data is dependent on the responses provided and on the ability of the assessment taker to understand that which is being asked. For example, the nature of one of the learner's disability was such that assessments were not feasible. He was unable to comprehend many of the questions that were being asked and to remain focused on the task of responding to each question.

Assessments for learners with cognitive disabilities should be skill-based (e.g. numeracy and literacy) rather than knowledge-based (e.g. abstract/hypothetical concepts).

### **3.10 Learning Plans**

A learning plan was created for each learner. Each document outlined blended learning interventions to enable learners to increase their competency in employability dimensions (e.g. Goal-Setting, Job Skills, Job Search Skills, Job Retention Skills). The plans also included a start date and end date for completing learning modules.

As the project evolved, Learning Plans (Appendix 2) were revised to include community resources that learners could utilize to increase their competencies. Also included in the plan were links to international Web sites with learning resources that learning facilitators could utilize.

A community employment specialist supporting a client reported the following "*I am going over her learning plan and this is AMAZING!!! It really helps me for when I meet with her next and gives me some concrete things to work on with her.*" The learning plans provided information on the various sites, including features and benefits, associated costs, technology requirements.

### **Lessons learned and recommendations**

Learning Plans should identify community resources that learners can access in order to engage in ongoing/remedial learning.

Learning interventions should be accompanied by detailed instructions as to how they can be accessed.



Unless requested, hardcopy or manual assessments should be avoided. Learners should have access to interactive, computer-based assessments that sustain their motivation to respond accurately.

## 4.0 Participant Results

The effectiveness of the Work Readiness Skills program is being determined by whether participants:

- Developed individual learning plans
- Completed the learning modules outlined in their learning plans
- Increased their employability skills
- Found e-learning to be useful
- Obtained support from a mentor

### 4.1 Individual Learning Plans and Completion of Learning Modules

As mentioned in Section 3.10, all participants of the Work Readiness Skills program completed individual learning plans at the beginning of the program.

The exact number of learning modules completed by each participant was not formally tracked, so it is difficult to determine whether they completed the learning modules outlined in their learning plans.

However, a total of 3 group two and 7 group three participants reported on the learning modules that they completed through the e-learning survey. Table 2 outlines each module and the number of participants from each group who completed it.

**Table 2: Group Two and Group Three Completion of Learning Modules**

Module	# Group Two Participants Completed	# Group Three Participants Completed
Positivity	3	6
Communication	3	7
Anger and Assertiveness	3	5
Goal Setting	3	7
Disclosure	3	1
Finding and Keeping a Job	3	0
Conflict Resolution	3	2
Working with Others	3	1
Stress	3	0
Problem Solving	3	0
How do you Rate your Skills to Work	2	0

A total of 100% of the participants who responded from group two completed all of the modules but one on *how to rate skills for work*.

There were also 100% of group three participants who completed the goal setting module and the communication module. Most also did the module on positivity and anger and assertiveness. Fewer people completed the other modules and there were some modules that no one from group three completed.

The Program Coordinator reported that some participants did not complete the entire curriculum because of lack of motivation, disability, or literacy issues, as well as lack of access to a computer.

## **4.2 Employability Skill Increase**

The Employment Readiness Scale (ERS) model was used as a guideline in developing questions for the baseline and follow up participant surveys. The Project Coordinator had worked with ERS consultants to formally measure employment readiness of participants of the Work Readiness Skills Program. Because of the existing connection to the ERS, it was decided to also use it as a guide for developing indicators of employability for the evaluation.

*“Employment readiness is defined as being able, with little or no outside help, to find, acquire, and keep an appropriate job as well as to be able to manage transitions to new jobs as needed”*

[www.employmentreadiness.org](http://www.employmentreadiness.org), 2008

The ERS is based on the assumption that becoming “employable” requires completion of three goals: self sufficiency on five dimensions, understanding challenges, and drawing on sources of support. The survey questions were developed using parts of the ERS as a guide based on what fit well with the Work Readiness Skills Program. For instance, only three dimensions of self-sufficiency were used to develop indicators including:

- *Career decision-making*, or knowing what type of work suits you
- *Skills enhancement*, or having the skills for the work you want
- *Job maintenance*, or having the skills to keep work once found

The results of the baseline and follow up surveys, which assessed the employability skills of participants are outlined in this section.

### **4.2.1 Career Decision-Making and Skills Enhancement**

Having an understanding of the type of work that you would like to do and the skills you need to do it are important first steps to employability. Participants in all three groups were asked to reflect on their employment goals in order to determine whether they were aware of the type of work that would suit them.

The participants were at a variety of different starting points in terms of their career decision-making skills. Some seemed to have a good sense of what type

of work would suit them or what field they wanted to work in, while others had potentially unrealistic goals. There were also two people who were unsure of their goals at the beginning.

By the end of the program, eight of the participants' employment goals in all three groups had stayed the same, while seven people indicated that their goals had changed. The others did not respond or were unsure of their goals. One person who had changed their employment goal wanted to present a patent for their own company when they first started the program, but realized by the end that working with the elderly was more interesting to them. Of the two people who were unsure about their goals, one did not make a decision about their career path by the end of the program. However, the other person had decided that they would like to work with children.

Overall, most of the participants had an idea of the type of work they would like to engage in and the skills that they would need to do so by the end of the program.

The employability skill that the highest number of participants said that they had improved upon in the past six months was communication. As one person commented:

*"I improve on my communication skills. I also try to [do] more listening without interrupting".*

Other skills that individual participants from the three groups felt they had gained included: self awareness, self-esteem, team work, problem solving, conflict resolution, organization, analytical skills and use of the Internet. Most of the participants were aware of the skills that they would need to continue to enhance in the future in order to fulfill their career goals.

#### **4.2.2 Job Maintenance Skills**

There are a series of basic, team work and interpersonal skills that are important for any person to possess in order to increase their employability. New participants were asked to rate their abilities on a variety of job maintenance skills upon starting the Work Readiness Skills program on a scale of 1-4 where 1 = needs improvement, 2 = ok, 3 = good and 4=excellent. Participants were then asked to rate themselves on these skills at the end of the program to determine whether any changes had occurred.

The skills measured included:

- Internet skills
- Ability to list skills
- Goal setting
- Positive attitude
- Problem solving
- Creative thinking
- Communication
- Team work
- Taking initiative
- Asking questions



- Learning from employer
- Conflict resolution
- Time management
- Stress management
- Ability to talk about disability
- Ability to talk about accommodations

A t-test was used to determine whether there were any changes in participants' ratings of their abilities between when they started the program and after they finished.

There were no statistically significant changes in the average ratings made by participants' of their abilities in any of the skill areas when all three groups were analyzed together. However, when the groups were analyzed separately, there were some statistically significant results, which are outlined below.

### **Group One Job Maintenance Skills**

At the beginning of the program, group one had the lowest average rating on their ability to ask questions and to resolve conflict. The highest average rating was on the ability to use the Internet.

There were no statistically significant increases in participants' average ratings of their skills from baseline to follow-up. Though not statistically significant, the average ratings had increased by the end of the program for almost all job maintenance skills, particularly for participants' ability to **ask questions** ( $t = 1.99$ , not quite statistically significant). This is positive, given that it was an area that participants identified that they need to work on.

The average ratings were also notably higher for participants' ability to work well with others, communicate, list their skills, and resolve conflict.

By the end of the program, the average ratings for the ability to organize work time had decreased slightly, though it was not statistically significant. The decrease could reflect the subjectivity of people's responses on rating scales. It is possible that some of the participants did not understand the question. It could also indicate that some participants had become more aware of what was involved in organizing work time through participating in the program. In realizing that their initial rating had been too high they rated themselves lower.

### **Group Two Job Maintenance Skills**

At the beginning of the program, the group two participants had the lowest average rating for the ability to organize work time, resolve conflict and set goals. The highest average ratings were for the ability to use the Internet and have a positive attitude. It should be noted that group two participants had higher average ratings at the beginning than group one and group three participants.

There were statistically significant increases in group two participants' average rating for the ability to **organize work time** ( $t=2.18$ ) and the ability to **set goals** ( $t=2.42$ ) between baseline and follow-up. This is particularly positive given that these were areas that participants identified that they need to work on. It is also interesting given that organize work time was the area that group one reported having increased the least overall.

The average ratings also increased by the end of the program for some of the other job maintenance skills, particularly for the ability to resolve conflict ( $t=1.87$ , not quite statistically significant). The averages also increased for doing things without waiting for others, managing stress, and listing skills, though the changes were not statistically significant.

The average ratings stayed the same for communication skills and the ability to work with others, indicating that some participants did not feel that they had increased their abilities in these areas. It should be noted that there was an overall high rating given for this ability to begin with, hence less opportunity for an increase.

As mentioned, the highest average ratings for group two at baseline were on the ability to use the Internet and have a positive attitude. By the end of the program, the average ratings for both of these skill areas had decreased slightly. There are a variety of reasons that the ratings for skills may have decreased. For instance, it was reported by the Program Coordinator that one of the participants in group two may have had a somewhat unrealistic view of their initial skill level. This was because the person had worked in a job that required a great degree of skill in the past, but due to a brain injury was no longer able to be employed in that field. Through the Work Readiness Skills program they may have become more realistic about their current abilities, resulting in a lower rating at the end.

### **Group Three Job Maintenance Skills**

At the beginning of the program, group three had the lowest average rating on their communication and creative thinking skills. The highest rating was on the ability to organize work time, use the Internet and have a positive attitude.

There were no statistically significant increases in group three participants' ratings of their abilities between baseline and follow up. However, the average ratings had increased overall for some of the job maintenance skills, particularly for participants' rating of their ability to ask question, creative thinking, communication and goal setting skills, though the changes were not statistically significant. It is particularly positive that participants increased their skills in communication and creative thinking, which participants had identified as an area they need to work on at the beginning.

The average ratings stayed the same for participants' ability to resolve conflict and organize work time. However, the participants reported having an initially high skill level in their ability to organize their work time.

It should be noted that there was a slight decrease in the average ratings for three of the other skill areas including: the ability to solve problems, positive attitude and Internet skills.

As mentioned, there are a variety of possibilities for a decrease in the average rating. Representatives of other agencies that provide services to members of group three were asked for their opinions about why the ratings may have decreased. It was explained that persons with intellectual disabilities tend to "present well" in new situations in order to try to make a positive impression. At the baseline the participants were new to the program and the Program Coordinator and they may have wanted to provide a good impression of their abilities so rated their abilities higher. However, by the end of the program, they felt more comfortable with the program and the Program Coordinator and were able to give a more accurate rating of their abilities.

It was also felt that some of the participants may not have fully understood the questions or the concepts (e.g. "resolve conflict"). For some of them, it could also have been the first time they were asked to respond using a rating scale, so they were not completely aware of how the tool worked.

### **4.2.3 Challenges to Employment**

In order to be employment ready, a person must understand the challenges and stresses that they face. Participants were asked to indicate their greatest personal challenges to finding and keeping employment at the beginning of the program and again at the end. Transportation, flexible hours, computer access, money problems, and family were presented as possible choices, as well as the option to indicate other challenges.

For group one, flexible hours, inaccessible work spaces and money problems were noted as the greatest challenges at the beginning of the program. By the end, flexible hours were still noted as a significant barrier, but the other issues were less of a challenge. One person commented that their disability posed a challenge to them.

Flexible hours and money problems were noted as the greatest challenges for participants in group two at the beginning as well. Even more people said that flexible hours were a challenge that they faced by the end of the program. Transportation was also seen as a barrier to more of the participants by the end of the program. More than one person indicated that their disability posed a challenge to them in employment.

Flexible hours were also noted as the greatest challenge for participants in group three at the beginning of the program, with transportation and inaccessible work space also posing barriers. By the end of the program everyone in group three felt that flexible hours were a challenge for them and one person also said that using a computer was challenging. Transportation and inaccessible work space were no longer seen as barriers for anyone. One person did say that their disability made it difficult for them to find employment.

All participants in all three groups indicated that they faced at least one barrier to employment, which indicates that participants are aware of the challenges that they face. The fact that group one and three participants reported fewer barriers by the end of the program could indicate that the Work Readiness Skills program helped them learn how to overcome challenges. Conversely, the fact that group two reported more barriers to employment by the end of the program could indicate that they increased their awareness because of the Work Readiness Skills program.

The participants were also asked about challenges to employment on the Employment Readiness Scale. Table 3 outlines the Top 5 challenges.

**Table 3: Top 5 five Challenges According to Employment Readiness Scale**

Reported Challenges	Percentage of learners
I am having health or emotional problems	73 %
I can't find affordable housing near where I want to live	55%
I never seem to have enough money to survive without assistance	55%
I feel that I just don't fit in at most workplaces	50 %
I recently found out that I have a learning disability	45%

#### **4.2.4 Believing you Can Do Well**

Another key to employment readiness is a sense of self-efficacy, or believing that you can perform well. The participants were asked to rate their confidence in their ability to find a job, keep a job and be good at the job that they obtained using a scale of 1-4 where 1 = Not at all Confident, 2 = A little bit Confident, 3 = Confident and 4 = Very Confident.

#### **Group One Self-Efficacy**

By the end of the program four of the six participants had increased their confidence in their ability to find a job and reported being either confident or very confident.

Though relatively confident from the beginning in their ability to keep a job once they got it, by the end of the program, five of the participants were reporting high levels of confidence in their abilities to keep a job.

From the beginning, all of the participants but one had a high level of confidence in their ability to be good at a job. By the end of the program the one person who was not at all confident in their abilities had become very confident. However, another person had become a little less confident in their abilities.

### **Group Two Self-Efficacy**

By the end of the program two of the seven participants who responded had increased their confidence in their ability to find a job, three had stayed the same, and another and decreased their confidence.

Most of the participants had been fairly confident in their ability to keep a job once they obtained one from the beginning of the program, besides one person who was not at all confident. This person increased their confidence by the end of the program, as did two other respondents. However, three people reported a slight decrease in their confidence levels.

Most of the participants had a high level of confidence in their ability to be good at a job once they obtained one and almost all of the participants remained the same in their confidence levels by the end of the program. There was one person who decreased their confidence from very confident to just a little bit confident.

### **Group Three Self-Efficacy**

By the end of the program two of the three participants who responded had increased their confidence in their ability to find a job, though one other person had decreased their confidence.

At the beginning of the program one of the respondents was already confident of their ability to keep a job. This person remained confident at the end of the program. Another person increased their confidence in their ability to keep a job. However, one other person decreased their confidence level.

One person remained fairly confident that they could be good at a job that they obtained and another person increased their confidence in their abilities by the end of the program. There was one person who decreased their confidence in their ability to be good at a job.

### **4.2.5 Expecting to Succeed**

Having a positive attitude about the possibility of finding and keeping employment is an important aspect of employability.

Work Readiness Skills program participants were asked whether they thought that they would find a job in the field that they wanted in the next six months and / or whether they would find a job in a related field.

Group one participants had fairly positive outlooks with four of the six people saying that they believed that they would find employment in their field or a related field within six months. One person said that they would not find employment in the field that they wanted and were unsure if they would find employment in a related field. The others were all unsure.

Group two participants were less sure of whether they would succeed in finding a job with only three people saying that they believed they would find employment in their field or a related field within six months. The other people were all unsure.

Group three participants were also unsure of whether they would succeed in finding a job in their field with only one person saying that they believed they would find employment in their field or a related field within six months. There were two other people who were unsure and one person who did not believe they would find a job.

#### **4.2.6 Social Support**

Social support, or a person's ability to get help when they need it, is also part of employment success.

The participants in group one and group two of the Work Readiness Skills program were aware of the areas in which they may need support. Some of the participants in group three were aware of support they might need, though one person said that they did not need assistance. The areas where participants might need support included: communication, transportation, filling out application forms, resume and cover letter writing, job search, interview skills, using computers, and general advice. Group one and group two participants all had family, friends or community agencies that they felt they could go to for this support. Some group three participants noted family, friends or community agencies they could access if needed.

#### **4.2.7 Work History**

A person's work history has an obvious bearing on their future employment success.

All of the group one participants indicated having held multiple jobs and/or volunteer positions in the past. From the reports, most seem to have held past positions for a limited period of time (e.g. 2 months). A few people had held jobs

for a year or two. Overall, group one participants reported having a good work history, though a lack of consistency in maintaining positions.

Of the seven group two participants, five indicated having held multiple jobs in the past. The other two did not respond. Most of the people had held past jobs for a year or more. Overall, group two participants reported having a good work history and consistency in their ability to maintain positions.

Just two of the group three participants responded to this question and both had held multiple jobs in the past. They had held past jobs for between six months and four years. Overall, while only two group three participants reported having a work history, those who did had a good work history and some consistency in their ability to maintain a job.

### 4.3 Employment Status

Participants were asked to report on their employment status at the beginning of the program and again at the end based on the following employment categories:

- Working full time (30 hours or more per week)
- Working part time (less than 30 hours per week)
- Under Employed (less than 20 hrs per week and wish to be working more)
- Unemployed but looking for a job
- Unemployed and not looking for a job

#### Group One – Employment Status

As is evident in Table 4, none of the group one participants were employed full time either at the beginning of the program or by the end. There were three people who were employed part time when the program started, but by the end only one had maintained their part time status, another considered themselves to be underemployed and the other had become unemployed, but was still looking. There was one person who went from being unemployed to having a part time job by the end of the program.

**Table 4: Employment Status of Group One Participants at Baseline and End of Program**

Participants	Baseline	End of Program
1	Part Time	Underemployed
2	Unemployed and not Looking	Part Time
3	Part Time	Part Time
4	Part Time	Unemployed but Looking
5	Unemployed and not Looking	Unemployed and not Looking
6	Unemployed but Looking	Unemployed but Looking

## Group Two – Employment Status

Table 5 shows that none of the group two participants were employed when they first started the Work Readiness Skills program, though it should be noted that one person indicated that they were doing some volunteer work. By the end of the program, none of the participants had found a job. However, one participant who had not been interested in employment had become motivated to start looking for a job.

**Table 5: Employment Status of Group Two Participants at Baseline and End of Program**

Participants	Baseline	End of Program
1	Unemployed but Looking	-
2	Unemployed but Looking	Unemployed but Looking
3	-	Unemployed but Looking
4	-	Unemployed but Looking
5	-	Unemployed and Not Looking
6	Unemployed but Looking	Unemployed but Looking
7	Unemployed and Not Looking	Unemployed but Looking

## Group Three – Employment Status

As shown in Table 6, two participants were working part time when they first started the Work Readiness Skills program and another person was underemployed. By the end of the program, at least two of the participants had improved their employment situation with the underemployed individual stating that they were working part time and one part time worker moving into a full time position. One person maintained their part time job and another who did not indicate their status at the beginning said that they were working full time at the end of the program.

**Table 6: Employment Status of Group Three Participants at Baseline and End of Program**

Participants	Baseline	End of Program
1	-	Full Time
2	Underemployed	Part Time
3	Part Time	Full Time
4	Part Time	Part Time

The Work Readiness Skills program is one step on the “path to employability” as is evident from the activities that the participants have gone on to accomplish. Some examples given by the Program Coordinator include:

- √ 2 people found new jobs just before finishing the program



- ✓ At least 7 people went on to participate in another employment intervention (e.g. Practice Firm, skills enhancement training, work with a job developer, employment counselling)
- ✓ 1 person realized that they were not capable of returning to competitive employment as a result of a brain injury and now has clearer goals
- ✓ Many participants remained employed in a supported employment workshop environment

#### 4.4 E-Learning Results

There were 7 group two participants and 3 group three participants who responded to the e-learning survey. Their responses have been combined to reflect overall opinions. The learners were asked to rate the content, language level, audio, images, and size and length of the learning modules using a scale of 1-5 where 1 = Needs Improvement, 2 = Ok, 3 = Good and 4 = Excellent.

A total of 80% of participants felt that the content of the Work Readiness Skills program learning modules was good or excellent.

Another 80% of respondents thought that the language level was good or excellent.

A total of 78% of the participants said that the audio used for the e-learning modules was good or excellent.

There were 60% of respondents who thought that the images used in the e-learning modules were good or excellent and 40% who thought they were just ok.

The participants were more varied in their opinions of the size and length of the e-learning modules with 44% saying that it was good or excellent, 33% saying it was ok and 22% reporting that the size and length of the Work Readiness Skills program needs improvement. Two people commented that the program was too long.

Participants were asked to report on some of the things that they liked about the learning modules. Comments included:

*“Everything”;*

*“The topics were good and we learn a lot”;* and

*“I like the modules because you have flexibility you can go back if you don’t understand something. I could hear the audio even though I had difficulty reading the modules”*

They were also asked what they disliked about the program. Comments included:

*“I didn’t like the font size of the written material. The prints were difficult for me to read because I am visually impaired. I did like when Audio said there was an animation/printing”;* and

*“All the listening we had to do”.*

These comments reflect the challenge of delivering modules in a way that meets the needs of people with a variety of disabilities. While the audio aspect works well for a person with a visual impairment, it may not be preferred by everyone.

#### **4.5 Mentorship**

One of the objectives of the Work Readiness Skills program was to provide persons with disabilities with access to industry mentors for help in acquiring employability skills and job search.

Mentoring information was provided to project participants on the program website and through a mentorship brochure. There were 2 group two participants who were matched with a mentor.

There were some lessons learned about the feasibility of implementing a mentoring strategy as part of the Work Readiness Skills program. For example, many project learners were not at the job search stage, so a mentor to assist with job search was not yet something they needed. Also, some participants did not have a clearly defined goal, which made it difficult to find an appropriate mentor. In some cases there were disability related barriers to a mentorship relationship.

In addition to these challenges it was also found through researching other models that an appropriate mentorship program for persons with disabilities would require a great deal of resources. Given that such a large amount of staff time and other resources were required to develop the other aspects of the Work Readiness Skills program, it was not feasible to also implement a full mentorship program.

Through this pilot project it was found that the Program Coordinator could act as a mentor to the participants in helping them acquire employability skills. Mentors to assist with job search may be useful at a later stage on the path to employability. An employment mentorship program for persons with disabilities could be a full program in itself and would require budget and staff dedicated specifically to that activity.



## 4.6 Summary of Participant Results

These results indicate that the Work Readiness Skills program was effective as a step to assisting persons with disabilities in enhancing their employability skills. Participants completed individual learning plans. They also completed learning modules, which most people reported to be good or excellent. Some of the learners reported increases in their employability skills. Particularly significant was an increase in the ability to ask questions (group one), the ability to organize work (group two), and the ability to set goals (group two).

## **5.0 Success Story Results**

The reality is that many persons with disabilities require additional intervention to support the acquisition of employment. Due to systemic stigmas and other barriers person with disabilities require assistance with job development and post hiring support beyond their skills development needs. For this reason, success needs to be defined more broadly than just finding employment after the participation in employability skills development.

Success in the Work Readiness Skills program can take many forms. For some it means finding the job they were hoping for and for others it means making positive changes in their lives, learning new things, setting a goal or following through with a plan. This section includes a sample of the various successes that took place as a result of involvement with the Work Readiness Skills Program other than solely finding employment.

### **5.1 Group One Success Story**

At the beginning of the program a 23 year old woman with a learning disability and attention deficit disorder was facing several employment barriers. She had great difficulty in maintaining employment as a result of not having the proper accommodations for success. Her Baseline Employment Readiness (ERS) scores indicated that she was not self sufficient in any dimension, yet was borderline for skills enhancement. She was facing significant personal and environmental challenges that included financial, social and emotional factors. Her long terms goal was to be employed in a nursing home kitchen.

She fully participated in all aspects of the program. She received regularly scheduled appointments with the Project Coordinator to address her action plan related to her goal and to address her additional barriers. This kind of support included connecting to community based counselling services, providing information about financial support and connecting with her other support providers such as family and learning disability support staff. A great deal of attention was spent on the ways she learned best and how to solve real workplace and educational challenges.

During the program she gained a greater social network and developed friendships that have been maintained with other members of the group. Her follow up ERS scores indicated an increase in all dimensions with the exception of Career Decision making. Her goals remained consistent through the program.

At the end of the program she was referred to Employment Access which supports persons with disabilities in their employment goals and the development of a detailed plan. She worked with the counsellor to prepare a Skills Enhancement Package and was approved by the Federal Government for food

services training for a nursing home. The training takes place in a nursing home context with small groups and no textbooks. The training coordinator is aware of her disability related need and able to provide support.

This example demonstrates that increasing supports, developing peer relationships, improving employment readiness and continuing on the path towards her long terms goal can be considered a success.

## **5.2 Group Two Success Story**

At the beginning of the program a 52 year old woman with low literacy levels, a learning disability and mental health issues was facing significant employment barriers. Her employment goal was to be a cleaner. Although she had experience in cleaning, her literacy level proved to be a barrier as she had difficulties filling out forms and cleaning reports at her job. At her baseline ERS she was not self sufficient in any employability dimension. The ERS also indicated high levels of personal challenges, which could include stresses related to education, health, relationships and work.

Due to her literacy and disability factors she required a lot of individual support during the program. She met with the Project Coordinator on a regular basis and accessed computers at her literacy support program and a local employment resource centre. She had little internet experience or skills. She was able to obtain an email address and would email the Coordinator to demonstrate this new skill.

At the end of the program her follow-up ERS indicated self sufficiency in Career Decision-making and Job maintenance. Her personal challenges were reduced from a high level to a medium level.

She was referred to a local mental health support centre and began to attend the program and meet with their job development staff. They provided her with employment leads in advance of their general three month trial period and she successfully obtained work as a part-time cleaner. She was asked to apply for fulltime employment at her workplace. At a recent follow up appointment she was found to be “surfing the net” independently. She is continuing with her literacy skills development in the community.

This example demonstrates that increasing community connections, reducing personal challenges and improving employability skills in some areas can be considered forms of success in addition to employment.

## **5.3 Group Three Success Story**

At the beginning of the program this 30 year old woman who had multiple barriers to employment, including having learning disability, intellectual disability and mental health issues, expressed a lack of confidence in her ability to use



computers and required ongoing encouragement. Both Baseline and Follow-up ERS suggest no self sufficiency in any employability dimensions and as a result of her disabilities she would require intensive supports in her job search. She has established connections with Supported Employment Staff to secure employment in the community.

She was able to fully participate in the program, demonstrating insight into the material. Despite her negative self regard, she was eager to learn while she accurately completed far more modules than any of her counterparts in group three. She went on to take a basic internet course and following completion of the Work Readiness Skills project she began a computer based Literacy and Basic Skills program. She has set goals to work in the community rather than a supported employment setting.

This example demonstrates the success of increased confidence in computer use leading to continuing education and ongoing learning.

## 6.0 Conclusions

### 6.1 Lessons Learned

The Work Readiness Skills program carried out a variety of planned and unplanned activities throughout the three year pilot project in an effort to fulfill its objectives. The nature of a pilot project is to learn from the experience and adapt the program based on that learning. As a result, some of the activities that were originally proposed were not carried out because the stakeholders discovered what they felt were more appropriate ways to deliver the program.

This report reflects the lessons that were learned about the delivery of a blended learning program that teaches employability skills to persons with disabilities.

Some of those key lessons were:

- Reducing disability related barriers through accommodations is essential for positive learning opportunities
- Offering individual support/tutoring to those with learning challenges improves quality of the learning experience
- E-learning can be offered in multiple streams for effectiveness as one approach does not fit all needs
- Group work in a blended learning program increases social inclusion for persons with disabilities
- Clear language is essential for written materials
- Connections to the community can improve one's awareness of additional services and supports
- There is a greater need for accessible services and resources at the community level, including computers with adaptive technology
- Community collaborations through the sharing of resources and ideas can contribute to successful programs

### 6.2 Objectives Met

The Work Readiness Skills Program had four main objectives. The degree to which these objectives were met is discussed below.

***#1: Complete a map of community resources which persons with various disabilities can use to access employability skills development services and programs that are accommodating to their needs.***

√ This objective was fulfilled through the completion of a comprehensive online map that continues to be updated on a regular basis with new resources.

***#2: Modify employability skills e-learning tools to accommodate a variety of learning styles and disability related accommodation needs along with***



***developing blended learning options that enhance persons with disabilities successful acquisition of employability skills.***

√ While the original proposal was to modify *existing* employability skills, the process of mapping and research demonstrated that an entirely new blended learning program would be more appropriate. A considerable amount of work was done to develop a curriculum based on best practice and a blended learning program was created and tested during the span of the project.

***#3: Provide persons with disabilities with blended learning opportunities for increasing employability skills.***

√ A total of 18 individuals with disabilities in three groups were provided with blended learning opportunities focused on increasing their employability skills.

***#4: Provide persons with disabilities with access to on-line industry mentors to assist them in their acquisition of employability skills and in conducting successful job searches.***

Currently there are no large scale mentorship programs in existence for persons with disabilities. Successful mentorship program in the community are for Foreign Trained Professional and they have dedicated staff, corporate support and a larger budget devoted exclusively work on the development of mentoring relationship. Persons with disabilities could certainly benefit form a program devoted exclusively to mentorship's.

## Appreciations

The Work Readiness Skills Project expresses its gratitude and acknowledges the tremendous support from the community. This includes all those agencies who contributed to the community maps and the following organizations.

- All Pilot Group Participants
- Coalition for Persons with Disabilities Board of Directors
- Employment Access
- Employment PAH
- Sign of the Time Practice Firm for Persons with Disabilities
- Tetra Society of North America Peel Branch and Glenn Barnes
- Brampton Library and David Hill
- Bwyze and John Towesly
- Halton Catholic District Schoolboard Continuing Education Literacy and Basic Skills and Colleen Berube
- Community Living Oakville and Sylvia Paurys and Janet Barton
- VPI Brampton
- Kerry's Place Autism Services
- Action Read
- Anne Moore
- Learning Disability Association of North Peel
- Skills For Self
- Canadian Mental Health Association Peel PAR North and South Clubhouses
- Peel Halton Dufferin Adult Learning Network and Matthew Schulman
- Alphaplus Centre and Nancy Friday
- Weave Partners and Catherine Chambers
- The Wired SchoolHouse and Brian Bell
- Oakville Library and Ruth Borst
- Caledon Community Services
- Mississauga Library
- YMCA Employment Resource Centre Brampton
- YMCA Access for Success Program
- Community Living Toronto

## Appendix 1: Community Mapping Survey

## Community Mapping Questionnaire

### Overview

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The Work Readiness Skills Project is researching best practices that will help people with disabilities learn, and enhance, their Employability Skills for the work place. We aim to test the effectiveness of a curriculum that involves blended learning in teaching employability skills. In the pilot phase of our project we will take project learners through the curriculum and evaluate the success. The key to the success of this project is a community mapping exercise that is identifying the learning assets, formal and informal that support the development of employability skills. We are also mapping community computer resources and the level of accessibility they offer persons with disabilities.

### Organizational Information

---

Name of Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Person, Title and Role: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_Mailing Address (including City and \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number \_\_\_\_\_

Fax Number: \_\_\_\_\_

TTY Number: \_\_\_\_\_

URL (web address): \_\_\_\_\_

e-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

Hours of Operation: \_\_\_\_\_

At what organizational level are your programming \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Level of Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities

---

What level of accessibility does your building have? (incl. entrance, washrooms, training rooms)

---

---



Are there any plans to increase the level of accessibility?

---

---

Are there specific issues that prevent you from implementing greater levels of accessibility?

---

---

**Accessibility of Computers**

How many computer stations does your organization have for client or public access?

---

---

How many of these computers are equipped with Internet access?

---

---

Do you charge any kind of fee for use?

---

---

Are any of your computers stations equipped with accessibility features or adaptive technology?

- Height adjustable computer tables
- Alternative keyboards
- Screen magnification systems
- Screen readers Software (ie. Kurtzweill)
- Any ergonomic supports such as wrist rests
- Alternative mouse systems, such as trackballs
- Voice recognition software
- Scanners/Optical Recognition

---

---

Are there trained staff on site to instruct or support the use of accessible hardware?

---

---



Are staff trained in accessibility features of the software? (eg screen changes, sticky keys)

---

---

Who is the main contact person at this location responsible for accessibility features?

---

---

Are there any plans to put into place accessible devices and or programs?

---

---

**Website**

Does your organization have a website that meets accessibility standards?

---

---

Does the website advertise or instruct that accessible hardware and support is available?

---

---

**Partnerships**

Do you partner/affiliate with other groups, boards, organizations that use accessible hardware?

---

---

Do you partner with provincial/federal governments for leadership, support or financial assistance?

---

---

Do you partner with any local charitable organization for assistance or support or financial?

---

---

**Employability Skills Development** (For a definition of ‘Employability Skills’ please see next page)

---

What programs do you offer that support development of Employability Skills?  
Please describe:

---

---

Do you have any programs that are specifically targeted for persons with disabilities?

---

---

Is there a cost associated with the Employability skills program?

---

---

What criteria for participation do you have?

---

---

How do you monitor the success of the program?

---

---

Is there a system for clients/participants to offer feedback?

---

---

How do you monitor the success of the participant? Do you have a follow up program in place?

---

---

What obstacles are you currently facing regarding this type of program?

---

---

Do you feel that the program is well utilized? How do you market it and recruit participants?

---

---



---

Is there anything else you want to add about your services that we have not considered?

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---

---

---

## Appendix 2 Sample Learning Plan

### SAMPLE Learning Plan

xxxxxx indicated at the time of the assessment that she has no definite occupational goal, but has a preference for office work. Therefore this learning plan is based on her expressed preference and the match suggested by the assessment results. The three most important skills required for an Administrative Clerk position are indicated in the table below along with the required skill level and xxxxxx's results.

<b>Occupational Goal</b>	<b>Most Important Essential Skills</b>	<b>Required Skill Level</b>	<b>Assessment Results</b>
<a href="#">NOC 1441</a> <a href="#">Administrative Clerk</a>	➤ Document use	1 – 3	1
	➤ Oral communication	1 – 3	1
	➤ Job task planning and organizing	2 – 3	1

xxxxxs self assessment results meet the required minimum level in two of the three skills. Each of these three skills involve reading, therefore ongoing development of xxxxxx's literacy skills will help to strengthen her document use, oral communication and job task planning and organizing skills. The activities suggested will enable xxxxxxxx to work on more than one skill at a time. As xxxxxxxx's skills develop, she can continue to move on to higher level activities also found on the recommended sites.

The online learning resources listed can be included in a blended learning program to help xxxxxxxx develop the essential skills used in her chosen occupation. The activities suggested are aligned with these skills; as well they are aligned with a variety of interests.

Specific sites have been included because they focus on goal setting. Activities help learners reflect on their own goals and use the steps identified to work toward meeting them. The focus of these activities is on employment goals though a few personal goals may be included. As xxxxxxxx had not decided on a specific occupational goal at the time of the assessment, these activities could be particularly beneficial. In addition, these activities can also assist with developing continuous learning skills.

xxxxxxxalso expressed an interest in developing her computer skills, therefore resources have been suggested in this area.

Finally, it is recommended that the learner/tutor explore the sites for activities to develop other essential skills not mentioned herein.

### **Document Use**

Administrative clerks may:

- Read and complete various forms that are unique to the organization. For example, an administrative clerk in a paramedical services company may need to read application forms.
- read registration lists or client mailing lists

Read safety labels, receipts, etc.

Skill	Document Use
Learning Intervention	Online interactive tutorials that develop reading skills i.e., scanning, skimming, vocabulary. Basic writing skills development tutorials as well.
Resource Description	<b>Skillswise</b> Skillswise aims to help adults improve their reading, writing and math skills. It is targeted at Level 1 of the Adult Basic Skills Literacy & Numeracy Curriculums. This is a U.K. based site.
Tutorials	<p><i>Reading development:</i></p> <p>Scanning Worksheets – learners print or use multiple windows/tabs to refer to documents to locate specific information [a job advertisement and a primary school prospectus] A printable fact and tip sheet is provided for reference.</p> <p>Timed Quizzes Three quizzes at increasing levels are available – learners refer to documents to locate specific information [retail flyer, bus schedule, information brochure]. Allotted time corresponds to the difficulty of the text. Learners receive immediate feedback and a certificate of completion indicating score achieved. Both are available for printing.</p> <p>Game – learners practise scanning for information as they try to discover who has committed a horrible murder in <i>Sleazeville!</i> A clue sheet can be printed before starting the game to remind learners which information they are scanning for. An answer sheet can be printed from the tutor's page.</p> <p>Skimming Worksheets – learners print or use multiple windows/tabs to answer specific questions regarding main idea of text e.g., the text's target audience, purpose of the text, etc. A printable fact and 'how to' sheet is provided.</p>
	<p>Timed Quizzes Three quizzes at increasing levels are available – learners skim through informative and descriptive texts to answer questions regarding the main ideas in the text. Allotted time corresponds to the difficulty of the text. Learners receive immediate feedback and a certificate of completion indicating score achieved is</p>

	<p>available for printing.</p> <p>Additional resources are available in this area of the website.</p> <p><i>Writing development:</i></p> <p>Spelling Activities include word building using roots, suffixes and prefixes , recognizing letter patterns Worksheets A printable worksheet is provided to complete an offline activity. Learners match letters with different letter patterns to create different words. Timed quizzes Three timed quizzes test the learner’s ability to recognise letter patterns in words and spell them correctly. Game Learners practice finding the words hidden in different word-search games. In each game the words share a letter pattern. Learners receive immediate feedback and a certificate of completion indicating the achieved score; both are available for printing. Paragraphs Fact sheets provide information on how to write paragraphs. Worksheets and games allow learners to practice identifying and writing topic sentences, using linking words and more.</p>
Benefits	Learners are practicing skills similar to those used in an administrative position while building vocabulary and other writing skills. Learners practice working under time pressures.
Website/URL	<a href="http://www.bbc.co.uk/skillswise">http://www.bbc.co.uk/skillswise</a> <a href="http://www.bbc.co.uk/skillswise/words/reading">http://www.bbc.co.uk/skillswise/words/reading</a> <a href="http://www.bbc.co.uk/skillswise/words/spelling/">http://www.bbc.co.uk/skillswise/words/spelling/</a>
Teacher/Tutor	Description of the activities available and a list of additional resources that can be used for teaching scanning/skimming, spelling and more.

Skill	Document Use
Learning Intervention	Online interactive tutorials that develop reading skills i.e., comprehension, scanning, skimming, vocabulary. Basic writing skills development tutorials as well.
Resource Description	<p><b>TV411</b></p> <p>TV411 is a site produced by the Adult Media Literacy Alliance to help adults gain the basic reading, writing, and math skills they need to achieve their educational, career, and personal goals.</p>



	<p>The site provides access to educationally sound and entertaining multimedia learning materials. This is a U.S. based site.</p>
Tutorials	<p><b>Reading development:</b> Scanning for specifics Learners scan test to identify key words in the order they appear Reading charts and graphs Learners identify information being conveyed by chart/graph Using context clues [for new vocabulary] Learners choose the correct definition of a highlighted word using context clues. Summarizing Learners read several brief texts and using a multiple choice question, learners identify the summary of each. Parts of a newspaper Learners identify the sections of a newspaper and the type of information found in each.</p> <p>Vocabulary and writing activities are also available.</p>
Benefits	<p>Learners practice skills similar to those used in an administrative position. The participant always has access to a dictionary, a calculator and an editing checklist.</p>
Website/URL	<p><a href="http://www.tv411.org/reading/">http://www.tv411.org/reading/</a></p>
Teacher/Tutor	<p>An area is provided for or teachers, facilitators, and tutors working with adult learners who read below a high school level and who want to improve their basic literacy (reading, writing, and math). Sample lesson plans and related links are included.</p>

## Oral Communication

Administrative clerks:

- Receive requests for information from clients and instructions from co-workers and supervisors.
- Listen to or leave voice mail messages.
- Exchange client information with co-workers and co-ordinate work with them.
- Talk to clients in person or on the phone and answer their questions.
- Interact with suppliers to obtain supplies.
- Attend and present information at staff meetings.

Skill	Oral communication
Learning Intervention	Online interactive tutorials that develop the learner's ability to listen for key words, take notes, remember and confirm information heard. Additional listening skills such as eye contact and using gestures are also covered.
Resource Description	<b>Skillswise</b> Skillswise aims to help adults improve their reading, writing and maths skills. It is targeted at Level 1 of the adult Basic Skills Literacy & Numeracy Curriculums. This is a U.K. based site.
Tutorials	Listening Listening for specific information – Learners listen to telephone messages and answer questions, or fill the gaps. A printable question sheet is provided, as is an answer sheet. Worksheets – learners listen to audio advertisements for specific information. Printable worksheets and answers are provided. A printable tip sheet is provided.  Additional listening activities are also offered.
Benefits	Learners practice listening skills similar to those used in an administrative position.
Website/URL	<a href="http://www.bbc.co.uk/skillswise/words/listening/">http://www.bbc.co.uk/skillswise/words/listening/</a>
Teachers/Tutors	Information is available for teachers/tutors.

Skill	Oral Communication Working with Others
Learning Intervention	Online activities that focus on identifying effective workplace communication skills.
Resource	<b>AlphaRoute</b>

Description	<p>AlphaRoute is a learning environment for adult learners. Using a variety of activities learners can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ use and improve language, math, computer, and Internet skills with AlphaRoute's quizzes, newspapers, learning activities, and games</li> <li>▪ Find out about the technology and math skills needed for work</li> <li>▪ Join AlphaRoute's community of learners – use email, chat online, try an online course</li> </ul> <p><i>The Learning Edge</i> covers stories that focus on learners' goals of enhancing independent living and workforce preparation. This is a Canadian based site.</p>
Tutorials	<p>The Learning Edge Issue Number 7 [Workplace Issue] <i>Communication at Work</i> This video discusses what and how one says something and the importance of voice tone and volume, and body language. It also reviews what one doesn't say. The learner responds to questions regarding appropriate communication.</p> <p>Issue Number 6 [Workplace Issue] <i>Communicate for Success</i> the video reviews how to be an effective communicator even in difficult situations. Learning activities include multiple choice questions, vocabulary quizzes and a writing activity.</p> <p><i>Assertiveness Quiz</i> a definition of assertiveness. It is designed to allow the learner to reflect on how assertive she/he is. An assertiveness score is provided at the end of the quiz. A tip sheet is available.</p>
Benefits	<p>Learners can work on developing more than one skill at a time. Movies are accompanied by text; and instructions are provided in writing with audio accompaniment.</p>
Website/URL	<p><a href="http://english.alpharoute.org/Newspapers.cfm">http://english.alpharoute.org/Newspapers.cfm</a> or <a href="http://thewclc.ca/edge">http://thewclc.ca/edge</a></p>
Teachers/Tutors	<p>A guide to using AlphaRoute in a blended learning program is available it includes <i>Skills at Work series: Workbook 1, 2 and Practitioner Guide</i>.</p> <p><a href="http://resources.alpharoute.org/resources.asp#blended">http://resources.alpharoute.org/resources.asp#blended</a></p> <p>Each AlphaRoute learner is matched with an on-line mentor who has been trained at the agency where the learner is registered. Mentors work closely with learners, helping them connect with the virtual learning environment that is AlphaRoute. The mentor guides the learner along a path of learning activities and interactive AlphaRoute features which help learners achieve their stated learning goals. The mentor also provides feedback on the learner's efforts. The mentor's</p>



name, photo and contact information is listed.

Skill	Oral communication
Learning Intervention	A demonstration to guide the learner to develop speaking skills.
Resource Description	<b>BrainPOP</b> BrainPOP movies cover topics such as English, math, social studies, technology, arts and music, and science. Movies are hosted by an expressive orange robot named Moby and his teen companion Tim. Interactive quizzes for assessment and enrichment materials like experiments and creative activities supplement the movies. Designed to spark inherent curiosity, particularly of those in grades 3-12, the movies are visually appealing, cleverly written and speak in a voice they can relate to, but without talking down to them. All movies are closed-captioned.
Tutorials	Public Speaking A short animated movie that highlights how to organize thoughts, use key words, eye contact, gestures and facial expressions when speaking. The learner can review the material presented using the comprehension quiz.
Benefits	The learner identifies the skills used to prepare for making phone calls to clients, co-workers or suppliers. They are skills especially important when calling to make a request, leave a message, place an order, etc. Topics on this site are current and culturally related.
Website/URL	<a href="http://www.brainpop.com/english/readingandspeaking/publicspeaking/">http://www.brainpop.com/english/readingandspeaking/publicspeaking/</a> Can be accessed as a trial. <a href="http://www.brainpop.com/">http://www.brainpop.com/</a>
Teachers/Tutors	<b>NOTE:</b> A <i>five-day trial is available</i> ; a paid subscription is required. To subscribe as a teacher the cost is \$175. For teachers with 2-3 classroom computers, or for teachers using projectors or interactive whiteboards for class instruction. Allows 3 simultaneous users, with 15 logins maximum per day. Subscription is for 12 months.

## Job Task Planning

Administrative clerks:

- Prioritize tasks/duties
- Respond to requests for information received via paper, e-mail, and voice mail.
- Use schedules, planners/agendas to meet deadlines
- Deal with interruptions
- Reorganize tasks

Skill	Job Task Planning Continuous Learning
Learning Intervention	Learners watch animated movies and then respond to comprehension questions, match the character's goal with strategies used, sequencing the character's actions that helped achieve the goal. Learners have an opportunity to reflect on skills, set goals and organize themselves, develop their own action plan, and keep track.
Resource Description	<p><b>Learn2Learn</b></p> <p>The Learn2Learn website presents activities that recognize and make explicit the skills used in everyday living and renames these as learning skills. The target audience includes, but is not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Anyone wanting to focus on setting and reaching a goal</li> <li>▪ Participants in an adult literacy programs</li> <li>▪ Adult learners in diverse settings wanting to develop and practise learning to learn capacities and strategies</li> <li>▪ Participants in introductory computer training programs</li> </ul> <p>This site is based in Australia.</p>
Tutorials	<p>Animated videos demonstrate skills used to set and reach goals. Steps are identified for setting goals and strategies, asking for help, and following up. The learner is directed to a range of activities depending on the skills or strategies being presented. Activities are completed online and offline. Online activities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Multiple choice</li> <li>▪ Click and drag classification activities</li> <li>▪ True and false</li> <li>▪ Memory/concentration game, while offline activities include goal setting, action planning, and journaling,</li> <li>▪ Checklists</li> </ul> <p>Each unit offers two animated videos with accompanying activities as above.</p>
Benefits	Learners practice listening, reading and computer skills.



	<p>The activities may assist Satwinder with goal setting as it relates to obtaining employment. A printable chart can help her set and meet short-term (next week) and long term (in five years) goals. Using the chart offers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ more independence in learning</li> <li>▪ improved organizational (time management) skills</li> </ul>
Website/URL	<a href="http://www.saalt.com.au/l2l/mainintro.htm">http://www.saalt.com.au/l2l/mainintro.htm</a>
Teacher/Tutor	<p>A mentor’s guide is provided here:</p> <p><a href="http://www.saalt.com.au/l2l/mentorguide/guide.pdf">http://www.saalt.com.au/l2l/mentorguide/guide.pdf</a></p>

Skill	Job Task Planning
Learning Intervention	Online activities that develop the learner’s ability to manage time by using schedules.
Resource Description	<p><b>AlphaRoute</b>          AlphaRoute is a learning environment for adult learners. Using a variety of activities learners can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ use and improve language, math, computer, and Internet skills with quizzes, newspapers, learning activities, and games</li> <li>▪ Find out about the technology and math skills needed for work</li> <li>▪ Join AlphaRoute's community of learners – use email, chat online, try an online course</li> </ul> <p><i>The Learning Edge</i> covers stories that focus on the learner’s goals of enhancing independent living and workforce preparation.          The site is based in Canada. For more about the site visit <a href="http://resources.alpharoute.org/about.asp">http://resources.alpharoute.org/about.asp</a></p>
Tutorials	<p><i>The Learning Edge</i> Issue Number 6 [Workplace Issue]          Examples of common workplace schedules followed by quizzes to test skills:          Personal work schedules          Employee schedules          Daily schedule used by receptionists          Front desk phone schedule          Quizzes          The learner reads the question and types in the answer.</p>
Benefits	<p>The learner practices using typical workplaces schedules to arrange coverage during time off, arrange to meet someone, etc. The learner also practices locating information on a document. Additionally, the learner is also practicing keyboarding skills. Other ‘newspapers’ are available to practice literacy and</p>



	numeracy skills also.
Website/URL	<a href="http://english.alpharoute.org/Newspapers.cfm">http://english.alpharoute.org/Newspapers.cfm</a> or <a href="http://thewclc.ca/edge/">http://thewclc.ca/edge/</a>
Teacher/Tutor	<p>A guide to using AlphaRoute in a blended learning program is available it includes <i>Skills at Work series: Workbook 1, 2 and Practitioner Guide</i>.</p> <p><a href="http://resources.alpharoute.org/resources.asp#blended">http://resources.alpharoute.org/resources.asp#blended</a></p> <p>Each AlphaRoute learner is matched with an on-line mentor who has been trained at the agency where the learner is registered. Mentors work closely with learners, helping them connect with the virtual learning environment that is AlphaRoute. The mentor guides the learner along a path of learning activities and interactive AlphaRoute features which help learners achieve their stated learning goals. The mentor also provides feedback on the learner's efforts. The mentor's name, photo and contact information is listed.</p>



### Computer Skills

#### Administrative Clerk:

- Uses word processing
- uses graphics software
- uses a database
- uses a spreadsheet
- may collect and organize information
- uses bookkeeping, billing and accounting software
- uses communications software e.g., e-mail

Skill	Computer Skills
Learning Intervention	Online activities that enable the learner to practice exploring the Web.
Resource Description	<p><b>AlphaRoute</b> AlphaRoute is a learning environment for adult learners. Using a variety of activities learners can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ use and improve language, math, computer, and Internet skills with quizzes, newspapers, learning activities, and games</li> <li>▪ Find out about the technology and math skills needed for work</li> <li>▪ Join AlphaRoute's community of learners – use email, chat online, try an online course</li> </ul> <p>The site is based in Canada. For more about the site visit <a href="http://resources.alpharoute.org/about.asp">http://resources.alpharoute.org/about.asp</a></p>
Tutorials	<p>Links to the web These links will take the learner to Web sites with more practice and information about math, health and employment. The employment link leads to other links that prepare the learner for writing resumes to a workplace administrative simulation.</p> <p>Learn to Use a Search Engine The tutorial demonstrates how to use search engines to find information. The tutorial includes treasure hunts where the learner uses various search engines to find requested information. Instructions may be printed.</p> <p>Cyber Search Over 20 Cyber Search scavenger hunts will lead the learner through some fun ways to find information on the Internet.</p>
Benefits	Practice the essential skill of finding information as well as keyboarding.
Website/URL	<a href="http://english.alpharoute.org/Internet.cfm">http://english.alpharoute.org/Internet.cfm</a>
Teachers/Tutors	A guide to using AlphaRoute in a blended learning program is

	<p>available it includes <i>Skills at Work series: Workbook 1, 2 and Practitioner Guide</i>.</p> <p><a href="http://resources.alpharoute.org/resources.asp#blended">http://resources.alpharoute.org/resources.asp#blended</a></p> <p>Each AlphaRoute learner is matched with an on-line mentor who has been trained at the agency where the learner is registered. Mentors work closely with learners, helping them connect with the virtual learning environment that is AlphaRoute. The mentor guides the learner along a path of learning activities and interactive AlphaRoute features which help learners achieve their stated learning goals. The mentor also provides feedback on the learner's efforts. The mentor's name, photo and contact information is listed.</p>
Skill	Computer Skills
Learning Intervention	Online activities which help the learner with basic terminology, learn how to make effective use of common types of software, and develop skills in effective use of the internet.
Resource Description	<p><b>National Qualifications – Learning and Teaching Scotland</b></p> <p>Learning and Teaching Scotland (LTS) provides teaching and learning experiences for young people. The site offers support and guidance to help improve achievement for all.</p> <p>The site provides a section for Core Skills. Core skills are the broad skills that help people achieve success in many situations in life and work. They provide a basis for learning throughout life, for working effectively, and for handling problems.</p>
Tutorials	<p>Activities will help the learner to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ name the different parts of her IT system</li> <li>▪ start up the system</li> <li>▪ find her way to different programs</li> <li>▪ open a file</li> <li>▪ shut down the system.</li> </ul>
Benefits	The learner practices these skills in the activities and on their own. Activities are based on Windows XP; MAC based activities are also available.
Website/URL	<a href="http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/nq/coreskills/itforpc.asp">http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/nq/coreskills/itforpc.asp</a>
Teachers/Tutors	A tutor guide is available.



Skill	Computer Skills
Learning Intervention	A demonstration to guide the learner to develop computer use skills.
Resource Description	<b>BrainPOP</b> BrainPOP movies cover topics such as English, math, social studies, technology, arts and music, and science. Movies are hosted by an expressive orange robot named Moby and his teen companion Tim. Interactive quizzes for assessment and enrichment materials like experiments and creative activities supplement the movies. Designed to spark inherent curiosity, particularly of those in grades 3-12, the movies are visually appealing, cleverly written and speak in a voice they can relate to, but without talking down to them. All movies are closed-captioned.
Tutorials	Short animated movies review computer basics – hardware, how a mouse works, how the internet works, and more. The learner can review the material presented using the comprehension quiz.
Benefits	The movies provide a good review of fundamentals.
Website/URL	<a href="http://www.brainpop.com/english/readingandspeaking/publicspeaking/">http://www.brainpop.com/english/readingandspeaking/publicspeaking/</a> Can be accessed as a trial. <a href="http://www.brainpop.com/">http://www.brainpop.com/</a>
Teachers/Tutors	<b>NOTE:</b> A <i>five-day trial is available</i> ; a paid subscription is required. To subscribe as a teacher the cost is \$175. For teachers with 2-3 classroom computers, or for teachers using projectors or interactive whiteboards for class instruction. Allows 3 simultaneous users, with 15 logins maximum per day. Subscription is for 12 months.



The learner is also directed to community programs for literacy, numeracy and basic skills development. These include:

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#### Halton Catholic District School Board Literacy and Basic Skills

The Adult Learning Centre's Literacy and Basic Skill Program offers weekly classes for developmentally disabled adults interested in developing/enhancing their employment, further education and independence skills. Individual programs are developed based on student's goals. Small group setting provide for individual attention. This is a non-credit, part-time program. Day and evening classes are available.

<http://schools.hcdsb.org/alc/Pages/LiteracyandBasicSkills.aspx>

#### Oakville Public Library

The Oakville Literacy Council is a non-profit, volunteer organization dedicated to providing adults 19 years of age and over in the community with one-on-one tutoring in reading, writing and basic math. The service is FREE and confidential. Visit the website for further information. <http://www.oakvilleliteracy.ca>