Gathering to Learn

believe →

courage

hope

brave & afraid

Unlocking the barriers and opening doors
to Adult Foundational Learning

Community Learning Network

carya

Alberta Government

Gathering to Learn

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COMMUNITY ADULT LEARNING PROGRAM

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With support from the Government of Alberta

Alberta Government

Author's Note

Welcome to the *Gathering to Learn* Field Guide!

If you're holding this resource, you're probably curious about how to FIND, ATTRACT, ENGAGE, and RETAIN Adult Foundational Learners, and I'm so glad you are!

When this Field Guide was first created in 2020 as a professional development project for the CALP system, none of us could have imagined how much our work and our world would change in just a few short years.

Five years post-pandemic, what matters now as we find, attract, engage, and retain Adult Foundational Learners? To me, it feels like the world continues to move at warp speed, bringing to light new social, mental health, and economic challenges and concerns for the learners we serve.

In my own CALP context, which is an urban setting, the cost of living is skyrocketing! Rent, groceries, childcare, and household bills have all become more expensive. Sadly, this experience isn't unique. Communities across the province have been and continue to be deeply affected, adding to the multiple layers of barriers Adult Foundational Learners face.

As you read through the guide and come to the sections on FINDING and ATTRACTING learners, I encourage you to bring a lens of curiosity and compassion. I believe it is more important than ever to understand each learner's unique context, paying special attention to the challenges and barriers they may be facing. A kind, compassionate approach connects us to learners in a deeper way and allows us to meet them where they are.

Understanding these challenges may also inspire us to make changes or improvements to our programs. This may require us to shift, adapt, and respond in ways that better support learners' needs.

In the ENGAGE and RETAIN sections of this guide, you will see themes of connection, trust, belonging, and confidence, and how community, environment, and a safe, welcoming space are all important factors in the learner's experience. Over these past five years, many of us have adapted to new ways of delivering programs, such as online, hybrid, or by using tools like AI to inform and even help write curriculum. While these are all wonderful tools to support and meet the needs of today's learners, I want to emphasize that building authentic, human-to-human connections and relationships with learners still matters deeply. Being seen and understood can be pivotal to their learning experience.

I sincerely hope you enjoy the *Gathering to Learn* Field Guide and find it to be a useful, relevant tool for your unique CALP context. Please know I am cheering you on as you FIND, ATTRACT, ENGAGE, and RETAIN Adult Foundational Learners in your corner of Alberta!

Warmly,

Shauna Pivarnyik

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HOW TO USE THIS FIELD GUIDE

The Gathering to Learn Field Guide is a representation of our shared wisdom and experiences as a CALP community at this moment in time. It is both research and resource, designed to be relevant, engaging and practical.

The Field Guide is divided into several sections:

- o **Section One: Executive Summary**.
  A condensed snapshot of the project's overall purpose and learnings.

- o **Section Two: Focus and Framing**.
  A description of the why, what, who, how and where of the project.

- o **Section Three: Project Results and Themes**.
  The bulk of the field guide that takes readers through four keys stages of the learning pathway (FIND, ATTRACT, ENGAGE and RETAIN). Each stage has research, stories, quotes, resources and resource links tailored for that particular pathway.

- o **Section Four: Lessons Learned**.
  What we learned through the process and where the work wants to go.

- o **Section Five: Checklists.**
  This is a quick checklist for each of the learning pathways which can be used to help you assess or get ideas for that particular stage.

- o **Section Six: Appendices**.
  Includes the interview questions and consents used for Gathering to Learn

- o **Section Seven: What Led the Way: Book References.**
  A list of books that have influenced our thinking, our process and the direction of this project.

A Note on Language:

ADULT FOUNDATIONAL LEARNER: Throughout the field guide, you will notice that we rarely used the term "Adult Foundational Learner". This was done with intention and for ease. When we interviewed learners for this field guide, they referred to themselves as participants or group members. We wanted to honor their language and the way they saw themselves. We

also recognize that many CALP staff use different language when referring to Adult Foundational Learners. As such, we use the word 'participant' and 'learner' throughout the field guide to mean Adult Foundational Learner.

Additionally, the revised *CALP Guidelines 2020* now includes a definition of Adult Foundational Learner:

> Adult foundational learners often do not see themselves as learners. They often experience a chronically disrupted learning journey, and as a result, these individuals may not have a strong learning identity and/or the belief and confidence needed to engage and remain in learning.
>
> A number of factors may underline the self-perception of adult foundational learners, including undiagnosed or unaddressed learning difficulties, diagnosed learning disabilities, developmental disabilities, cognitive delays, trauma or violence, posttraumatic stress disorder, health/mental health issues, addictions, and/or previous negative experiences in formal education.
>
> Adult foundational learners may feel challenged advocating for themselves and/or their families, or finding the information and services they need to support their own learning.
>
> These individuals often experience systemic marginalization and stigmatization and may be fearful of further stigmatization. They may also experience a sense of failure associated with education and learning.
>
> Foundational skill levels often have a close connection with low income and poverty. Foundational learners may experience food insecurity, lack of transportation, lack of childminding, and lack of access to stable housing. National and international research has shown that there is a strong correlation between low literacy and the experience of poverty, and that improvement in literacy and other foundational skills closely correlate to increased economic and social opportunities. (p.24)

CALP: This acronym stands for Community Adult Learning Program. **CALPs** are grassroots community-based organizations funded by Alberta Advanced Education to provide, promote and increase access to foundational learning opportunities in areas such as:

- Adult Literacy
- Numeracy
- English Language Learning
- Basic Digital Skills
- Foundational Life Skills
- Community Capacity Building

CALP STAFF: When we use the term "CALP staff", we mean staff that are funded by Alberta Advanced Education who provide Community Adult Learning Programs. This could mean facilitators, tutors, support staff, coordinators, executive directors, managers, teachers, or volunteers.

CLN: This acronym stands for Community Learning Network. The **Community Learning Network** is a provincial non-profit association and registered Canadian charity. Their mission is to support Community Adult Learning Programs (CALPs) through leadership, resources, training and connections.

CALP PD System: This stands for CALP Professional Development system.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The *Gathering to Learn* project set out to explore the following question: "**What are the key ingredients that support Adult Foundational Learners to learn in community**?" More specifically, the project asked: "**What gets Adult Foundational Learners in the door, what keeps them there and what gets in the way?**

This professional development initiative was funded by the Community Learning Network and the Government of Alberta. The objective of the project was to increase knowledge and help shape the CALP PD system by taking a focused approach to an identified priority area, most specifically in the area, of *how Adult Foundational Learner contexts affect their learning.*

The project took place over 20 months, from April 2019 to November 2020, and had the following elements:

- o A **research and inquiry process** with CALP staff across the province as well as Adult Foundational Learners.
- o The **creation of the Gathering to Learn Field Guide** based on the research gained from our CALP community.
- o The **development of presentations** based on the collective knowledge that shaped the Gathering to Learn field guide.
- o **Instigating communities of practice** through shared experiences, knowledge building and connection.

The project examined four key stages of a learning pathway:

1. What's involved in **finding** a learning opportunity
2. Understanding what **attracts** potential learners to it
3. Unpacking the elements of becoming **engaged** in learning
4. Examining the key ingredients of **retaining** them

Each of these four stages investigated what barriers Adult Foundational Learners may encounter as well as what strategies, practices or elements made a difference for them. We

engaged the CALP community of staff and learners through different methods including individual and group interviews, focus groups, local presentations and workshops at Symposium over a 6-month period. We gained perspectives from all regions of the province. The field guide was informed by 115 perspectives of our CALP community (98 CALP staff and 17 Adult Foundational Learners).

Key highlights from the Gathering to Learn project include:

- How we gather matters.
- Relationship opens doors and is the pathway to all other doors.
- Learning together changes the way we see things and the way we see ourselves.
- Risk and courage are present in each stage of the learning pathway.

This Field Guide is a practical and relevant resource that highlights the knowledge gained through the research process and points to helpful strategies and resources for each stage of the learning pathway.

This guide is divided into the following sections:

- o **Focus and Framing:** A description of the **why, what, who, how and where** of the project. You will learn of the key questions that informed the project; how the project was structured and evolved; who led and participated in the project; and where contributions came from.

- o **Project Results and Themes:** This section makes up the bulk of the Field Guide and is designed to appeal to different learning styles. Through stories, reflection questions, data, and helpful resources we hope to shed light on the results of the project, tools, and strategies. The four thematic areas of the guide are:

  1. **Find:** This theme paints a picture of learners' contexts before they came to the program/workshop/course. It also illustrates the different ways that the CALP community finds their learners and what gets in the way.

  2. **Attract:** This theme explores what is happening in those first few classes or visits. It unpacks the elements that make a difference to learners as well as what their context is when they walk in the door. This section also showcases what strategies CALP staff use to reduce barriers and increase relationships.

3. **Engage:** This theme highlights what happens with the learner as they engage with the learning community and attend to their learning with some regularity. It offers tangible and relational suggestions based on CALP staff experiences of what makes a difference at this stage of learning.

4. **Retain**: This final section of themes showcases the key elements that keep learners coming back and what gets in the way of them coming back. It looks at the systems and practices the CALP community employs to promote welcome and return as well as systemic challenges CALP staff face in retaining learners.

o **Lessons Learned and Future Research Implications:** This section highlights lessons learned in the structure, methodology and process of the Gathering to Learn project. It also points to other potential research projects based on seed ideas discovered by the Gathering to Learn results.

o **What Led the Way - Book References:** A list of books that inform our work in community, with Adult Foundational Learners and the Gathering to Learn project.

> A mind that opens to a new idea never returns to its original size.

FOCUS & FRAMING

The "Idea"

The **Gathering to Learn** project began like many things do. An initial invitation sparked intrigue and possibility, which prompted conversations like "*I wonder about this….*", which led to brainstorming questions like "*What do you think about this…?*" and that ended with a tentative and hopeful "*Why not try*?"

The "spark" was an invitation to submit a concept paper and in later months of 2018, a full proposal to the Community Learning Network (CLN). Both submissions were expected to describe our concept idea and framework, as well as our methods and outcomes, and by doing so, illustrate how we would **contribute to the Professional Development of CALP staff.**

The inspiration for both the title of the project and its framework came from our own experiences, learnings and curiosities of working in community for years, and hosting different kinds of groups, in many different settings, to lots of different kinds of people.

> What you seek
>
> Is seeking you.
>
> Rumi

Specifically, we had been offering and delivering Foundational Life Skills courses for several years and were struck by **how we gather to learn influences *everything*.** For years we noticed, practiced, and adapted our own ways that we gathered to learn, often with mixed results. No two groups were ever the same, and each person walking in the door came with their own complexities, stories, strengths and courage.

We were curious about both the specific and general ways that we could set up the environment so that people walking in the door felt

safe, welcomed and primed to build community and relationships. We wanted to explore what elements made a difference for people, from the way that we interacted with them, to how we worked with any of the barriers they were facing, to what made them begin to open up to their own possibilities for learning, relationship and new identities. In short, we wanted to explore **what gets Adult Foundational Learners in the door, what keeps them there and what gets in the way?**

Finding ways to do this was not a solitary or generic exploration. Our CALP community is rich with diversity, breadth and depth. Our goal was to engage and hear from as many different perspectives as possible so that the Gathering to Learn project would be a compilation of wisdom and contexts from across the province, from rural to urban settings, from group facilitators to program supports and tutors. Our goal was to initiate conversations about the ways that we gather to learn and create a tangible resource of our collective voice and wisdom (which you are reading right now!).

In short, The **Gathering to Learn Project's intent was to:**

- o Build an understanding of Adult Foundational Learners and how individual contexts affect learning.
- o Adapt program strategies to meet specific needs of learners' individual contexts.

> We shall not cease from exploration
> and the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place
> for the first time.
>
> TS Eliot, 4 Quartets poem

We wanted to create and instigate:

1. **A RESOURCE**: An accessible, engaging, relevant and practical *Gathering to Learn* Field Guide in both print and electronic form, available to all CALP staff across the province.

2. **AN EXPERIENCE**: Deliver presentations and workshops based on our research, collective wisdom and contexts, unpacking the many elements of what opens and closes the doors to learning.

3. **AN ONGOING CONVERSATION**: Create and inspire conversations and communities of practice related to our ongoing exploration of what gets people in the door and what keeps them there.

The "How"

We began by looking at the different stages of a Learner's pathway and the unique elements of each of these stages. The interview questions and subsequent findings pivoted around four key stages of a learning journey:

1. **FIND:** How do participants find you or how do we (CALP staff) find them? What methods are used to find, recruit, and meet potential Adult Foundational Learners? What gets in the way?

2. **ATTRACT:** What are key elements of attracting participants to your learning opportunity? What are their needs? How do you work with these needs? How do you set up the environment and build relationship?

3. **ENGAGE:** How do you keep learners engaged? What signs do you see that point to their engagement? What makes them keep coming back? What's hard at this stage?

4. **RETAIN:** What do we know about the circumstances of people who stay engaged and complete a learning opportunity? What's changed? What are the setbacks people experience at this stage of learning?

Interview questions were designed for both CALP staff and Adult Foundational Learners. While they were reworked many times, for further clarity, simplicity and brevity, the exploration of these four themes remained constant. Detailed interview questions and consents can be found in Appendix A.

The "Who" & The "Where"

Our project team consisted of four people: two Facilitators, Shauna Pivarynik and Tanya Nichol, one Supervisor, Corinne Zimmerman, and one Manager, Bodil Masterson. We met regularly with CLN Regional Support staff, Emily Robinson Leclair, who provided invaluable support and insights. We also received support from the CLN's Communication Specialist, Odette Lloyd and CLN's Executive Director, Lisa Dickner.

We engaged the CALP community of staff and learners through different methods, inviting participation through the CALP portal as well as individual email contacts and face-to-face invitations. Because of our regular connections with CLN Regional Support staff, Emily Robinson Leclair, we were able to utilize her network connections to open doors for engagement in the project.

Interviews were conducted in various ways:
- face-to-face
- phone or ZOOM interviews with individuals or groups
- in person focus groups
- regional meetings
- a workshop at Calgary Learns
- Fall 2019 Symposium sessions

The interviewing phase of the project took place from April 2019 to October 2019.

Our goal was to have a large representative voice from the CALP community:

- 50 CALP staff in total, with 10 – 15 interviews coming from rural staff
- 30 Foundational Learners (10 from the neighbourhoods we work in Calgary, 10 from Calgary city at large, and 10 from across the province).

The Results

In total**, 115 people informed the Field Guide.** Ninety-eight CALP staff from across the province participated in the development of the Field Guide and all regions have been represented in the data collection.

There is a diversity of staff perspectives and voices represented in the field guide. We had the opportunity to hear from many different staff that intersect with Adult Foundational Learners. Tutors, Facilitators, Coordinators, Student Advisors, Supervisors, Managers, Executive Directors and Volunteers all contributed to the collective wisdom of the field guide.

Instructions for living a life:

Pay attention.

Be astonished.

Tell about it.

Mary Oliver,
"Sometimes" poem

In total, **17 learners were interviewed for Gathering to Learn,** 16 from Calgary and one from Three Hills. All learners were in different stages of adult foundational learning, including current learners and alumni. For additional context to this, please see the **Lessons Learned** section of the field guide.

We delivered three **presentations/workshops** based on our preliminary findings in the fall of 2019 (one workshop at Calgary Learns and two Meet-the- Experts sessions at Symposium 2019). Once our data collection phase of the project was complete in the late fall of 2019, the Gathering to Learn Field Guide began to take tangible shape in the spring of 2020. Further workshops were delivered from April to September of 2020. These workshops shared our collective knowledge and continued to add to the conversation of the ways we gather to learn.

TIMELINE

April 2019 -------------- Oct 2019   Nov 2019 - May 2020   June –Sept 2020   Nov 2020

Project begins   Interviews & Presentations   Field Guide Creation   Presentations   Field Guide Distributed

The following sections of the field guide are compilations of our journey as a project team and as fellow CALP staff who were inspired by the collective wisdom our larger CALP community. **Our hope is that you find your voice represented in these pages and that you are inspired by the rich perspectives and stories of others.**

FIND

It can be a long and winding path between **thinking about change and actually making it**. Often, there are cues and signals that whisper, knock or demand to be heard. Internally, we may feel discomfort, like a nagging feeling that we need to do something different. We may have subtle but persistent thoughts that it's time to make a change. We may feel an inexplicable pull or need to radically alter our day-to-day lives.

Externally, we may stumble across information that we didn't expect to find but seems to be exactly what we are looking for. We may take the path of gathering all kinds of information in efforts to convince ourselves of what's right for our lives at this time. We may be listening to the compassionate encouragement of supportive people in our lives or we may be responding to the distress of our lives that is forcing our hand.

Whatever the pathway is to making change, just thinking about making a change is an act of courage.

One of the areas that the *Gathering to Learn* project explores is what's involved in participants finding your door. This is that all important phase of the learning path that happens <u>even before</u> the formal learning starts. It involves understanding the best methods to reach people to provide them with the right information about what you are offering and how it might benefit their lives. It's about being aware of the little things that are actually the BIG things. Things like doing 'intake' over a cup of coffee/tea, being in the right place at the right time and communicating with simple language. It's also about being attentive to the lived realities of

potential learners, accessing our compassion for the challenges they are so resiliently facing, and listening to their storylines that are playing a major role in how they see themselves.

> *"I just wanted something different for my life. I was looking to connect with others and get out of the house but I felt alone and had no support."*
>
> Participant

To that end, one of the questions that we asked our CALP community was "**How do you find participants? How do they find you?**" In looking at the most common themes related to finding your participants, three themes emerged:

- **Personal Connections,**
- **Getting the Word Out There, and**
- **Ease of Access.**

Personal Connections

Author and Activist, Glennon Doyle says: *The most revolutionary thing you can do is introduce people to each other.* Our connections are often the entry point to brand new worlds. Word of Mouth is one of the main ways that participants find your door – it is that simple "*someone just told me about...*" interaction that is both planned and unplanned. People find you through friends and family, perhaps by a family member or friend having attended something you offer or a natural support encouraging them to check out your program or agency.

> *We just approach people at these events and engage them in conversation. Our passion shines through.*
>
> CALP Staff

Referrals from other students or referrals from community partners are other ways people find their way to you. Community partners come from many different places, such as:

- o Food banks, libraries, community associations
- o Resource centers such as Parent Link centers
- o Government agencies like Alberta Works, social workers
- o Health agencies like mental health, public health nurses
- o Local colleges, schools and churches
- o Boards
- o 211 (*this number is not available in all areas. Larger centers and cities that do have this resource will find updated and current information)

Personal connections are also about <u>CALP staff going directly to people</u> and places. This means being IN community and being VISIBLE. Examples of this include going to local employers, supportive living spaces, consulting with justice partners, attending other agency staff meetings or volunteering at other organizations. We also learned that having an Indigenous Learner

Liaison or key contact from within your local Indigenous community is helpful in making connections.

Voices from the Field!

We started a conversation with one family we spoke to at an event. The grandparents were pushing a stroller so it was easy to get into a conversation with them. At this time, their single parent daughter was not with them. We had seen them walking around town several times. We had a real easy conversation and got into talking about the event, the town and where we were located and what we did. We spoke about our family literacy program that they could bring their grandchild to.

Prior to coming, they visited our location a few times for more conversation. Their single parent daughter who lived with them also came. More conversation led them to finally attend our family literacy program. They visited our office more often, building trust with us. That is the most important thing. They needed to have a relationship and trust in order to keep coming. They came with documents and questions they needed assistance with. The daughter who had left school early wanted to get her GED. She was very foundational so we provided her with a tutor to improve her skills.

The little girl in the stroller is now going into grade 1. They still come in when they need help. This story is like so many of our long-term participants.

Getting the Word Out There!

People find their way to you because what you put out there is easy to understand, in places they go to, and in ways they access their world. Plain language posters communicate your opportunities in straightforward, easy to understand ways. Think about strategic locations for your information: laundromats, convenience stores, supermarkets, libraries and farmer's

markets are key places where potential participants may find out about you. Roadside signs like the bolded, moveable advertising signs are also helpful.

Go digital! Don't be afraid to use social media! CALP communities get the word out though their websites, promo videos, local paper, radio and newsletters. Social media like Facebook, Instagram and Twitter are also used. In the words of one CALP staff: "*Facebook has become one of our most successful communication platforms. We find people and stay connected with people through Facebook. For AFLs Facebook is perfect! It's visually appealing, can be accessed anytime/anywhere, and it's not text heavy….can be read in snippets*."

Ease of Access

How simple is it for people to find you, get in touch with you or speak with a real person when they call? Having a key contact for your group, workshop or course is greatly valued by learners, and even more so when that person is accessible.
Do you have an intake number with a person attached to it? What ease does the participant experience when they call that number?

Having a work cell phone encourages CALP staff to be free to leave the office. A cell phone works great too, because learners can text questions and information to it when they may not have enough data or a large enough phone plan to communicate via other means! Texting is also an often preferred way for participants to communicate.

Helpful to Remember:

"The biggest barrier could be the intake. I always start with a cup of coffee/tea."

CALP Staff

Face to face connections also help with ease of access.
Home visits or meeting in the community like a local coffee/tea shop, park or library are some possible options. These are some of the strategies used across the province by different CALP staff to make it easier for people to take that first step.

Another way that you can make it easier for people to find you is being intentional about location. You've probably heard the phrase "**location, location, location!**" Our conversations

with both learners and CALP staff confirmed this to be true. Spend some time thinking about location for your program. Ask yourself, "where would the best spot be?" while considering the strategies below. Visible, easily accessible, non-intimidating locations for learning help potential participants take that first courageous step in the door.

The Biggest Payoffs in Finding Participants!

✓ **Be Visible:** Cultivate a presence in places where potential learners may go! Think laundromats, grocery stores, coffee/tea shops, libraries! Attend events in the community like resource fairs or community dinners. Your presence means more than a poster!

✓ **Strategic location, strategic time**: Offer different locations, offer a variety of classes, at different times. Give potential participants options and ease by being accessible, in places they can get to, when they can get to you.

✓ **Personal contact:** Face to face. Have that cup of coffee/tea at Tim Hortons! Meet at someone's home, the library, a local park. These first face to face touchpoints are the building blocks of relationship.

✓ **Word of mouth**: Have ways for past participants or current participants to tell others about you. Sometimes this means a poster, business card or plain language pamphlet. Sometimes it's about your social media presence and being a bridge for people that way. Make it easy for them to try your learning opportunity out with their friend!

✓ **Have a gateway or bridge:** Draw people in with things that are of interest to them. Offer something for children (a gateway to the parents). Offer something creative like journaling, clay making, crafts (a bridge to relationship building). While these activities are not CALP funded they may be an option through alternative funding sources, donors, or volunteers.

✓ **Develop specific partnerships** that can offer wrap around supports/resources for potential learners. Share space and services where people come for a variety of reasons.

Reaching the Soft Voices and the Hard to Reach

Soft voices in community are those folks who are isolated for a variety of reasons. Isolation is sometimes literal – a person rarely leaves the house or has very few supports in their lives. Isolation can be relational: you may have people in your life, but they are not supportive and healthy. It may also be a state of mind – the person may have some visibility in the community but lacks supportive connections and being known and seen.

People might be isolated by virtue of their circumstances: health issues, single parenthood, domestic violence, caregiving, addictions, trauma, lack of transportation and geographical locations are just a few of the circumstances that make it difficult for a person to connect to community life and learning opportunities. They might be isolated because of the way they view or experience life. Mental health issues including anxiety and depression, low self-esteem, lack of confidence and lack of trust are a few of the inner challenges that isolated people face.

Our CALP community has specific strategies to reach the softer voices of community, all heavily related to **building relationship and trust**, and **going to people**. All of these strategies take time on the front end. Just having a cup of coffee/tea with people for the sake of having a cup of coffee/tea goes a long way (leaving the paperwork behind!). It is the power of conversation, time and a focus on relationship (not program) that helps to build trust.

> I'd finally come to understand what it had been: a yearning for a way out, when actually what I had wanted to find was a way in.
>
> Cheryl Strayed, Author of WILD

Going to them is another key way to reach people that are isolated. Giving the message that "we'll come to you" is critical as it conveys the emotional compassion of meeting people where they are at. Tangible approaches like door - knocking and attending local community dinners and events are ways to build a bridge between isolation and connection.

What Gets in the Way? (Participant Barriers and Challenges)

CALP staff were asked what things could be challenging for potential participants as they are trying to find you. There were several barriers identified that help us understand Foundational Learner contexts.

Lack of Ease/Accessibility

Simply getting to you can be a challenge. The location of the learning opportunity itself is limiting. The building can be intimidating. There are no busses or taxis to get there. There are limited office times and hours.

Another thing that acts as a barrier to learners is the way information is conveyed. There may be too many choices for people and this makes it confusing to the public. The language of the material is confusing – information is written without an understanding of plain language or consideration of the audience. The organization itself is hard to navigate – there isn't a point person, the website is confusing or incomplete, and the intake process is challenging.

Something that may be both a barrier or not is on-line learning and digital learning platforms. At the time of this field guide's publication (September 2020), the world was experiencing a pandemic that changed how we lived our lives. Many CALP's had to pivot from delivering learning opportunities in a community setting face to face to offering learning opportunities on-line. Participants that lacked the technology skills, Wi-Fi, and access to technology experienced great challenges with accessibility. On the other hand, digital and on-line learning provided solutions for some, given the timing, convenience and not having to find childminding or transportation.

> **TEST THIS OUT!**
>
> Walk into your space like you were coming into it for the first time. What does it feel like? What do you see? Experience?
>
> For more information on how accessible your opportunity is, see the **Needs Assessment** section in the FIND toolkit that follow this section. Check out the **Foundational Learning Checklist** link.

Just Getting There

Participants struggle with many aspects of simply getting to you. Not having a car is limiting. Getting to your location on time is hard. Transportation costs, such as having to pay for parking, bus tickets, a taxi or gas are all barriers learners face in the midst of their desire to go to a program. Sometimes people have to take multiple busses to get to an appointment or to your location or they are coming from work. There may not be a transportation system or taxis in their community, or they may not have the money to pay for gas. Some participants rely on a spouse for

transportation, who may get called away for work or be working remotely with the family's only vehicle. Not having a back-up support network to assist with alternative rides is also a challenge for some.

Sometimes the geographical location is a factor. Winter roads can be a challenge. We learned from our rural CALP community that some CALPs cover a very large geographical area and the location of the learning opportunity is very far for participants to go.

> Belonging is the innate human desire to be part of something larger than us. Because this yearning is so primal, we often try to acquire it by fitting in and by seeking approval, which are not only hollow substitutes for belonging, but often barriers to it. Because true belonging only happens when we present our authentic, imperfect selves to the world, our sense of belonging can never be greater than our level of self-acceptance.
>
> Brené Brown
> Daring Greatly, p. 145

Participant Stories and Context

While the above barriers relate to tangible issues such as location, language and transportation, learners also have the additional challenges within themselves and their lives that make it difficult to find you. Low self-esteem, uncertainty, and social anxiety create barriers for a potential participant to access your support. Mental health such as anxiety and depression make it difficult to even get out the door.

Sometimes, there are issues with past experiences with learning that act as barriers for learners. People may have triggers related to their abilities and learning, they may fear failure or not even consider that they could have a different experience. Indigenous learners can have unique and historically traumatic experiences and contexts with education.

Additionally, there might be issues related to basic needs not being met, and navigating life while trying to manage food and housing needs means that food and housing needs must come first. People may struggle with homelessness, addictions and a chaotic or unstable home life. All of these contexts can act as barriers to someone being open to or having the means to explore further skill building and learning.

> *If we think we are fragile and broken, we will live a fragile and broken life.*
> *If we believe we are strong and wise, we will live with enthusiasm and courage.*
> *The way we name ourselves colours the way we live.*
> *Who we are is in our own eyes.*
> *We must be careful how we name ourselves.*
> Wayne Muller

FIND TOOLKIT

In addition to the rich strategies our CALP community offers in terms of people finding their way to you, increasing our knowledge and practices in the following areas can also be of help. This toolkit gives you a "taste" of the concept or idea. The links and resources follow each topic in the toolkit.

Plain Language:
Knowing your key audience—who you are writing to—is vital to the process of using Plain Language. Plain Language, in the form of written messages, involves a communication style that is easy to understand and able to engage your audience on its first reading. Concepts and ideas should be well organized and thought out. Language should be familiar and recognizable to your key audience. Draw your reader's attention to important or main points by breaking up the reading into small sections while using bold fonts, symbols, pictures, and colour. Use short sentences and personal pronouns—your audience wants to be talked to, not at.

Resources for Plain Language:
- Plain Language: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C_8RzU6JGQ0

- Plain Language resources: https://carleton.ca/communityfirst/wp-content/uploads/Plain-Language-Workshop-Resource-List.pdf

- Plain Language definitions: https://www.plainlanguage.gov/about/definitions/

- Plain Language checklist: https://www.plainlanguage.gov/resources/checklists/checklist/

- Plain English at a glance: https://www.plainlanguage.gov/resources/articles/at-a-glance/

Needs Assessments:
Needs Assessments can take many forms – think of it as a bit of a treasure hunt! In simple terms, a needs assessment is a way to look at your group, program, neighbourhood,

organization or community from a place of trying to figure out what is working and what isn't. What do we have? What are we lacking? Who are we reaching? What will point the way for us to figure this out? There are lots of places to explore! Some cities, towns or communities have reports right on their websites. For example, the City of Calgary has "*Indices of Well Being*". This report looks at specific neighbourhoods in Calgary and examines quality of life in various areas, such as physical well-being, social well-being and economic well-being. Alberta Health Services has a link where you can enter your postal code and community stats are illustrated (see below for link).

<mark>Resources for Needs Assessment:</mark>

- Needs Assessment: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7DBvdg4Zi8A

- What is Needs Assessment: http://compositionawebb.pbworks.com/f/0787975257.pdf

- How to conduct a training Needs Assessment: https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/tools-and-samples/how-to-guides/pages/conduct-training-needs-assessment.aspx

- Calgary Learns, Needs Assessment Report: https://www.calgarylearns.com/wp-content/uploads/Calgary-Learns-Needs-Assessment_Jan-2020.pdf

- City of Calgary Indices of Well-Being: https://www.calgary.ca/CSPS/CNS/Pages/Research-and-strategy/Indices-of-Community-Well-Being-for-Calgary-Community-Districts.aspx

- Alberta Health Services: https://albertahealthycommunities.healthiertogether.ca Choose the "resources" tab, then click "Alberta Community Health Dashboard

- Foundational Learning Checklist: https://www.calgarylearns.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/IFL-project-apr2012.pdf

- CALP Portal's Learner Support Services eLearning. There are many relevant connections to 'Finding Learners' including a section Supporting Barriered Learners: https://calp.ca/search/?search=Learner+Support+Services+e+learning

Relationship Building:

Humans are social beings. We all need social connection to improve and sustain both mental and physical health. People that are engaged in community tend to live longer, feel less stressed, and experience a higher quality of life than those who are isolated.

Active listening, communication, trust, mutual respect, honesty, and vulnerability are all vital ingredients in building and maintaining relationships. This requires mindful attention to one another. Technological devices, such as cell phones and computers, can be put aside during conversation to invite a genuine connection between two persons. This connection can fuel encouragement, build trust, inspire action, and provide someone with a deep sense of being "heard" and understood. Validation and connection are powerful sources of strength and motivation and they are created in relationship.

Resources for Relationship Building:
- Why personal relationships are important: https://www.takingcharge.csh.umn.edu/why-personal-relationships-are-important

- What is relationship building all about: https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/leadership/leadership-functions/build-sustain-relationships/main

- 8 Tips to developing positive relationships: https://trainingmag.com/content/8-tips-developing-positive-relationships/

- 12 Ideas to build positive relationships: https://barbarabray.net/2018/03/02/12-ideas-to-build-positive-relationships/

- Healthy relationships lead to better lives: http://thenationshealth.aphapublications.org/content/41/2/20

Motivation and Tipping the Decisional Balance:

To motivate is to move or inspire a person to act or set a goal. Negative reinforcements such as threat, punishment, and intimidation are not effective ways to inspire or encourage change. In order for an individual to successfully motivate or adjust behaviour, it is important to set SMART goals: specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time bound goals. Creating social incentives (highlighting what other people are doing, and doing well), giving oneself immediate rewards, and monitoring progress (making sure to highlight the progress, not the decline of the actions, as the brain does not process negative information about the future effectively) establishes an environment where the brain retains a sense of control which drives behavioural change.

Resources for Motivation and Tipping the Decisional Balance:

- Tali Sharot Ted Talk: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xp0O2vi8DX4

- Fight through this: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aSZLwBViCcM

- 15 Ways to motivate yourself and others: https://time.com/4262774/motivation-ways/

- Motivate yourself: https://www.positivityblog.com/motivate-yourself/

- SMART Goals: https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/smart-goals.htm

Stages of Change: (Also called the Transtheoretical Model)

The Stages of Change refers to a model of six phases that an individual moves through as he or she modifies behaviour. These stages take an individual from a time when he or she is unaware that the behaviour is damaging (precontemplation), to questioning whether the behaviour is problematic (contemplation), to recognizing the behaviour as problematic and wanting to change it (determination), to taking small steps and believing that he or she can achieve behavioural change, to finally maintaining a healthier lifestyle. Understanding what stage a learner may be at can help staff move at the pace of the learner and offer relevant information for whatever stage they are at.
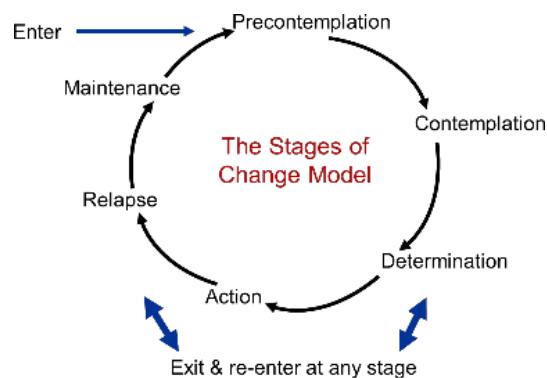
Resources for the Stages of Change:

- Transtheoretical Model: http://sphweb.bumc.bu.edu/otlt/MPH-Modules/SB/BehaviouralChangeTheories/BehaviouralChangeTheories6.html#headingta glink_1

- Stages of Change: https://psychcentral.com/lib/stages-of-change/

Loneliness:

Loneliness is a huge challenge in society. Experiencing loneliness impacts our mental health and our physical health. Chronic loneliness can result in depression, cardiovascular disease, premature aging, obesity, insomnia, poor decision making, and even death.

The presence of loneliness can be hard to detect sometimes. For instance, a person can be surrounded by people and befriended by hundreds on social media platforms, but still feel lonely. Though technological advances have increased our number of connections as well as the speed and distance which we can connect with others, the quality of the connection may have decreased. Having hundreds of "friends" on Facebook and hundreds of followers on Instagram, Snapchat, and/or Twitter implies connection, when in reality the connection is nothing more than a number on a screen. In fact, it has been suggested that social media may actually be a driving force in the pandemic notion of loneliness. Building and establishing meaningful in-person relationships is key to combatting feelings of loneliness.

Resources for Loneliness:
- Book: Christakis, N. & Fowler, J. (2009). *Connected: how your friends' friends' friends affect everything you feel, think and do.* New York: Back Bay Books.

- Nicholas Christakis Ted Talk: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2U-tOghblfE

- John Cacioppo Ted Talk, The Lethality of Loneliness: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_0hxl03JoA0

- The Health Consequences of Loneliness: https://www.verywellmind.com/loneliness-causes-effects-and-treatments-2795749

- You Don't Have to be Alone: https://www.besthealthmag.ca/best-you/mental-health/beat-loneliness/

ATTRACT

People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did,

but people will never forget how you made them feel.

Maya Angelou

There is an art to gathering. If you have ever hosted a family dinner, a birthday party, a meeting or a family reunion, you know that how we gather matters. This is no different for a learning environment, class, or workshop. Where you meet, who attends, what you do, and how you do it are major factors in gathering well. And yet sometimes, the most important consideration to gather gets overlooked – the WHY.

Priya Parker, author of *The Art of Gathering* begins her book with the line "*The way we gather matters*."[1] For a gathering to shape, influence and

> *90% of what makes a gathering successful is put in place beforehand.*
>
> **Priya Parker**

inspire, it needs to have a purpose, not simply be a category such as an "intake meeting", "orientation night" or "class". Your purpose helps you determine all the details, big and small and helps you refine choices related to what you want people to feel, do, learn and experience. The **why** behind our gathering sets the stage for all the other

> *"This is the important thing – they need to have a relationship and trust to keep coming."*
>
> CALP Staff

details; details like an opportunity to create an alternate world. For Adult Foundational Learners, the alternative world we create from those first few interactions, meetings, or classes sets the stage for that powerful **why**. It can be the reason people come back, begin again, start believing in their abilities, and change their educational stories.

One of the key reasons in why we gather and hope to attract Adult Foundational Learners is to build trust and relationship. Relationship building has a significant influence at this stage of a learner's path: the human to human connection they make in those first initial gatherings is often the catalyst for changes in beliefs, educational stories, and identity.

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[1] Parker, P. (2018). *The art of gathering*. New York: Riverhead Books.

It's all in the details: the warm welcome, the atmosphere of the room, the food, the coffee/tea and the way the room is set up communicates care from that first step into the room. The details include the way staff take an interest in each person, taking the time to understand what got the participants there and what might keep them away. It's the recognition that the learning community is built through sharing stories, building connections, and creating a safe place for people to authentically be themselves.

> ## The Why and the Way we gather matters.

Strategies to Attract Learners

The *Gathering to Learn* project wanted to understand what's involved in those first initial sessions and the way CALP learning experiences are planned and shaped. We asked our CALP community: What made those first few classes or meetings places that learners wanted to go? What do CALP staff do that encourages people to try? What are the ways that relationships are built? What are the things that can hold learners back at this stage?

In looking at the most common ways we gather that attracts participants to keep coming back, four themes stood out:

- **Setting up the Environment**
- **The Facilitator/Learner Relationship**
- **The Learning Setting**
- **Celebrating Success**

Setting up the Environment

How we set up the physical and energetic environment is one of the key elements to attracting participants to the learning community. Peter Block, an influential author and community development consultant, states: "*The room has importance beyond its functionality. Every room we occupy serves as a metaphor for the larger community we want to create. This is true socially and also physically. The room is the visible expression of today's version of the future.*"[2]

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[2] Block, P. (2008). *Community: The structure of belonging*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler (p. 152)

Some of the ways our CALP community sets up the physical space include things like having books and magazines available in the reception area, as well as coffee/tea/tea and snacks. A welcoming, safe, respectful space is communicated through Land Acknowledgement signage and non-gender washrooms. Orientation nights are enhanced with food and attention to details like lighting, table cloths and being family friendly. Those first few sessions communicate welcome to different learning styles by having fidget tools on tables, teaching in a circle, and having sensitivity to lighting and time. Barriers are removed through free parking, bus tickets and childminding as well as offering options for connection (open on evenings or having spontaneous hours, like a drop in). For rural communities, barriers can be removed by providing gas cards, taxi chits or encouraging carpooling. Meeting at a location that is accessible to the participant is a consideration as well.

> *I felt welcomed and encouraged. They made accommodations for me. The teachers were approachable and available. There were evening classes. Teachers understood even when my life was a mess!*
>
> *Participant*

CALP Staff/Learner Relationship

Another way that CALP staff attract participants to try their program or courses is through the way they build relationship. We heard many different versions of the ways that CALP staff build connection *human being to human being*, instead of the traditional teacher to student power relationship. The way they do this varies and yet the essence of connection is built on curiosity, sharing and encouragement. Stories are exchanged between staff and learners and the learners themselves. Space and attention is given for participants to share their feelings, interests, hopes and fears for the journey ahead. Here are some perspectives from CALP staff on the ways they build relationship.

> I am a teacher. That means I shine a light here and hold a mirror there. It means I walk in wonder and sit in truth. It means I love stories and follow where they lead…I'm a teacher because I believe that the obstacle is there to ignite the gifts. And so I devote myself to how and not why.
>
> Mark Nepo,
> The Life You're Given, p. 185

- o *"We cannot be all things to them, "the fixer uppers", however, we can acknowledge every circumstance they might be going through."*

- o *"No matter what you are feeling, you are welcome."*

- o *"Sometimes we lead people with vision boards, asking them what excites them or what lights them up. Many of them have never thought about this before or believed that their dreams were possible."*

- o *"I take a very loving, kind, non-intrusive approach. Where appropriate I share my own experiences as a way to build relationship with the learners and show them that struggles are a part of life and we can still carry on*."

The Learning Setting

This element of attracting learners details the specifics of those first few sessions. The learning setting, according to our CALP community, involves not only how the room is set up or the structure of the lesson, but also about how it is done. One of the key pieces of feedback that was shared was to **find ways to distance your learning environment from a traditional learning setting**, as this can be a trigger for some of your participants. Create a warm, welcoming learning space! Teach in a circle, a horse-shoe or do away with tables altogether. Staff can sit with the participants, instead of the front of the room. Include coffee/tea/tea and snacks, art on the walls, dimmable lighting, lamps, fidget tools, and comfortable seating that fits all sizes of adults. Anticipate needs for food, childminding and transportation and make them visible and accessible.

Things that are a MUST: coffee/tea & snacks. People cannot learn when they are hungry.

CALP Staff

The learning setting is also enhanced by paying attention to what is done and what is said. CALP staff model belief in participants through their language and tone – an encouraging "You can!" or "You've got this!" goes a long way in helping participants make that internal shift of believing in themselves. Learning that is fun, relevant and interesting to them also has an impact. We learned in one of our interviews of how a math tutor changed his lesson plans to all sports language and stories as a way to connect with a participant that was an avid sports fan.

Taking the time to really listen to the learner is so important. The value of taking the time to get to know the learner and what's important to them can't be underestimated.

CALP Staff

The other piece about the learning setting is **what is available to the learner outside the setting**. Some CALPs, for example, provide options for one-to-one support, with flexible hours and in flexible settings. We also learned that some CALPs embrace a 'wrap-around' model, meaning they are strategically located or in relationship with other local resources and supports. These resources can help the learner in many areas of their lives and reduce the

barriers some learners may experience related to food stability, housing, utility payments and health.

<u>Celebrating Success</u>

One of the inspiring messages we heard from CALP staff was to celebrate early successes right away. Learners benefit from hearing positive, life affirming messages about their abilities, actions and changes very early on in the journey. While the big goal may be for the learner to gain their GED for example, celebrating the early successes of perhaps coming to class on time or two weeks in a row is valuable. One CALP staff said, "*Start at the level they experience success*". To one learner this may mean simply speaking up in class; to another it may be handing in their first writing assignment. Weaving together all the gems of relational knowledge you gained by getting to know their interests and hopes helps make recognition of their success personal and meaningful.

Anytime we try something new, take a risk, or confront our fears, we straddle an emotional tightrope of being "Brave and Afraid". There is a certain amount of courage, hope and grit we are accessing to step out of our familiar routines and explore new possibilities for ourselves. Accompanying us on these steps are our fears, our beliefs about ourselves and the realities/complexities of our lives. For Adult Foundational Learners, it is no different. When participants are in the stage of 'trying something out', such as your course or learning opportunity, their internal script and beliefs, community pressures and realms of life complexities are right there with them.

What Gets in the Way? (Participant Barriers and Challenges)

> *Many learners have had negative experiences with learning and we try hard to make sure this doesn't reoccur. We don't want to be another piece that adds to their "negative story". We are trying to help them change their story.*
>
> CALP Staff

<u>Internal Scripts and Beliefs</u>

A learner's belief and identity are major influences in this vulnerable stage of their learning journey. They are often still lacking confidence and trust in themselves, you, their abilities and the learning experience itself. One of the CALP staff we interviewed said, "*They are looking to confirm their negative bias of themselves; the slightest thing can sabotage.*" Many come to this stage of the learning with fear, shame and old stories of their educational

journey. Many have never experienced a positive learning community or community in general, and consequently, struggle to find belonging and their place. It's hard for them to trust and it's hard to for them believe. One CALP staff's perspective of how a learner thinks at this stage was, *"I don't want to"* which is really *"I don't think I can"*.

Community Pressures

In addition to the internal pressures and dialogue, learners may experience are also the external cultural and community pressures they may feel. Some learners are not coming to your learning experience of their own will, but are being mandated to come by the justice or other government systems. Some are coming to your learning experience and risking their anonymity; this is especially true in our rural and small town CALPs. People feel various kinds of stigma from ageism, to ethnicity, to family history. There are insecurities about what people will think of them; if they become involved, and even if they don't (if they lack supports). Something as unpredictable as the weather can be a major external factor that influences them at this stage.

Realms of Life

The most significant and complex barrier for Adult Foundational Learners at this stage is what we are calling "The Realms of Life". Learners experience a wide range of challenges related to **basic needs** such as finances, transportation, childminding and food security. **Family life** is impacted by a change in routine and many participants experience childminding issues (i.e. lack of dependable childminding). Some are dealing with work and family schedules; some are dealing with a chaotic home life that makes it difficult to get out of the house. Some are the primary caregiver in their home and are often pulled back into that role. Some are experiencing the serious and complex issues of domestic violence and mental health.

Employment is another area that adds complications to a learner's ability to continue to attend. Some learners are pressured to get back to work instead of attending a course and some are forced to find work for financial reasons, instead of taking a course. Job schedules can change suddenly and now taking classes during the day or night are no longer an option. Participants may have been secretive about taking courses or classes and are no longer able to keep both fronts going.

A learner's health can also impact their ability to get into the routine of going to a class or learning opportunity. Some participants struggle with a physical illness that trumps all other commitments. Some have medical appointments for themselves or family members that take priority. Others are struggling with energy. As one CALP staff said, "*They may have the time but they don't have the energy*." Trauma and mental health issues also come into play, and are often triggered by the anxiety and/or memory of learning experiences.

Lastly, **the learner's challenges with learning** can act as a barrier at this stage of the journey. For some, it's hard for them to trust teachers, classes, other students and the learning experience in general - they felt too beaten down by the educational system. Challenges may

be tangible things like the timing or location of the course doesn't work for them. There may be a lack of tutors available to support them. They may have learning differences that are accurate or inaccurate that they carry from the past. They may in a family situation or caregiver situation where everyone else's learning comes first and their own comes last.

The realms and complexities of a learner's life are vast and run deep, as are the internal and external pressures. Thankfully, CALP staff have this understanding and have developed strategies to work with them!

What Makes a Way? (CALP Strategies to Address Barriers and Challenges)

CALP staff shared three main strategies they use to decrease barriers or address barriers for learners.

- o **Intentional Strategies for the Learning Environment**
- o **Intentional Strategies to Build Relationship**
- o **Intentional Strategies to Support Learners**

> There was friendliness. It made me feel at home. I learned about my strengths. There was childminding.
>
> Participant

Intentional Strategies for the Learning Environment:
One of the biggest ways to open doors for learners is for programs to be affordable and to offer free childminding. The CALP grant can be used to reduce financial barriers in three main areas: 1) reduce or waive fees for learning opportunities when a financial barrier exists, 2) provide on-site-childminding, and 3) cover costs for transportation. Having flexible hours for courses and learning is also key. Being open on evenings or offering weekend options gives learners more choice and access.

> *I often think of them as a precious gem. They need such special care and attention. I don't want this experience to become just another negative experience for them*.
>
> CALP Staff

The way the learning environment is structured is also intentional. Providing warmth and welcome, food, coffee/tea, and snacks are all ways to communicate care in tangible ways. Being sensitive to learners' needs is also critical; this includes giving lots of breaks and something called "*Shoulder-Time*" – being present for learners

before and after the formal learning time. This time is often when connections are deepened and more knowledge about the learner's circumstances are gained.

Intentional Strategies to Build Relationship:

Some of the ways we can do this is by being generous with our assumptions of the learner. One CALP staff said: "*I try to never assume. We don't know what's going on for them, what might be happening in their lives. A whole bunch of things could be impacting their ability to learn or even show up*".

Modelling friendship and relationship building is critical – one of the most repeated statements we heard throughout the research was about how important it is to present yourself as a human being, not just a facilitator. One CALP staff said: "*Showing your own vulnerability or experience creates trust and comfort*". Added to that is an attitude of curiosity: asking the learner where they want go or what they want to do builds shared understanding of their needs and contexts.

Another intentional strategy to build relationship is to bring worthiness into the conversation. As identified earlier, many learners are straddling old beliefs and new possibilities during this time. Reinforcing the message that they are worthy of where they want to go can help shape their internal dialogue into new patterns. A CALP staff noted that sometimes they just need to be told it's okay for them do this at this stage in their lives.

> Wholehearted living is about engaging in our lives from a place of worthiness. It means cultivating the courage, compassion and connection to wake up in the morning and think no matter what gets done and how much is left undone, I am enough. It's going to bed at night thinking, yes, I am imperfect and vulnerable and sometimes afraid, but that doesn't change the truth that I am also brave and worthy of love and belonging.
>
> Brené Brown, (2016), p.10

Intentional Strategies to Support Learners:

One could think of this as the "behind the scenes" or the tangible, instrumental encouragement a program can provide. This could look like providing supplies for the class such as books or a backpack. It might be providing financial help, like waiving fees or paying for mileage. It could be facilitating supportive referrals with local partners such as the local food bank, mental health, the library, local employers or resource centers.

This approach also includes the hiring practices of CALP staff. Being sensitive to the needs of the learner and the learning community is conveyed by who is hired, the type of people that occupy positions and the attitudes of the facilitators. We learned through our interviews that it's important to hire for the community, such as hiring Indigenous teachers. We heard again that the attitude of the facilitator is so critical – presenting oneself as a human being, with person-centered actions, authenticity and vulnerability helps strengthen connections in the learning community you are trying to create.

> It's more than a backpack. It's the message that someone cares about them and someone's rooting for them.
>
> CALP Staff

Creating a social place for learners is also an intentional strategy that supports learners. Setting up and establishing the classroom as a community where people can be themselves, feel safe and belong is of great value to learners. In their words:

o *They remember my name and say thank you for coming. They are happy that I am there. It does not feel like a clique – I am not an outsider.*
o *It's a place where I can be myself. I feel confident in coming to the group.*
o *I met people I could relate to.*
o *I became more comfortable and secure. The class is like family – these are my friends.*

ATTRACT TOOLKIT

If you are wanting to learn more about how to attract Adult Foundational Learners to your program, these additional resources may be of specific interest to you. These resources follow the main themes that CALP staff shared for this stage of the learning journey. This toolkit gives you a "taste" of the concept or idea. The links and resources follow each topic in the toolkit.

The Power of Environment:

It's more than the room! Creating an environment is about finding tangible and relational ways to convey "Come on in!", "You are welcome here!", and "We are so glad you came!" This is not about having or not having an aesthetically beautiful space, but more about the energy and atmosphere you can create using what's available to you. It's about being resourceful and using your own energy to evoke invitation, warmth and welcome.

Place and space, while not new concepts, have grown in their breadth, impact and consideration. Well respected Community Developers and Consultants such as Michael Jones (The Soul of Place) and Peter Block (Community: The Structure of Belonging) write extensively on how place, community, identity and physical set up are inextricably linked. "*Place is not merely something we return to, but something we grow out from in order to create other and perhaps even better places in the future" (Jones, 2014, ix).* Mainstream culture has been intrigued with Scandanavian concepts such as *Hygge* and *Lagom*, which loosely translated mean creating atmospheres of togetherness, coziness and balance. Master Facilitator and Strategic Advisor, Priya Parker, describes how to harness the tangible and psychological benefits of gathering and environment in her best-selling book "The Art of Gathering". She reminds us of the importance of place and space and how aesthetic considerations to group dynamics, space and group size can result in elevated gatherings and deeper connections. To find out more about sizes of groups, which kind of set-up encourages community, and how to "hygge" your space, check out the following resources.

Resources for the Power of Environment:

- Book: Parker, P. (2018). *The art of gathering*. New York: Riverhead Books.

- Videos by Priya Parker:
    - TED Talk: https://www.ted.com/talks/priya_parker_3_steps_to_turn_everyday_get_togethers_into_transformative_gatherings/transcript
    - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nggucasecto;
    - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KXPDpAreaXg

- Book: Block, P. (2008). *Community: the structure of belonging*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers Inc.

- Video by Peter Block: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CwahGcEiAr0

- Book: Jones, M. (2014). *The soul of place*. Victoria, British Columbia: Friesen Press.

- Using the Power of your environment to promote positive change: https://psychcentral.com/blog/using-the-power-of-your-environment-to-promote-positive-change/

- Scandanavian Lifestyle TED talk: Planting Seeds of Happiness: https://www.youtube.com/w333atch?v=biQGa89O5O4

- Say Hello to Hygge Video: http://www.telegraph.co.uk/women/life/say-hello-to-hygge-the-danish-secret-to-happiness/

Trust Building:

Trust is built on significant moments of authenticity, both of self and others. To trust is to be able to rely on the integrity of a person or thing; to have confidence in. Professor and researcher, Brené Brown developed the acronym BRAVING in order to understand the anatomy, or the basic structure, of trust.

- **B:** First is the idea of healthy **B**oundaries which are essential, invisible borders that we create in order protect us and keep us safe. Respect for those boundaries need to come from self and others.
- **R:** **R**eliability is the sense that we will do what we said we will do, understanding our own abilities and limitations.
- **A:** **A**ccountability is about owning our mistakes.
- **V:** The **V**ault creates confidentiality.
- **I:** Living in **I**ntegrity means walking in our values; choosing the honorable and just path over ease.
- **N:** **N**on-judgemental attitudes allow the conversations to be open, honest, authentic.
- **G:** **G**enerosity includes empathy, demonstrating a motive of compassion and goodwill.

Over time, an environment of trust will be cultivated while keeping these seven key objectives in mind.

- Book: Brown, B. (2015). *Rising strong*. New York: Random House.

- Handout: Brené Brown, The Seven Elements of Trust: https://daretolead.brenebrown.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/BRAVING.pdf

- Video: Brené Brown, the Anatomy of Trust: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HX7pxiwzSzQ

- ATTRACT: https://humanparts.medium.com/my-classroom-is-not-a-safe-space-406927bfeab6

Trauma:

Science has discovered that the neurons in our brain are in constant motion of connection and reconnection as we take in new information and continue to learn. This concept is called neuroplasticity.

Jenny Horsman, a university professor and a community-based researcher, understands and teaches that the environment in which an individual is placed in can alter his or her learning experiences. During, or in the aftermath, of a violent or traumatic occurrence the natural human response is to either fight, flight, or freeze. These are not optimal learning conditions. The "fight, flight, or freeze" response can get in the way of the learning process, make it difficult to learn, and even cause continued hardship to the individual. During periods of trauma, it is vital for those affected to stay connected in community, and for the learning environment to remain uncompromised, safe, and relaxed.

Resources for Trauma:
- Jenny Horsman, " Creatively exploring and addressing the impact of violence on learning": https://jennyhorsman.com/

- Neuroplasticity: https://www.britannica.com/science/neuroplasticity

Unconscious Bias and Assumptions:

An unconscious bias is an unintentional belief or presumption that an individual is holding onto. Studies show that our minds automatically label people into rigid, categorical confines such as

age, race, religion, sexuality, education, ability, etc. Operating in this unconscious classification informs judgement and can impact friendships, community, and workplace associations.

There are some easy methods to overcome unconscious bias, beginning with examining your internal conversation to understand why you have made the assumptions you have made and asking yourself if they are valid beliefs. Some of the ways to do this are to step outside your comfort zone and associate with people who are not stereotypically the same as you. Knowing what your core values are and if they include aspects of respect and equality is another marker. And sometimes it's simply having the courage to be honest and acknowledge where you might have made unconscious assumptions and then take steps to remove the bias.

Resources for Unconscious Bias and Assumptions:
- Avoiding Unconscious Bias at work: https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/avoiding-unconscious-bias.htm

- Unconscious Bias: Surfacing Hidden Assumptions: https://www.employerscouncil.org/unconscious-bias-surfacing-hidden-assumptions

- How to Recognize and Overcome your Unconscious Bias: https://www.theguardian.com/women-in-leadership/2015/dec/14/recognise-overcome-unconscious-bias

Presence and Energy:

To be "present" is to be in the moment; to have an authentic and real experience. Professor and social psychologist, Amy Cuddy, has studied the idea of "presence": what it means; how it looks; how to receive; and how to respond in those moments, creating genuine connection. Presence is not a permanent or fixed state. There can be moments when you are not present – moments of distraction and interruption – and this is okay, natural even. But if you are trying to build a real connection with someone or hoping to engage someone in your project or idea, then it's important to be present.

Amy Cuddy teaches that body posture and language is essential in being present and communicating authentically with others and within ourselves. Simple stances, eye contact, facial expressions, and arm movements can communicate all sorts of messages. Our bodies unconsciously position themselves in postures that reflect our attitudes and thoughts. Wide, open stances demonstrate power and authority; while small, closed stances tend to demonstrate weakness and incompetence. Interestingly, by consciously focusing on body

posture, our minds and thoughts shift into the aligned expression. For instance, by deliberately creating the wide, open stance of power and authority, our thoughts will begin to alter accordingly, and we will exude confidence. It's important that we are aware of our own body posture and what it may be communicating, as we talk with people about various learning opportunities or invite participation in community activities.

Resources for Presence:

- Book: Cuddy, A. (2015). *Presence: bringing your boldest self to your biggest challenges*. New York: Little, Brown and Company

- Videos (Amy Cuddy):
  - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ATo9sYax-AQ;
  - https://www.ted.com/talks/amy_cuddy_your_body_language_may_shape_who_you_are/up-next

ENGAGE

> The willingness to tell our stories, feel the pain of others, and stay genuinely connected in this disconnected world is not something we can do halfheartedly. To practice courage, compassion and connection is to look at life and the people around us, and say, "I'm all in".
>
> Brené Brown[2]

What does it mean to be engaged? To be "all in"? For some, it may mean a sustained commitment of time, effort and resources. It might be the way that something holds our interest and attention. Being engaged could be visible to the eye; the way a person is immersed in something, paying attention or 'in the flow'. It can mean strong, visible ties to a relationship. It could mean being part of an action or a change effort in a community and generously offering your energy to that. Whatever the form, engagement includes elements of commitment, action, attunement and perseverance or as Brené Brown sees it, Courage, Compassion and Connection.

Engagement is also part of a Learner's journey. Simply put, this is the stage of learning where they are "all in". They've found your door, they walked in your door, and now they are coming through that door on a consistent basis, drawn to an experience where they find courage, compassion and connection!

What do we see when participants are engaged? Coming early and helping to set up is one of the signs. They are booking and keeping their appointments. They are doing their homework. Asking questions and sharing their stories are also signs they are engaged, as is making eye contact. And, as throughout all the stages of a participant's pathway, relationships are central. They are making friends, meeting peers outside of class and connecting with you. Here are some of the things participants said at this stage of their journey:

o *I knew my friends would be there. The facilitators were welcoming and friendly. I liked meeting people and hearing other people's stories. I liked learning that what I was going through was normal.*

[3] Brown, B. (2010). *The gifts of imperfection*. Center City, MN: Hazelden. (p. 21)

- *I started to make friends in the group.*

- *I could trust the group with what I shared.*

- *I felt like I [had] a purpose. Coming gave me a chance to reflect on things, on life as a person, not just as a parent.*

If we were to unpack the visible signs of engagement further, this stage of the learner's pathway points us to two central themes. One of those themes is the power of community and the other is the power of possibility.

> ## *Community is the birthplace of possibility.*

Community:
Whether you are meeting as a group in a class, connecting with someone to provide one-to-one tutoring, or hosting a small learning circle, the opportunity to build community is present. Community is a difficult concept to define: for some it means a physical location, such as a neighbourhood, a school, a town or a farming community. It may also mean a group of people, like a book club, sports team, or spiritual group. Community can also mean an organized gathering like a women's peer group, a weekly ESL conversation group, or a meet up hiking group. People name something "community" if it is based on location, shared interests, common life stages, something they are acting on, something they belong to, pay into, or have been born into. The meanings of community are vast and in some cases, presumptuous.

Paul Born, Founder of the Canadian based Tamarack Institute and Vibrant Communities says: "*I believe that there is a word that gets at the essence of all these different understandings {of community} and that word is belonging. A sense of "knowing that I belong" is the most common desire of those who wish to build community, but it is also one of the least realized desires…Belonging means to feel that we are in the right place, to be made to feel welcome in a place or group. It is to be cared for and to reciprocate that caring, to know that "I am home." It is a willingness to extend our identity to a people or expe*rience."[4]

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[4] Born, P. (2014). *Deepening community*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Inc. (p.56)

He goes on to define **four acts that deepen community**, all of which can be found in the way that Learners and CALP staff describe the learning community at this stage. The four acts are:

> Maybe the anxiety they have of being new or being around other people and not having connections is replaced with "We have a place where we belong."
> <div align="right">CALP Staff</div>

- o Sharing our Stories
- o Enjoying One Another
- o Caring for One Another
- o Working Together to Build a Better World (Contribution)

Possibility:

Embedded in the power of the learning community is **the power of possibility**. This is the stage where a Learner's internal dialogue shifts and they imagine new possibilities for their lives as a result. One Learner said, "*I began to feel I could actually do this. I liked that if I didn't understand something the teachers would try to show it to me in a different way. They would keep trying until I understood. I never felt judged and I felt cared about.*"

Possibility thinking is marked by our willingness to change our stories and an attentiveness towards what is available and here *now*, inside ourselves and from others. It's about being creative with options and resources. It's about moving from a failure/success mindset to that of a growth mindset, or a contribution mindset. [3]

Possibility thinking shows up in a Learner's life in many ways. It's marked beautifully by a learner who said: "*I try not to use the words "at" least" anymore. I can give more empathy, not sympathy. I learned how to change the bad thoughts about myself. It was the first time I looked at my strengths and saw areas I needed to work on in my life.*" CALP staff echo these changes in a learner's attitude: "*Believing you can do something is an important first step in actually doing something.*" "*It's important to stay positive. We want to be giving messages of "you can do it!"*
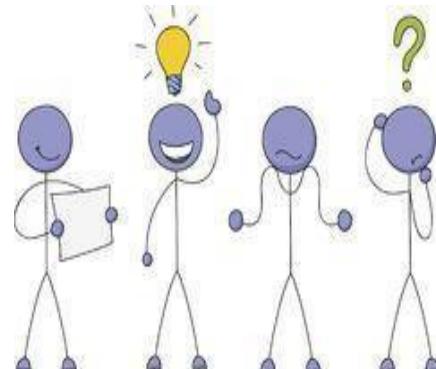
> "I settled on a game called I am a contribution. Unlike success and failure, contribution has no other side. It is not arrived at by comparison. All at once I found that the fearful question, 'Is it enough?' and the even more fearful question "Am I loved for who I am or for what I have accomplished?" can both be replaced by the joyful question, "How will I be a contribution today?"
> <div align="right">Stone Zander & Zander[5]</div>

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[5] Stone Zander, R & Zander, B. (2002). *The art of possibility*. New York: Penguin Books. (p. 57)

So what do CALP Staff do to keep Learners engaged? What are the key things they do that keep people coming in their door? It's all about setting up!

- o **Setting the Tone in the Relationship**
- o **Setting the Tone in the Environment**
- o **Setting up the Learning**
- o **Setting up for Success**

Setting the Tone in the Relationship

Many aspects of setting the tone in the relationship echo strategies used in the *Attract* stage of a learner's journey. What is different at this stage is hopefully a deeper connection, knowledge and understanding of a learner's life. What might also be different is that the relationship is no longer a 'you' and 'them', but there is also an 'us' or 'we'. CALP staff spoke about the ways they communicate this, by having coffee/tea or meals together and making time for participants inside and outside of class. There are conversations happening that are personal and where humor, relatedness and knowledge of each other are shared.
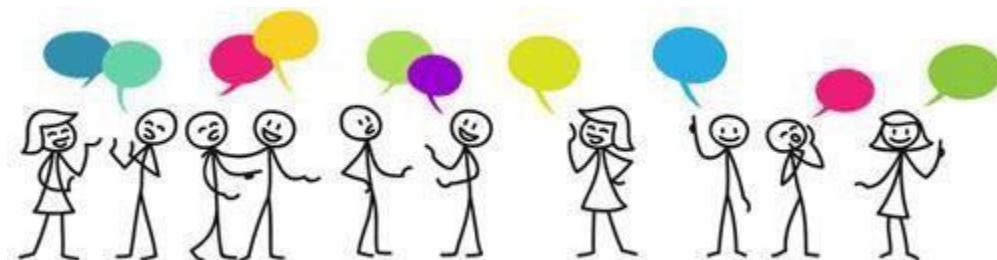
Setting the Tone in the Environment

The environment continues to be a major influence in a learner's journey. They have come to expect and count on the little touches that have been present all throughout, like coffee/tea and food, childminding, flexible hours and a safe and welcoming environment. Being consistent in conveying a warm and welcoming tone encourages the learner to trust not only you, but the process. In the midst of whatever they are going through in their lives outside the classroom, knowing they can count on being welcomed, feeling safe and being cared for goes a long way in keeping them engaged for the long haul.

> Building rapport is so important. If there is good rapport, there's greater chance the learner will stay engaged.
>
> CALP Staff

Setting up the Learning

CALP staff shared their wisdom as to how they set up the learning once learners are engaged and "all in". One of the key pieces of wisdom shared repeatedly was to be flexible and have a Plan B! It is critical to have this for many reasons: learners continue to face barriers and challenges in their lives and understanding this can be a source of help and relief to participants. Childminding falls through, a partner's spouse gets sick, there are unexpected job demands. All of these things can affect attendance, attention, and motivation.

> "I never felt judged at the program, they were always understanding and really cared about me and getting me to pass the exams. No one in high school ever cared like that."
>
> Participant

We learned that if learners can see that you are willing to ask them what they need, customize the learning to meet their needs and be resourceful in finding a Plan B, they are more likely to stay engaged and even more likely to continue to build trust in themselves and you.

> "We use language like, 'we're glad you're coming and we'll see what we can make happen for you. It's all about the learner. It's their agenda, not ours."
>
> CALP Staff

And while flexibility is critical at this stage, so is sensitivity. Encouraging conversation and having time for people to connect and share remains important, even when you are knee deep in curriculum. One CALP staff said: "*The curriculum is a resource, not a prescription.*" It's about understanding the different needs, barriers, learning needs, and energy levels. At the end of the day, the message learners need to hear is "*we're glad you're here.*"

Setting up for Success

Every stage of the Learner's path has unique markers of success. In the "FIND" stage, making that first call for an appointment is a mark of success. With the "ATTRACT" stage, speaking up and sharing personal experiences with others can be seen as a mark of increased confidence and success. With the "ENGAGE" stage of learning, success may look both traditional and unconventional. Learners may be seeing results from marks, grades or progress through a course or workbook. They may be reaching milestones they set out for themselves regarding completing an assignment, coming to class regularly, or practicing a skill they learned in class in their everyday lives.

> Effort is often revelation in slow motion.
>
> Mark Nepo,
> The One Life We're
> Given, p. 104

Success can also look different. It may be the outward validation you give to a learner when you see them persist through something difficult. It could be a celebration of someone's contribution to the class or their helping attitude. Key aspects of setting up for success is simply to not miss it! Giving feedback right away and having visual reminders of their goals and accomplishments can be the fuel that helps the learner keep going. As one CALP Staff so eloquently put it, "*It's the relationship, encouragement and determination all working together*. "
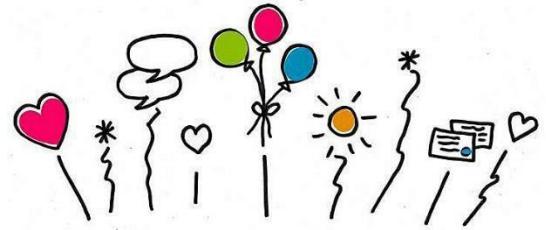
> Hope is not an emotion; it's a way of thinking or a cognitive process. Emotions play a supporting role, but hope is really a thought process made up of goals, pathways and agency. "I know where I want to go, I know how to get there, I'm persistent, and I can tolerate disappointment and try again. I can do this!"
>
> Brené Brown (2012),
> (sharing C. R. Synder's work on hope, p. 239)

What Gets in the Way? (Participant Barriers and Challenges)

There are many challenges and barriers that are part of a learner's story all throughout the stages of learning. The beliefs learners have about themselves, life trumping learning and learning differences can remain a storyline from start to finish. Key challenges and barriers at this stage fall into three categories:

- **Inner Thoughts and Beliefs**
- **Life Trumping Learning**
- **The Learning Doesn't Fit**

> Life circumstances, addictions, and old patterns are very difficult to change. Sometimes it's as simple as their current housing or food needs. If they are living in their vehicle, it is difficult to get the rest needed to learn. Old ways of thinking or poor self-esteem is hard to get past for learners. They often do not have the belief they are worthy of the opportunity and at times self-sabotage it by not attending or dropping out.
>
> CALP Staff

Inner Thoughts and Beliefs

Old patterns of thinking continue to surface for learners no matter what stage they are at or what success they have experienced. Negative self-talk, unrealistic expectations of themselves and worthiness all factor into what gets in the way. Some CALP staff shared that some learners do not think they are worthy of the opportunity. They are also so close to the completion of the learning opportunity, some of them can't handle the loss that it will end. It has become part of their routine, they have built community and they have felt belonging – who will they be when it is over and where will they find this again?

Life Trumping Learning

Sabotage can have many faces and learner's lives can be filled with them. Childminding arrangements can change suddenly and they are no longer able to come to class. Family members may not be used to or feel threatened by the growth and changes the learner is displaying and consequently, influence the learner's confidence or abilities to keep on going. Basic needs may not be met and alternative arrangements must be made, like looking for work. Sometimes learners experience homelessness or are unable to manage their homelessness any longer. Sometimes they take extended trips back home to see family. Health issues and complications can also trump learning at this stage; things like lack of sleep, physical health issues, mental health and trauma triggers can be factors in a learner not remaining engaged.

> When we choose to be true to ourselves, the people around us will struggle to make sense of how and why we are changing. Partners and children might feel fearful and unsure about the changes they are seeing…Some will find inspiration in our new commitment; others may perceive that we're changing too much – maybe even abandoning them or holding up an uncomfortable mirror.
>
> Brené Brown (2010) p. 50

The Learning Doesn't Fit

Our CALP community demonstrates multiple ways they offer relevant learning opportunities. Sometimes, however, the learning simply doesn't fit for the learner. They may experience challenges working through certain sections of a curriculum or course.

Other ways the learning doesn't fit can simply be logistics. The hours, timing, and location of the learning opportunity may not work with the learner's life anymore.

One interesting perspective a CALP staff shared was that for some learners, once they start their learning journey, they realize how far they have to go. Sometimes the view of that long road ahead is interpreted by the learner as an impossible feat.

In looking at the interviews and feedback we received for this part of the research, the strategies that "make a way" are found in the ways that CALP staff *RETAIN* participants. These strategies will be discussed in that section of the Field Guide.

ENGAGE TOOLKIT

If you are wanting to learn more about how to keep Adult Foundational Learners engaged, these additional resources may be of specific interest to you. These resources follow the main themes that CALP staff shared for this stage of the learning journey. This toolkit gives you a "taste" of the concept or idea. The links and resources follow each topic in the toolkit.

Different Learning Styles:

There are many different learning styles and each person is unique in how they learn best. Also, the ability to learn and retain new information is improved when a combination of learning styles are used. Traditional school settings rely mostly on a lecture type style of teaching. This teaching style works well for auditory learners (those who learn best through listening), but if someone is a visual learner or a kinesthetic (hands-on) learner they may have difficulty learning in that type of setting. Since everyone has distinctive learning styles, it's important to consider how you will deliver the information and make efforts to offer the learning experience in a variety of ways (see below) to reach every person.

Different learning styles include:

- o The **visual or spatial learner** who requires the use of graphs, pictures, diagrams, and other visual aids.
- o The **physical or kinesthetic learner** who needs to be able to use his or her hands to manipulate and interact with objects.
- o The **aural or musical learner** uses melody and rhythm to gain understanding.
- o The **verbal learner** is one who is most comfortable making speeches and presentations.
- o The **logical or mathematical learner** understands patterns, numbers, categories, and statistics.

- o The **social or interpersonal learner** is comfortable and energized in group settings.
- o The **solitary or intrapersonal learner** tends to be an introvert and works best alone.

- 7 major learning styles and the 1 mistake everyone makes: https://www.learndash.com/7-major-learning-styles-which-one-is-you/

- Tesia Marshik: Learning Styles and the Importance of Critical Reflection: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=855Now8h5Rs

- 8 types of learning styles: https://www.skillsyouneed.com/rhubarb/fingerprints-learning-styles.html

Reflective Practice:

The idea of Reflective Practice is more than just examining or learning from past experiences or mistakes. It is a skill and process that involves contemplation, critical thinking, and active learning. The goal of Reflective Practice is to create an environment of awareness and to challenge unconscious biases or assumptions by examining an event, reflecting on what is learned, and asking how that learning can be applied to future events.

Although reflective practice can be done alone, it's best done within a supportive group setting which encourages questioning and a diversity of ideas. Key questions that guide the Reflective Practice process are: What? (what happened?); So What? (what does this mean?); Now What? (what action do I/we take now that I/we know this?).

- Borton's Framework of Reflectivity: https://www.physio-pedia.com/Borton%27s_Development_Framework; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vGyjF9Ngd8Y

- What is Reflective Practice: https://www.skillsyouneed.com/ps/reflective-practice.html

- Getting Started with Reflective Practice: https://www.cambridge-community.org.uk/professional-development/gswrp/index.html

<u>Deepening Community:</u>

Community is more than just the neighbourhood or town that we live in and more than just a geographic area or a building. Community is created by people who share common interests, backgrounds, situations, afflictions, etc. It is organic and in constant ebb and flow with tides of ideas and circumstances.

In community, voices come together and harmonize for a better world. The opposing force of community is competition and individuality where importance lies in being faster, stronger, smarter, and richer. Without community, there's a lack of collaboration and people tend to compete against, rather than work with each other. This type of competitive atmosphere doesn't support learning as it discourages vulnerability and risk taking. Lacking a sense of safety and belonging, productivity decreases and loneliness continues. By choosing to step into community and allowing it to shape our interactions with others, we are creating a healthier environment with more desirable outcomes.

<u>Resources for Deepening Community</u>:
- Book: Born, P. (2014). *Deepening community*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers Inc.

- Videos with Paul Born:
  - Deepening Community Rap: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ujYTi74ICuI
  - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=InCNo3URXxs
  - http://www.deepeningcommunity.org/

- Book: Block, P. (2008). *Community: the structure of belonging*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers Inc.

<u>Possibility Thinking & Growth Mindsets:</u>
The underlying concept of mindsets and possibility thinking is that words and thoughts matter. The conditions of an event or circumstance themselves are of no real concern, but the approach and the perspective taken during and after an experience creates the mindsets that an individual will hold onto.

Possibility thinking involves positive attitudes and shifting the limited gaze to acknowledge that there is less to fear and more to learn. This is not about looking through rose-coloured glasses and pretending life to be perfect or without problems because there is no authenticity in pretense. This is, however, about being present in the situation and understanding that the choices made, and the attitudes portrayed, influence and shape the individual as he or she faces challenges and strives for success.

Resources for Possibility Thinking & Growth Mindsets:

- Book: Stone Zander, R. & Sander, B. (2002). *The art of possibility*. New York: Penguin Books

- Videos with Benjamin Zander:
    - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nTav0D3YIN4
    - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d54-4mDLXYo

- Book: Dweck, C. (2006). *Mindset: the new psychology of success*. New York: Random House.

- Video with Carol Dweck:
    - Mindset Works: https://www.mindsetworks.com/science/

- Learning and Violence Network. All or Nothing article and video: https://learningandviolence.net/ourresources/student-kit/all-or-nothing/

RETAIN

> You've always had the power, my dear.
>
> You just had to learn it for yourself.
>
> The Wizard of Oz

Retain is a word steeped in meaning. It can mean *to keep* or *continue to have something*. To *stay safe and secure*. To *remember*. All of these definitions contain the essence of what it means to retain Adult Foundational Learners, or said another way, for learners to "keep on keeping on". To continue on a journey of growth and learning, there needs to be elements of safety, even as we risk and move forward into the unknown. Trust in ourselves, trust in the process, and trusting those around us gives us courage to continue to step towards the bigger versions of ourselves. Remembering who we've become and what we've done is fuel for this journey; powerful enough to change our beliefs about ourselves, what we are capable of, and what is possible *now*.

> **TEST THIS OUT!**
>
> **A Mindset Practice to Try!**
>
> When you are learning something new or come up against a challenge, **use the word "YET".** For example, "*I don't know how to do this kind of math YET.*" "*I don't know how to create an essay YET.*" Adding the word "YET" to your language is a way to practice a growth mindset and change your thinking!

> So the greatest threshold to an awakened life is the courage to say yes. Not yes to what others dream for you or to being abused or mistreated, but yes to the challenge to live your own life, vulnerably and directly.
>
> Mark Nepo, 2016, p. 156

So what is helpful for our perseverance? What are the practices that help us to continue to say YES despite challenges? Having a growth mindset is one of them.

Growth mindset is a concept that Positive Psychologist Carol Dweck[6] developed after studying learners' attitudes towards success and failure.

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[6] Dweck, C. (2006). *Mindset: The new psychology of success.* New York: Random House.

Learners who have fixed mindsets avoid challenges. They give up easily in the face of obstacles. They see effort as pointless and feel threatened by other's success. Feedback is ignored and is seen as threatening.

Learners with growth mindsets, on the other hand, embrace challenges. They persist in the face of setbacks and seek to learn from feedback. They see their effort as the path to success and mastery. They are inspired by other's successes and glean valuable lessons from them.

A growth mindset can be learned! One could speculate that many of the Adult Foundational Learners who have made it through to the completion of their class or courses are practicing it on a regular basis. Carol Dweck research points to this: "Your capacity to stay with and eventually triumph when things get hard is less about innate ability and more about whether you believe success comes from talent or effort. If you believe that success comes from some innate gift, something you either have or don't have, you often end up faring worse. You're more likely to back away and make excuses when things get hard….If, on the other hand, you believe that success is more about effort than talent, when those same difficult moments arrive, you take a different approach. You see them as opportunities to grow. Your job is to figure out how to embrace the trial, continue to work hard, explore new ways of moving through it, and ask for help from teachers, mentors, and guides."[7]

> Courage does not always roar. Sometimes courage is the quiet voice at the end of the day saying, "I will try again tomorrow."
>
> Mary Anne Radmacher, Author

Another practice that is helpful for developing our perseverance is GRIT. Grit is a combination of our passion and our perseverance, our ability to stay loyal to our goals, to work hard and to keep going in the face of setbacks. The Positive Psychology Researcher and Author who brought this concept to current culture is Angela Duckworth. In her book GRIT[8], she explores that the secret to outstanding achievement is not talent but the blend of sticking with something that you love, even if

> There's nothing wrong with mastering any skill or accomplishing any task, as long as that mastery or accomplishment is born of our love, as long as we can remember it is we who are being created and shaped by our immense effort. What we often perceive as failure is an unexpected opening in our lives. Nothing is wasted. Sometimes the map we work so hard to chart and follow needs to be burned in order for us to live our own life.
>
> Mark Nepo, 2016, p. 75

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[7]Fields, J. (2016). *How to live a good life*. New York: Hay House. (citing Carol Dweck's work, p. 89).
[8] Duckworth, A. (2016). *GRIT: the power of passion and perseverance*. Toronto. Harper Collins.

it means it takes a long time, there are failures, and it requires great effort.

Key aspects of grit are:

- o **Interest** (finding something you love or enjoy),
- o **Practice** (devoting yourself to focus on it and commit to it),
- o **Purpose** (your WHY), and
- o **Hope** (continuing to keep going even when you get knocked down).

As she says in her book: "One form of perseverance is the daily discipline of trying to do things better than we did yesterday." [9] Again, this would seem to be a practice for the learning community, both participants and CALP staff. As one learner put it, "*The teachers never gave up on anyone in the program. They always looked for another way to teach or reach them*". Another learner shared: "*Now I feel more comfortable reading to my kids. It's something we can do together. I still struggle with some things but I know I will get it eventually. I don't give up as easily on things that are hard for me*."

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Strategies to Retain Learners

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The Gathering to Learn project learned a lot about what makes participants stay involved and engaged. Our CALP community pointed us to three key areas that are elements of retention, learners persisting and what makes a difference.

- o **Changes to the Learner**
- o **Gaining Something from the Learning**
- o **There is Help for their Barriers** (see What Might Get in the Way, p. 60 and Recipe for Hope, p. 64)

Changes to the Learner

One of the main areas that changes in a participant from the beginning of the learning journey to when they are "all in" is their belief in themselves and their identity. They have new storylines about their learning, their education, their abilities, and their potential. They realize they are smart! Their self-talk changes from "I can't" to "I can". They feel a

> I am a totally different person now because of getting my GED. I am not as shy, I feel more confident. I have my Driver's License now and have left an abusive relationship. I am able to make it on my own and keep my kids safe. I can apply for jobs that I could not have before.
>
> Participant

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[9] Duckworth, A. (2016). p. 91

sense of pride for what they have gone through or, in the keeping with the nature of being "gritty", – "*survived*."

One CALP Facilitator shared his experiences with a participant's changes in identity by saying, "*He sees himself as a leader, not a broken man.*" Another CALP staff shared, "*Their desire to improve their lives is greater than their previous learning fears.*" Both of these examples point to powerful changes in identity and belief in oneself.

Another thing that happens is that the participant feels free to be themselves; they no longer fear judgement. This is when the energy and effort put into building connections and community pays off: participants have a sense of confidence and a sense of belonging. Both influence the other.

> I kept coming back because I felt that the women were open and that I could trust them. I started to make friends in the group and looked forward to being with everyone each week. I like how if you are having a bad day, you do not have to say anything and people do not judge you for it. I have been coming for 3 - 4 years now.
>
> Participant

Gaining Something from the Learning

Participants also experience many benefits from the learning journey. The key quality to these benefits is **relevance**. For some, it may be that they are using what they learned in a real life situation. One participant shared that as she gained a better understanding of her own emotions, it also helped her understand the emotions of her son – she now realizes that all emotions are okay – his and her own! Other participants shared that they learned tangible skills that helped them in life, like math or how to write an essay. Another group member shared it was valuable to her that she could relax in the learning environment and learn *how she needed to learn*.

> I am more confident to talk to people I don't know or who are different from me. I can open up to people. I am learning to better understand my surroundings and this is helping me with my anxiety.
>
> Participant

Another benefit that came forward from the research was that participants gained relationships that were important to them and as a result, gained trust. People made friends and they formed communities. Sometimes coming to one group led that person to other learning opportunities and more social connections. For some, the value in the relationships came from feeling significant and known. As one CALP staff put it: "*The relationship makes them stay.*"

In response to being asked "***What kept you coming back?***" one participant replied, "*I like that I can talk to others that are different from me. I like the acceptance and welcome of the group. I like the location in the community.*" Another responded to this question by saying, "*I liked getting to know different people and that we got to talk about meaningful things. It was an opportunity to be 'real'.*"

Participants also valued the invitation and space to share with others – they liked being asked for their input and they liked sharing their learning with others. They liked doing culturally relevant activities. They valued being invited to do something fun – to laugh, play and try new experiences through different learning activities.

Last, as a result of the invitation, the community, and the relevance of the learning, they kept coming back! Their learning path became part of their routine and consequently, a habit, even when it was hard. One CALP staff shared a story of an Adult Foundational Learner that had a job, plus a farm, two children and a wife, and he still persisted with his learning goal of learning to read. His wife kept asking him to read her another story, and this was the fuel he used to persist in his learning.

> *So come to the pond, or the river of your imagination,*
>
> *or the harbor of your longing*
>
> *And put your lips to the world*
>
> *And live your life.*
>
> Mary Oliver, Poet

The Million Dollar Question!

We asked CALP staff "**Can you predict who will stay**?" The most frequent answer we received was "Maybe". "No". "Sometimes."!

The most concrete data we could gather from this question was that if you have a relationship with the learners you may be able to predict who will stay. If you see inner confidence growing in a person and they are making progress or having success, you might be able to predict that they will stay all the way through.

That said, sometimes we are simply wrong in our assumptions. A learner who has been quiet and introverted may be the mystery that follows all the way through. Someone who was engaged and committed may have life circumstances that all of a sudden alter their life course.

CALP staff were asked to reflect on their experiences with learners who were sporadic or didn't remain engaged. They shared that people who had not managed their addictions or transience may stop attending or following through. Other factors that contributed to retention occurred when the choice or decision to attend the group wasn't their own (they are mandated to come or they are being pressured to come). Sometimes it was just not the right time or the right fit.

Unfortunately, for some, the learning community can be a deterrent. If people are feeling left out, if there is comparison or cliques, if there are unresolved conflicts or poor interactions between participants, the will and courage to attend may simply stop.

What Might Get in the Way? (Participant Barriers and Challenges)

Adult Foundational Learners were asked a similar question: "**What kinds of things would make you leave and not return? What might have happened in your life**?"

Overwhelmingly, the most popular answers:

- **If they felt judged or embarrassed in class**
- **Not feeling heard or seen**
- **Lack of trust**
- **Not making a connection** to the people would keep people away

Other barriers learners shared clustered around things related to **life circumstances**. If they didn't have childminding, had to return to work or if the program wasn't affordable or free, they would have difficulty continuing their learning. Mobility, health and transportation issues also weighed in on their decisions and ability to continue on.

There were several comments made about the **learning environment and staff**. A learner shared that she would not return "*if the teacher's heart is not at work or if the teacher was negative*". Lack of meaningful discussion was also a trigger for not wanting to continue. Learners also shared that if there was gossiping outside the group or if people were not respecting the rules or group guidelines, they would not be motivated to stay.

Equally....

What Gets in the Way? (For CALP Staff, Administration and Funding Sources)

We asked CALP staff a similar question, specifically "**What limitations or challenges do you face in retaining your learners?**"

Challenges fell into four categories:

- o **Lack of Funding**
- o **Staff**
- o **Organization**
- o **Community challenges**

Lack of Funding

CALP staff **lack funding** for the very things that make the difference for Adult Foundational Learners. Some CALP groups are not funded in ways that allow them to provide childminding, food, refreshments, or transportation assistance. They are not funded for the important 'front-loading' of relationship building, including one-to-one visits, home visits or follow-up visits. They also face issues related to rental and building costs.

The CALP 2020 guidelines state that learners must pay fees so long as they are able to afford them. "Grant funds can only be used to reduce fees for learners that demonstrate a financial need. Fees may cover partial or all costs, or even generate revenue above delivery costs. Grant recipients must collect fees for all programs and services with the exception of learning opportunities offered through the tutoring mode of delivery. Nonetheless, finances should not be an obstacle to learning, and fees must be reduced or eliminated for learners with financial barriers. To ensure access for learners with a financial barrier, organizations must have an effective policy in place to reduce fees." (p. 18)

Staffing Challenges

Staffing challenges are also an issue that gets in the way. It's difficult to find the right facilitators. As evidenced all throughout the research, staff's ability to be person-centered, authentic, vulnerable, present and responsive are just some of the qualities that make a difference for Adult Foundational Learners. Add to that a good dose of flexibility, resourcefulness, creativity and perseverance and you may have the beginnings of a CALP staff profile. The soft skills needed to build relationship with learners with a variety of contexts is not to be underestimated. Added to this, some CALPs must serve a large geographical area with a very small staff team (sometimes just one person!). This also brings a lack of anonymity to CALP staff – if they are "the one Facilitator" in a small town, community or area, their own privacy is compromised.

Organizations

There are lots of issues related to organizations. Some of them are struggling with lack of space. Location can also be a challenge – it may inadequate, hard to find, or hard to get to. Some are limited in only providing daytime hours. Sometimes the issues are more complex. CALP staff shared that sometimes there are competing funders within one project – how do you satisfy all needs and remain centered on your vision? Other times, there is a lack of sharing within the organization – a classic case of one hand not knowing what the other hand is doing. Last, philosophies of how to do the work can be competing – some staff or CALP groups are very neighbourhood focused and others operate as large institutions and businesses. Where is the common ground?

Community Challenges

Community challenges round out the areas of challenge for CALP staff. As mentioned, in some cases, there is a small staff team serving a large geographic area. In other situations, there is a very small population – this brings its own issues with anonymity, community building and incentives. For example, one CALP staff noted that in their particular community, there are historical family patterns of not valuing education. The attitude is "What do you need to do that for? Just go work at the plant."
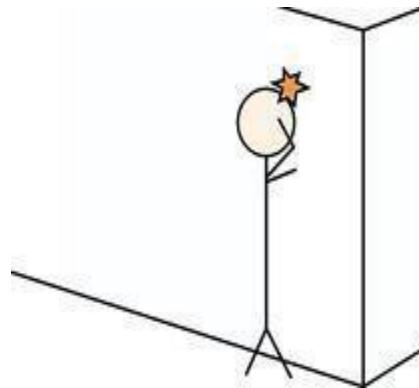
A Recipe for HOPE!

One of the questions that quickly became our favorite was one that was posed to participants. We asked them:*" If you could give us a recipe for what would make people keep coming back to a group like this, what would that be?"* *Please note, this recipe can be doubled and shared!

- o   Start with good preparation! Put the coffee/tea pot on! Create the atmosphere! Put out snacks. Help us not to worry about things like childminding, transportation, and being hungry.

- o   Have the right ingredients before you even start! Hire people who care about us and take the time to understand what we bring with us. The special combination of patient, calm, present, caring, authentic, encouraging, enthusiastic staff are KEY ingredients to making this recipe work for us.

- o   Don't forget that the container matters too! Make it easy for us to get to you. Give us the materials that we need to learn and have the container fit our needs. This is not one size fits all – some of us will need structure, some of us will need free-form containers. Some of us will mix well with other ingredients right away. Some will need a long, slow immersion…

- o   The little touches make the difference. Remember my name. Laugh with me. Make me laugh. Ask me questions. Find out my interests and what adds 'spice' to my life.

- o   What really holds this recipe together is connection. Accept me for who I am in all the stories I live through. Help me find my common humanity with others and compassion for myself. Don't discard my struggles for fear they will change the flavor – let me add them and integrate them into the taste of what we are creating together.

- o   Take the time to mix all these things together. Taste as you go along and feel free to add unlimited amounts of belief and care.

- o   Enjoy and celebrate whatever we end up with – **this is what courage tastes like**.

RETAIN TOOLKIT

Retention is one of the most difficult aspects of our work. If you are wanting to learn more about how to retain Adult Foundational Learners to your program, these additional resources may be of specific interest to you. These resources follow the main themes that CALP staff shared for this stage of the learning journey. This toolkit gives you a "taste" of the concept or idea. The links and resources follow each topic in the toolkit.

GRIT:

Psychologist and researcher Angela Duckworth defines "Grit" as "passion and perseverance for long term goals." In other words, Grit involves taking the lessons you have learned through successes and failures and putting them to work for you for future accomplishments. It involves a "stick-to-it-ness" regardless of surrounding circumstances or other people's opinions and believing that failure is not a fixed or an unchangeable rule.

Grit paired with the concept of Growth Mindset creates an understanding that failure does not define your character. Who you are is, instead, defined by how you evolve and learn from that failure. Courage, conscientiousness, perseverance, resilience, and passion are strong indicators at how "gritty" you are.

Thankfully, grit can be learned and there are concrete ways a person can become more "gritty". It grows through practice and *practices*. It's about believing you can change and that success is learning, falling down, and getting back up again. In many ways, it's both about the "end game" as well as the day-to-day moments of choice we make as we move towards a goal.

Resources for GRIT:
- Duckworth, A. (2016). *GRIT: the power of passion and perserverance*. Toronto: Harper Collins.

- Book: Dweck, C. (2006). *Mindset: the new psychology of success*. New York: Random House.

    o   Carol Dweck: Mindset Works: https://www.mindsetworks.com/science/

- Book: Duckworth, A. (2016). *GRIT: the power of passion and perserverance*. Toronto: Harper

    Collins.

- o https://www.ted.com/talks/angela_lee_duckworth_grit_the_power_of_passion_and_perseverance?language=en
- o Grit Questionnaire: https://angeladuckworth.com/grit-scale/
- o 5 Characteristics of Grit: https://www.sacap.edu.za/blog/psychology/what-is-grit/

Natural Supports:

Natural supports are the personal relationships in an individual's life. As these do not include paid support, natural supports may be made up of family, friends, co-workers, peers, members in the same community, and almost anyone else that crosses the individual's path in a relational or organic setting. It comes from the idea of belonging which encompasses inclusivity, acceptance, and recognition of the individual where the relationships are built with each other, not for each other. Reciprocity and mutual exchange are pivotal components of these relationships.

As we change and grow, so do our natural supports. There are relationships that create life-long bonds and interconnection. There are also those relationships that are seasonal, established and formed for short-term support. In whatever case that these relationships are developed, no two friendships will be the same in conversation, capacity, support, and exchange. Natural supports can be an important resource for people to cultivate in all stages of a learner's pathway.

Resources for Natural Supports:
- How to develop natural supports: https://www.dds.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Publications_NaturalSupport_20190318.pdf

- Natural Supports (Video): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IMe_5ERYWzk

- Natural Supports framework (Video): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ng1vNJ9xsJg

The Power of Habits and Tendencies:

Researcher Gretchen Rubin introduced the public to the idea of human habits and tendencies. Her framework introduced four approaches based on how we respond to expectations made by others and by ourselves.

Upholders are people who have no problem meeting expectations put on them from outer or inner voices. *Questioners* are those who require the expectations to make sense. They have to know why the expectation needs to be performed and they need to be able to endorse it. *Obligers* are people who look to please others who will meet the expectations of others (sometimes at the expense of their own happiness and expectations). Finally, *Rebels* are driven by their own expectations and needs.

Being able to understand one's tendency, and the tendencies of those around us will help us understand people's unique tendencies and motivations, which in turn, gives us insight to support learners and staff more effectively and authentically.

Resources for the Power of Habits and Tendencies:

- Book: Rubin, G. (2017). *The four tendencies: the indispensable personality profiles that reveal how to make your life better (and other people's lives better too).* New York: Penguin Random House.

- Video with Gretchen Rubin:
  - Gretchen Rubin: Habits: Strategy of the Four Tendencies: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LIgvEOVT9OE

- Gretchen Rubin's 4 Tendencies quiz: https://quiz.gretchenrubin.com/

- Gretchen Rubin's: The habits we most want to foster: https://gretchenrubin.com/2014/02/the-habits-we-most-want-to-foster-or-the-essential-seven/

Relational Dynamics:

Human interaction is pivotal for health and wellness. How we interact with self and others; how we develop, build, and grow relationships are integral in how we walk in everyday life. These interactions are what fuel or influence our relationships.

It is important to note that communication and conflict resolution are essential skills while cultivating these healthy relationships. Holding space – being present in mind and body and actively listening – creates an atmosphere of compassion. Using meta-communication or being able to convey messages so that the receiver can fully comprehend the significance and emotion behind the messages, is crucial to the authenticity of the interaction. Relational dynamics is about being able to hold many elements of communication at the same time – yours, mine, and ours. Within these elements, it is natural for conflict or miscommunication to arise as no two people think or feel exactly alike. Having strategies to communicate with compassion, vulnerability and presence will serve to build relational dynamics, instead of building relational walls. The following resources are just some of the tools that can support you with this!

Resources for Relational Dynamics:

- Metacommunication (Video): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RqeH75UWLJY

- Metacommunication: https://diana-jones.com/metacommunication/

- TED talk (Video) Rodolfo Young: The Art of Holding Space: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1eTWew9zbAs

- How to hold space for someone: https://www.goodtherapy.org/blog/11-things-that-will-help-you-hold-space-for-someone-0523175

- What are relationship dynamics: https://drdenisenadler.com/what-are-relationship-dynamics/

- Conflict Resolution (Video): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DSGy5yvC0hM

- 11 Ways you can better resolve conflicts: https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbescoachescouncil/2017/11/14/11-ways-you-can-better-handle-conflict-resolution/#6fbcd5832854

LESSONS LEARNED

> Have patience with everything unresolved in your heart and try to love the questions themselves as if they were locked rooms or books written in a very foreign language. Don't search for the answers, which could not be given to you now, because you would not be able to live them. And the point is to live everything. Live the questions now. Perhaps then, someday, far into the future, you will gradually without even noticing it, live your way to the answers.
>
> Ranier Maria Rilke

What follows are some of the ways we "*lived our way to the Answers*". While we know there are still many questions related to the ways that we can gather to learn, you are invited to be part of our learnings, reflections and insights gained throughout our CALP PD journey. We include learning and advice from our initial start-up process, research and engagement methods, how we decided to share our learning, what we would have changed, and what we wouldn't have changed! Last, we offer our ideas as to what other possible research and professional development projects might develop as a result of what we have learned together in the *Gathering to Learn* project.

Lessons on Beginnings

- o Come Together

One of the first things we did as a project team was to meet together before we launched into the tangible parts of the project: we used this time to talk about our values, hopes, anxieties and strengths. This was a no holds barred conversation where we declared our fears of failure, imposter syndrome feelings and our self-doubts. There was a lot of "what have we gotten ourselves into?!" and "I'm scared!" There also was inspiration drawn from Brené Brown quotes, a little bit of music and our "why" for the project. Looking back, this was such an important first

step as it helped name our vulnerability and in a symbolic way, reminded us that it is such a common human experience to take risks, try something new, and put yourself out there.

- o Get Grounded

Shortly after meeting as a **carya** project team, we then met with CLN staff, Odette Lloyd and Emily Robinson Leclair to further unpack our work plan, flesh out details and learn of other resources available to us. In this pre-work stage of our project, it was helpful to meet as a project team and build our framework together. This included deadlines, action items, connection points, and the overall rhythm of the project. It helped chunk a large project into sizable bits, and helped us visualize our next steps.

We also found that as much as we had a work plan in mind, we learned it needed to be flexible. Talking through our initial proposal and ideas helped us move aspects of our project around and opened up possibilities we had not considered in the proposal stage.

Lessons on Structure and Process

- o Language is key

One of our key lessons in this stage came from our many attempts to *get the heart of our project into questions that would engage people.* We had four areas that we wanted to explore (Find, Attract, Engage and Retain) and within those four areas, we were curious about so many things. We also needed to create a consent form for both learners and staff that explained the project and was somewhat easy to understand. There were many attempts to make it as Plain Language as we could. To start out with this goal is so worthwhile.

Our initial learner interviews were completed with people we had relationship with. This was beneficial as it helped us understand what we needed to change in terms of language and questions. For example, throughout our interview questions, we would refer to them as "learners". One person said, "I'm not a learner. I'm a participant." We heard this more than once when we were interviewing people and quickly realized that assigning language or identity to people through our questions was more complex than we had anticipated. This shift influenced us to change our language to words like "participant", "group member" and "staff." This, in turn, influenced what you see reflected as language in this field guide as well.

We also condensed our questions. Our four key areas remained constant throughout the entire project, but *the way* the key questions *were asked* changed. Many of our initial questions were actually prompts, not questions themselves. We also noticed that a 'good question' answered many of our other questions. Our learnings from this was to pay attention to how people interpret or react to what you are asking them and to be flexible with making changes.

- o Find your Connection Points

We initially had a plan of conducting one-on-one interviews over the phone and attending some meetings in different places, expecting to connect with a good representation of CALPs across the province. How quickly we learned! We hadn't anticipated that starting in April meant that we had only a couple months to connect with people before summer as many CALPs close during this time. We had not anticipated that wrapping up our interviews at the end of August would mean we would miss out on the rich opportunities for connection in the fall. We had challenges with technology, timing, and finding ways to engage people when they did not know who we were.

What helped us in finding our connection points were the suggestions that came from our CLN support, Emily. Through her, we were able to build a network of connection points and people across the province, including when and how to reach people. Through her, we learned about Regional Meetings and how we could utilize the fall Literacy and Learning Symposium as an engagement tool. We also ran a focus group with a local Calgary CALP, interviewing 10 people, staff and participants, one morning in June. This was such a rich experience and brought diverse contexts and perspectives together in one room.

We were also able to strategize how and when to use the CALP Portal. We had initially seen the CALP Portal as a key connection point but learned that it was, instead, a great information/ sharing portal.

Our advice for anyone who is looking to do interviews and make connections with people would be to utilize the natural gathering points that exist within our CLN system. There are Spring Regional Meetings once year as well as a Regional Connections session at the yearly fall Symposium. These are excellent opportunities to make connections as well as learn from our collective community. We also recommend utilizing the network knowledge that the CLN Regional Support staff have as well as the CLN Provincial staff team.

o   Make it easy for people

One of the things we had to juggle throughout our project was our enthusiasm and our 'asks'. We wanted to have lots of voices represented in the field guide from all across the province, from many different viewpoints. We wanted to hear your stories and your experiences of the unique ways you have gathered to learn. That said, in doing so, we also wanted your time! We recognized early on that, however appealing our project may have sounded, some people simply did not have the time to be interviewed.

One of the ways we made it easier for people (and ourselves) was to use the natural gathering places as ways to get people's perspectives. This meant we had to change our expectations around how things looked and simplify our questions and our approach. For example, we had 45 minutes at the 2019 Symposium to do our skit, present about our project and ask you questions about the main four areas! It also meant giving our project questions to other people, like Regional

Support Staff, and have them take their members through a modified creative interview process. All these things worked in their own forms, even if they were different.

One of our lessons learned after the fact was that we did not make it easy for people to interview their own learners for us. We had a complicated consent form and several questions. We realized after the fact that we could have early on, created a simpler process for CALP staff to interview their participants for us. We could have also used tools like Survey Monkey to get more perspectives from people who did not have the gift of a lot of time.

Lessons on Risk and Creativity

- o Bring it to life

One of the other major parts of our project was to share what we were learning, at different points throughout the journey. We had a good chunk of data gathered by the summer of 2019 and based on that, we offered to do two workshops that fall: one at Calgary Learns and one at the Symposium. The decision to do that was somewhat easy – the complicated part was the "how?".

Given that so much of the research we had gathered had rich stories embedded in the interviews, we decided to "tell a story" in our presentation by doing a skit. No one on the project team felt confident to act, but we felt confident in this approach, and this is what made the difference. We wove the story of a character named C.J., a single mother who wanted to get her G.E.D so she could read to her children. We used her story and journey to illustrate all four areas of our project, showing her context and the experiences that made a difference for her. An equal role in the story was about a CALP staff she got connected to early on. Our skit highlighted what we had learned in our project thus far and showed the importance of relationship, environment and the stages of change.

Our decision to do a skit as part of our presentation also sparked other creative ideas – we decided to use quotes from our interviews as "swag" for our project, attaching them to an antique key. None of us was crafty! Our hope in doing so was to share the knowledge and inspiration that was coming from our learning community in an artistic memento that inspired our fellow CALP staff.

The key lesson here for us was to share what we had learned in our project in a way that modeled what we were learning. Our project was about *Gathering to Learn*. We wanted to give people an experience that brought the findings to life. That was best done through relationship, trust building, environment and community. We took a risk by telling a story instead of talking through a PowerPoint, but found this to be a more authentic representation of what we were

uncovering in our project. Our advice for anyone who is thinking of how to share the results of their PD projects would be to think about what your project is about and tell the 'story' of it, give people an experience of it, or find a way to demonstrate the heart of it.

Lessons on Making Sense of Things

- o Chunk, Clump and Cluster!

Any project that involves getting multiple voices integrated into a coherent whole requires some systems along the way that steer it that way!

One of the ways that helped us make sense of project and progress was to have regular meetings with our project team, including our CLN support. Referring back to the work plan and being flexible with dates also was helpful in integrating our plans for the work and 'the work itself'. We developed systems for our data tracking including mapping where we were getting representation from and when interviews were complete.

One of the most useful things we did throughout the project was to "chunk" and "clump". Once we had the interviews completed, each team member took chunks or sets of interviews to review them for overall themes and stories. Once that piece was complete, we came together as a whole team and had a larger "clumping" session. All four areas of our project were white-boarded with the key findings from our interviews for those areas. We clustered the big ideas into main themes, clumping stories and sub-ideas under these main themes. We also utilized clumping/clustering meetings as we created this Field Guide. This was invaluable to us as we built and integrated the many voices that made up the Gathering to Learn project.

Where the Work Wants to Go…. Further Research Considerations

What follows are the pieces of the *Gathering to Learn* journey that emerged, stoked our curiosity, and inspired us to think about what parts of our research could be expanded upon should someone want to continue to follow the threads *of Gathering to Learn* further.

1. **Motivation and the Stages of Change**: One of the interesting pieces that we saw was how a learner's motivation can change throughout their learning journey. What is the motivator at the beginning of their learning pathway often changes, expands and directs them to other goals.

   At the same time, what happens to motivation at the "Retain" stage, where people often cease to continue when the end is in sight? What makes a person persist in the face of obstacles and barriers? Digging deeper into the stages of change and what are

the things that can tip the motivational balance for learners could provide the CALP community with new strategies to support and understand the different parts of the Adult Foundational Learning journey.

2. **Learner Identity**: Similar to how we saw motivation transform over a person's learning journey, we were also struck by the transformation of a learner's identity as they move through the stages of the learning pathway. We noticed that when learners first begin to consider becoming part of a learning opportunity, there is a strong desire to want something different for their lives, whether that is connection, wanting a better job or to learn a skill, wanting to not be lonely, or knowing they needed to change their life. As they progress through the different stages of learning, the way they see themselves, what they are capable of, or their confidence changes. What are the things that influence these changes in themselves, even if immediate circumstances in their lives remain the same? Exploring how that happens and how the learner sees themselves change and influence their trajectory could help our CALP community further understand how we can nurture paths to confidence building.

3. **Using Community Development practices to build Learning Communities**: Given that our team is comprised of CALP facilitators who are also Community Development Facilitators, we were struck by how community development principles parallel and are similar to how we establish and build our learning communities. Some key principles of community development are reaching the isolated voices of community so that they can find their place in community, develop networks and friendships and find places to share their gifts and strengths with others. Community development involves cycles of engaging, organizing, coaching and sustaining with the hopes that people find belonging, power and avenues to take action on what they care about.

   Similarly, engaging Adult Foundational Learners involves finding, attracting, engaging and retaining learners so that they can build their skills and confidence, so they can go forward, equipped for their learning and life goals. This often happens in a network, classroom, neighbourhood or community and follows the same hopes that people will take action on what they care about.

   There may be value in exploring these parallels further to enhance the learning environment and relationship building avenues we see in our CALP opportunities. What can we learn from the field of Community Development that we can apply to a learning community? Likewise, how can a learning environment inform and deepen community development practices? What are the intentional ways that CALP staff build learning communities in the complex settings they are expected to: busy, unconnected large cities, small towns where anonymity is challenging, or large geographical areas where building face-to-face connections and networks are challenging? How can we take our diverse practices of building learning communities and find our common threads as a

larger CALP community? These are just a few of the avenues that could be explored within this thematic area.

4. **What do YOU see?** If you've made it this far into the Field Guide, **what has struck you about where the work wants to go?** What are the questions you are "living your way to the answer to"? Are there pieces we have missed? Have you noticed yourself becoming engaged in a part of the field guide and wanting more? We offer our encouragement and cheerleading for you to take that next step and see where your own ideas for CALP PD take you!

OUR THANKS

We are so grateful for all the voices, stories, and experiences that informed this Field Guide, from CALP staff who met us face to face, those who took time out of their busy days to have phone calls with strangers and to the supporters of this project that took it and found places to explore its richness. We were in GOOD company all throughout and we are so grateful to be in the presence of your brilliant minds and big hearts!

We could not have had this project go in the direction it has gone without the support of the CLN Staff. They cheered us on from the get go, allowing us the freedom to be creative and being the anchor when we needed grounding. A special thanks to Emily Robinson Leclair whose enthusiasm, strategic thinking, and belief in us lit the way for us to grow, risk, learn and ENJOY the journey. You are a force for good – thank you for not letting us take ourselves so seriously!!!

Last, we extend our gratitude to the Learners who helped us better understand the depth of their experiences, courage and resiliency as they step towards new experiences, dreams and identities. They are the **heartbeat of this project** and the work that we do every day. Through them, we learn how to do things better, to be brave and afraid and to keep on keeping on.

"Let **me fall if I must fall**. The **one I will become will catch me.**"

Baal Shem Tov

FIND Checklist

These are the broad themes, suggestions and practices that have come from our CALP community related to the FIND aspect of the Learning Pathway.

The following checklist can serve several purposes for you. It can provide you with:

- ✓ A quick assessment of the different elements to consider related to potential participants finding their way to your course, program, workshop or service
- ✓ A tailored strategy of things to try out, change, tweak or consider
- ✓ A regular review of your progress
- ✓ A conversation tool to use in your team or network to assess priorities

Areas to Consider	Yes	No	Not possible	Let's do this!	Priority rating
PERSONAL CONNECTIONS & EASE of ACCESS					
Do you have a key contact for the group or course?					
Do you have an intake number with a person attached to it?					
Do you have a number that can be called or texted?					
Is your intake process complicated?					
Do you offer home visits?					
Do you offer in-office appointments?					
Can you meet people out in the community for a coffee/tea?					
Is your location accessible by bus, taxi, or walking?					
Is your building accessible? (think about access for wheelchairs, strollers, people with mobility issues)					
Is parking easy for people with vehicles?					
Do you have flexible office hours? (evenings)					
Can you offer your opportunity in a physical location where people naturally gather? (i.e.: resource center, library, community association)					

Areas to Consider	Yes	No	Not possible	Let's do this!	Priority rating
Do you offer your opportunity in a variety of locations?					
Do you have good signage?					
Do you offer a variety of workshops, courses or classes?					
Do you offer activities to just get people in the door, as a gateway or bridge to build relationships? (clay making, journaling, art, crafts)(*note: this is not covered by the CALP grant but may be offered through other funding)					
Do you have anything for children? (childminding, children's workshops, etc)					
Do you have a way that people can just try your opportunity/course out before they commit? (no registration)					
Getting the Word out THERE!					
Is your information in Plain Language?					
Is your website up to date and complete?					
Is your website easy to navigate?					
Is your information available in different languages?					
Do you use multiple digital platforms to get the word out there? (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter)					
Are your posters and advertising in Plain Language?					
Are your posters in different languages?					
Are your posters and advertising placed in places where potential learners might frequent? (Think about: Grocery stores, library, laundromats, convenience stores, gas stations, farmers' markets)					
Do you use roadside signs?					
Do you have a promotional video?					
Do you advertise in the local newspaper or radio?					
Do you attend local events like resource fairs, community dinners, interagency meetings?					

Areas to Consider	Yes	No	Not possible	Let's do this!	Priority rating
Do you attend other agency staff meetings?					
Do local government agencies know about your program? (Mental Health, Justice, Alberta Works, Public Health)					
Do you do any door knocking in the local neighbourhoods?					
Do you equip Alumni, past participants, board members, volunteers and staff with information they can easily pass on?					

Your Notes: _____

ATTRACT Checklist

These are the broad themes, suggestions and practices that have come from our CALP community related to the ATTRACT aspect of the Learning Pathway.

The following checklist can serve several purposes for you. It can provide you with:

- ✓ A quick assessment of the different elements that can encourage people to begin learning with you
- ✓ A tailored strategy of things to try out, change, tweak or consider
- ✓ A regular review of your progress
- ✓ A conversation tool to use in your team or network to assess priorities

Areas to Consider	Yes	No	Not possible	Let's do this!	Priority rating
ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS					
Is what you offer affordable? Can you offset potential financial barriers like parking, transit, childminding and fees?					
Do you have flexible hours? (evening, office hours, not too long of sessions, spontaneous hours)					
Do you provide food, snacks or refreshments?					
Is your building accessible? (think about access for wheelchairs, strollers, people with mobility issues)					
Is parking easy for people with vehicles?					
Do you offer comfortable seating for all types of people?					
Do you provide soft lighting or dimmable lighting? Rooms with sunlight?					
Do you teach in a circle or horseshoe?					
Do you provide fidget tools and ways for different types of learners to stay focused/calm?					
Do you smile, laugh and greet people by name?					
Do you give body breaks?					

Areas to Consider	Yes	No	Not possible	Let's do this!	Priority rating
Do you stagger the learning activities so that there is variety for all kinds of learners?					
Is your space welcoming and acknowledging of the Land, different gender orientations, family life, cultures, learning styles?					
Are there tutors or support available in real time?					
Do you provide free supplies and equipment for learning? (i.e. Free backpack, books, pens, paper, printing, computer use)					
BUILDING CONNECTIONS					
Do you make learning fun? (Think about HOW you do this…)					
Do you find ways to learn about people's interests and lives?					
Do you build connection among other participants through stories, games, and conversation starters?					
Is your language and energy positive, affirming, encouraging and hopeful? (Think about HOW you show this…)					
Do you regularly communicate warmth and affirmation to people individually and as a group?					
Do you stop to take a break or check in on how people are doing?					
Do you ask people what they need?					
Do you acknowledge barriers and challenges that learners are facing? (HOW do you acknowledge and support them?)					
Are you generous with your assumptions about learners and their life circumstances? (HOW do you know you are?)					
Do you celebrate small and large successes individually and as a group? (HOW?)					
Do you give "shoulder time" (are you there before group and/or after group so people can stay and connect with you/others?)					
Is your staff team representing and sensitive to the community you are building?					
Do you present yourself as a human being, not solely a facilitator/staff?					

Areas to Consider	Yes	No	Not possible	Let's do this!	Priority rating
Do you communicate and help learners make connections to other agencies or resources that might be of help to them? (i.e. Food bank, counselling supports, mental health)					
Can you partner with other agencies (food bank, grocery store, service groups) to provide your program or participants with extra food?					

Your Notes: _____

ENGAGE Checklist

These are the broad themes, suggestions and practices that have come from our CALP community related to the ENGAGE aspect of the Learning Pathway.

The following checklist can serve several purposes for you. It can provide you with:

- ✓ A quick assessment of the different elements that can keep people engaged, involved and invested in their learning journey
- ✓ A tailored strategy of things to try out, change, tweak or consider
- ✓ A regular review of your progress
- ✓ A conversation tool to use in your team or network to assess priorities

Areas to Consider	Yes	No	Not possible	Let's do this!	Priority rating
SETTING THE TONE					
Do you communicate that you are glad to see people and you are glad they are here? (HOW do you do this?)					
Do you communicate welcome, positive energy and approachability? (HOW?)					
Do you communicate that you are in this together? (HOW?)					
Do you communicate that you go where the participant wants to go (meaning at their pace, their interest, their energy)? (HOW?)					
Do you make time for participants inside and outside of your session time?					
Do you check in with participants to see if you are meeting their needs?					
Do you provide food, snacks or refreshments? Do you enjoy this with them?					
Do you use humor? Do you bring elements of play, fun and creativity to the sessions?					
Do you move to Plan B if Plan A isn't working? Are you attuned to when this needs to happen?					
Do you use the curriculum as a resource, not a prescription?					
Is the learning session set up to engage all different learning styles and different kinds of social energy?					
Do you provide time for people to talk, share and process?					

Areas to Consider	Yes	No	Not possible	Let's do this!	Priority rating
Do you provide opportunities for participants to talk with each other?					
Do you teach in a circle or horseshoe?					
Do you provide fidget tools and ways for different types of participants to stay focused/calm?					
Do you smile, laugh and use people's name?					
Do you give body breaks?					
Do you stagger the learning activities so that there is variety for all kinds of participants?					
Is your space welcoming and acknowledging of the Land, different gender orientations, family life, cultures, learning styles?					
Are there tutors or support available in real time?					
BUILDING SUCCESS					
Do you facilitate from a place of possibility? (HOW?)					
Do you model and facilitate from a growth mindset? (HOW?)					
Do you validate your participant's successes, large or small?					
Is your language positive, affirming, encouraging and hopeful?					
Do you chunk success? (provide ways for them to experience success early on)					
Do you provide feedback right away?					
Do you ask people what they need?					
Do you acknowledge barriers and challenges?					
Do you encourage participants to have goals AND dreams?					
Do you plan activities for participants to bring their goals or dreams to life? (i.e. vision boards, story-telling, collages)					

Areas to Consider	Yes	No	Not possible	Let's do this!	Priority rating
Are there ways for participants to define success on their terms?					
Do you have rituals or celebrations to mark important dates, milestones and success? (WHAT are they?)					
Do you utilize alumni or bring in special speakers that can help motivate, validate and inspire?					
Do you take pictures or find ways to commemorate the learning journey along the way (not just at the end)?					

Your Notes: _____

RETAIN Checklist

These are the broad themes, suggestions and practices that have come from our CALP community related to the RETAIN aspect of the Learning Pathway.

The following checklist can serve several purposes for you. It can provide you with:

✓ A quick assessment of the different elements that can keep people coming and committed to their learning goals
✓ A tailored strategy of things to try out, change, tweak or consider
✓ A regular review of your progress
✓ A conversation tool to use in your team or network to assess priorities

Areas to Consider	Yes	No	Not possible	Let's do this!	Priority rating
GAINING SOMETHING FROM IT!					
Do you consistently provide support for people's potential barriers and life circumstances? (think: childminding, food, transportation needs, learning needs)					
Do you consistently communicate belief in their abilities?					
Do you see participants experiencing a sense of belonging?					
Do you see participants changing the way they see or talk about themselves?					
Do you see participants encouraging each other?					
Do you see participants caring about each other and taking care of each other?					
Do you see this learning experience becoming part of their life/routine?					
Do you see participants having fun?					
Do you remain curious and engaged in what is important to the participant or learning community? (HOW?)					
Do you see participants using their knowledge and skills in their day to day life?					
Do you hear participants talking about next steps for their lives or their learning?					

Areas to Consider	Yes	No	Not possible	Let's do this!	Priority rating
Do you see participants joining other learning activities?					
Do you see participants referring other people to your program or course?					
A WAY IN					
Do you have ways for participants who didn't complete to come back or join in again?					
Is the process easy for past or present participants to return?					
Do you have ways to work with a participant's barriers so that they can remain engaged? (i.e. tutoring, helping with fees or costs, childminding, etc.)					
Do you check in with participants who have missed one or two sessions?					
Do you check in with participants who didn't complete?					
Do you provide assurances and encouragement of a participant's strengths?					
Do you acknowledge small steps of confidence and trying new things? (HOW?)					
Do you ask people what they need?					
Are there ways for you to engage a participant's support network or natural supports if they are struggling?					
Are there ways for participants to define success on their terms?					
Do you communicate the barriers participants face to your funding source?					
Do you communicate the barriers you face as CALP staff to your funding source?					

	Yes	No	Not possible	Let's do this!	Priority rating
Do you hire people who have the heart, the mind and the presence for this work? (What is important to you?)					
Areas to Consider	Yes	No	Not possible	Let's do this!	Priority rating
Do you as a team or staff regularly encourage, recognize and ignite each other in this work? (HOW?)					

Your Notes: _____

Appendix A: Welcome and Consent

What is the Gathering to Learn Project?

The Gathering to Learn project is an opportunity for you to share what's meaningful, helpful and supportive to you as you learn in community. We hope to understand what gets you in the door, what sparks your interest and attention, and what keeps you coming back. Funded by the Alberta Government, the project will seek out stories from participants and facilitators across the province that are part of the Community Adult Learning Programs. Through these stories, we will create a field guide full of ideas, knowledge, and practical ways to create supportive learning experiences for participants all across Alberta.

How we will get things done!

This project is an action research project that wants to find out, "**What are the key ingredients that support participants to learn in community?**"

Participation: What does this mean for you?

Some benefits to participating in the Gathering to Learn Project are:
- o An opportunity to share your story so that others can learn from it
- o Having an influence in shaping a guidebook that will be used by other facilitators across the province
- o Contributing to the larger Adult Learning Community across Alberta

Particular risks for participation in the Gathering to Learn project include that you may have strong emotions by sharing your stories about your participation in groups or workshops.

Confidentiality: How we will protect your information

Your participation in this project is voluntary. At any time throughout the project, you can refuse to participate or withdraw from the entire process. It is also confidential, meaning that at no point during this process will you be required to reveal your identity. You can remain as anonymous or transparent as you wish. The Gathering to Learn Project Team have signed a confidentiality agreement in which they commit to not sharing your personal information with anyone.

Consent to participate

I have read and understood the Gathering to Learn Project letter, including the benefits, risks, and how we will protect your information.

Participant Name (Please Print)	Participant Signature	Date

For More Information:
{staff names and contact information were placed here}

Appendix A: Participant Survey

Participant Questions

Date: **Name:**

Interviewer: **Recording Permission? Y/N**

The following questions will help us understand what are the key things that help and support people as they join and become part of a learning experience. Your story will help us know what the important ingredients are in a community learning experience – what works, what doesn't, and what makes a difference! **Do you have any questions before we start?**

1. **How did you find out about us?**

   a. What was going on for you at that time when you found us or starting thinking about coming to …….{name of group/workshop}

   b. Can you give me a picture of what your life was like before you found us? (Think about living/financial situation, connection to others, time in your life, circumstances that made you think about joining this group?)

2. **What did you like about your first visit(s) or time(s) in the group?** (What made you walk in the door? Think about: the environment, the topics, the time, the location, the facilitators, the time in your life)

3. **Give us a picture of your life as you became more connected to this group**. Did anything start to change? Improve? Get more challenging?

   a. What kinds of things happened in the group that you liked? What made you keep coming back? (Think about: topics, activities, flexibility and choices in how you like to participate in a group or learn)

   b. Were you able to apply what you learned to your life? How so?

c. How was this group or workshop different from other experiences you've had?

4. **How long have you been coming to these groups?**

   a. If you could give us a recipe for what would make people keep coming back to a group like this, what would that be? (Key elements)

   b. What would be the kinds of things that would make you leave and not return? What might have happened in your life?

Appendix A: Facilitator Survey

CALP Facilitator Questions:

Date: **Name:**

LFL Category (Please circle): 1) Adult Literacy 2) Numeracy 3) English Language Learning 4) Basic Digital Skills 5) Foundational Life Skills

Interviewer: **Recording Permission? Y/N**

The following questions will help us understand what are the key things that help and support people as they join and become part of a learning experience. Your story will help us know what the important ingredients are in a community learning experience – what works, what doesn't, and what makes a difference! We have four main themes for questions in this interview: The themes are: **Finding, Attracting, Engaging and Retaining Adult Foundational Learners. Do you have any questions before we start?**

FIND: *These questions are related to before your group or workshop starts…*
   1. **How do you find your participants? Or how do they find you?**

      a. What has been your greatest success in finding participants?

      b. How have you been able to find the soft voices and the harder to reach participants? Can you give us a picture or story of how you've been able to do this?

      c. What things could be challenging for potential participants as they are trying to find you?

ATTRACT*: These questions are related to those first few sessions…*

   2. **What are the ways you attract Adult Foundational Learners?** (Think about: How do you create the environment? Think about timing, days of the week. What works well?)

      a. What are some of the barriers or challenges you see that participants have to overcome or manage? What are the circumstances in their lives? In the neighbourhood or community?

b. What strategies do you use to decrease these barriers or address these barriers?

ENGAGE: *These questions are related to when you have a core group or well into your workshop materials…*

3. **How do you keep participants engaged? What are the things you do that keep people coming in the door?**

    a. How do you know people are engaged? What do you see? (example/story)

    b. What are some of the challenges and barriers you see at this stage of a participant's journey?

RETAIN: *These questions are related to your thoughts about what makes people stay or leave…*

4. **Do you have participants that are consistently part of what you offer? What do you know of their circumstances? What do you think makes them stay?**

    a. What are the particular barriers they no longer have or have overcome/managed?

    b. Can you predict who will stay? Tell us a story.

    c. What systems or practices do you have so that people feel they could always come back, when they are ready?

    d. Can you tell us about participants who are sporadic or don't remain engaged? What do you think contributes to that?

    e. What limitations or challenges do you face in retaining your learners? (for example, is there only one of you, are there limitations for space/rentals, etc.)

Alberta
Advanced Education

Community Adult Learning Program

CALP Management Regions

- North
- East-Central
- West-Central
- Central
- South

CCC Service Region

Community Adult Learning Provider Locations

- Comprehensive Community College
- Community Adult Learning Program Grant Recipient

Keyano Region

Northern Lakes Region

Grande Prairie Region

Portage Region

Edmonton Region

Lakeland Region

Central Region

Calgary Region

Medicine Hat Region

Lethbridge Region

Chateh
High Level
Fort Vermilion
La Crete
Little Red River Cree Nation
Paddle Prairie M.S.
Fort Chipewyan
Loon River
Manning
Peerless Lake
Cadotte Lake
Fort MacKay
Fort McMurray
Gregoire Lake
Peace River
Grimshaw
Fairview
Peavine M.S.
Atikameg
Wabasca
Janvier
Spirit River
Falher
McLennan
Gift Lake M.S.
Marten Lakes
Conklin
Beaverlodge
Grouard
Grande Prairie
High Prairie
Driftpile
Slave Lake
Valleyview
East Prairie M.S.
Fox Creek
Buffalo Lake M.S.
Athabasca
Lac La Biche
Cold Lake F.N.
Boyle
Cold Lake
Kikino
Whitefish Lake F.N.
Whitecourt
Thorhild
Goodfish Lake
Elizabeth M.S.
Barrhead
Smoky Lake
St. Paul
Bonnyville
Westlock
Saddle Lake F.N.
Elk Pt.
Fishing Lake M.S.
Grande Cache
Ft. Sask.
Gibbons
Lamont
Evansburg
St. Albert
Edmonton
Two Hills
Frog Lake F.N.
Edson
Stony Plain
Sherwood Pk.
Vegreville
Vermilion
Hinton
Devon
Leduc
Ryley
Lloydminster
Drayton Valley
Wetaskiwin
Camrose
Wainwright
Jasper
Ponoka
Killam
Rimbey
Bashaw
Provost
Rocky Mountain House
Lacombe
Stettler
Red Deer
Coronation
Consort
Innisfail
Olds
Three Hills
Hanna
Didsbury
Oyen
Banff
Cochrane
Airdrie
Drumheller
Canmore
Calgary
Strathmore
Bassano
Okotoks
Brooks
High River
Vulcan
Claresholm
Coaldale
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Medicine Hat
Fort Macleod
Bellevue
Lethbridge
Warner
Foremost
Pincher Creek
Cardston

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