



# Community Learning Needs Assessment

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## Toolkit

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# Introduction to Toolkit

This toolkit is designed to support Alberta’s Comprehensive Community Institutions (CCIs), Community Adult Learning Councils (CALCs), community literacy providers, and other employment and training providers to assess adult learning needs through coordinated activities at the local level. The toolkit provides step-by-step instructions, tips, and sample tools to help CCIs and community partners ensure that educational programs and services are responsive to local learning and labour market needs. The toolkit can assist communities to work together to:

- Collect community data relevant to adult learning and the local labour market
- Map the learning assets currently available within the community
- Identify gaps and prioritize the most pressing adult learning needs
- Leverage existing resources and develop new educational programs and services

The results can be used by CCIs, CALCs, community literacy providers and partner organizations to identify adult learning opportunities in the areas of literacy, language learning, employability enhancement, and community-identified priorities. Ultimately, the process outlined in the toolkit can increase learner access to post-secondary education across the CCI geographic regions by:

- Improving knowledge of pathways for adults to participate in community learning
- Facilitating learner transitions from community learning to CCI credit programming
- Supporting economic development and jobs growth by increasing the responsiveness of educational programs to labour market needs
- Strengthening alignment between the community adult learning system and post-secondary education

This toolkit draws on the experiences of Albertans across the adult learning, workforce development, economic development, and community services sectors, and is informed by the perspectives of people who work with rural, Aboriginal and newcomer populations. While much of the content has been modified and adapted from the other needs assessment and asset mapping guidebooks listed in the Resource section, the specific tools reflect best practices identified through interviews with 28 key informants across the province and two roundtables with 36 participants from 24 organizations in Cochrane and Red Deer. Interview and roundtable participants expressed strong support for more collaborative processes that break down silos and create a culture of sharing. They were interested in strengthening connections between education and employment, and better understanding the educational programs already available within their communities. This toolkit responds directly to the goals and aspirations of many community organizations to more effectively support adult learners.

The development of this toolkit was overseen by a steering committee representing five CCIs (Bow Valley College, NorQuest College, Lethbridge College, Red Deer College, and Olds College), the Ministry of Enterprise and Advanced Education, and the Alberta Rural Development Network, with project funding from the Alberta Association in Higher Education for Information Technology (AAHEIT). Academics Group conducted the research and prepared the contents of the toolkit. The views expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Government of Alberta.

## Next Steps

To provide additional support for the implementation of this toolkit, the steering committee is seeking funding to develop an online Campus Alberta Needs Assessment System. The system will facilitate and enhance the needs assessment process by enabling CCI and other community partners to:

- Generate online community learning profiles using data from Statistics Canada, the Ministry of Enterprise and Advanced Education, and other sources
- Visually display community learning assets on a web-based asset map
- Administer online surveys and enter data collected during the needs assessment into a provincial database

Needs assessment results from across each stewardship region can then be aggregated to create a better understanding of regional learning needs and assist CCIs to carry out their responsibility for regional stewardship. Regional results can also be aggregated to the provincial level, to inform provincial policy and planning.

## Why conduct a Community Learning Needs Assessment?

Adult learners, particularly those with low skills, are more likely to participate in adult education and training when they believe their investment of time and money will benefit them in the labour market. This can mean improved job prospects for unemployed adults, or career advancement for adults who are already working. Yet adult learning providers face challenges in aligning their programming with labour market needs. Even when educational programs respond directly to identified skill shortages, it can be difficult to predict whether there will be enough interest among adult learners in the community to deliver the program.

The process outlined in this toolkit will address these issues by helping adult learning providers identify the skills needed within the local labour force and ensure responsive education and training opportunities.

## Definition of Community Learning Needs Assessment

In its simplest form, a needs assessment is a systematic process for identifying local needs, placing needs in order of priority, and allocating resources to resolve the highest priority needs. Needs are commonly defined as identified gaps or discrepancies between the current state (what is) and the desired state (what should be). Needs assessments involve making decisions about how important the needs are, why they exist, and how they can be addressed. Needs assessments can be implemented at three levels: individual, organizational, and societal.

**Individual needs assessments** are conducted with individual learners during the registration and intake process. These individual assessments generate data on the specific skills and educational backgrounds of individual learners, and may involve the use of standardized assessment tools, such as the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL).

Some local businesses and organizations may be interested in **organizational needs assessments** or **training needs analysis**. These assessments may be requested by employers to address professional development needs or develop specific employee skill sets. For example, a framework is available from

the federal Office of Literacy and Essential Skills to help with Organizational Needs Assessments of workplace essential skills (<http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/workplaceskills/LES/pdfs/assessment/ona.pdf>).

This toolkit focuses on the third level of needs assessment, that is, activities conducted to understand overall **community learning needs**. This type of assessment involves the collection and analysis of information on the local community including:

- Characteristics of adult learners and the local labour market
- Issues and trends that have an impact on adult learning and employer needs for education and training, such as new populations moving in and the emergence of new industry sectors
- Existing program and community resources available to meet identified education and training needs

The needs assessment specifies where there are gaps, and identifies solutions to address the gaps. The results can be used to guide the planning, development, and delivery of educational programming for adult learners, including levels of staffing and volunteers, program options, location of programs, and methods to deliver services. The results can also support program funding applications by demonstrating the demand for new programs or services.

### **What needs assessment is not**

A survey of learner interests, wants and/or preferences does not alone constitute a needs assessment. The programs that learners **would like to have** are not always the same as the programs **needed to address identified gaps**. Student preferences, as well as their self-perceptions of needs, are critical considerations for the development of adult education programming. However, an effective education and training system must balance learner interests with employer and community needs.

It is also important not to let predetermined solutions drive needs assessment processes. Too often people consider only one solution (a want) and interpret it as a need. For example, people might insist “this community needs a swimming pool,” when a swimming pool is just one of several possible options to address a lack of recreational activities. Before determining whether a swimming pool is the best solution, more information about the causes of the need must be collected and analysed.

### **Needs vs. assets**

Traditional needs assessments have been criticized for taking a “deficit” approach, since they focus on local problems and shortcomings. In addition, organizations that have conducted needs assessments in the past have sometimes found it difficult to move forward on the results, especially when a long list of concerns and gaps are identified.

Taking a more positive approach by considering community assets as well as needs can increase local ownership of the results and motivate communities to action. Instead of looking at what is missing, an assets-based approach focuses on a community’s strengths by identifying the skills and resources that reside in the individuals, formal institutions, and informal organizations that make up each community.

By first taking stock of the individual, organizational, and institutional resources that exist, the needs assessment process can explore whether available resources can be leveraged or linked to tackle priority issues. Rather than deficiencies, this process may reveal that needs are actually assets that may be

threatened or underutilized. Asset-based approaches bring together local people and organizations from different sectors to explore possible connections between issues, and respond to priority issues in a coordinated and collaborative way. Community learning asset mapping is a relationship-driven process that can help to build linkages across local people, institutions, and organizations.

#### **Best Practice**

The concept of asset-based community development emerged in the US in the 1990s as a strategy for community building in distressed urban neighbourhoods. Since then, asset-based approaches have been recognized as particularly valuable for small and rural communities and have been used to advance regional economic development initiatives. Some examples of asset mapping projects include the [Battle River Alliance for Economic Development Asset Mapping Report](#) (2005), [Employment Supports for Persons with Disabilities in Five Canadian Regions](#) (2006), which included the region of Bonnyville/Cold Lake, and the [North East District of Parry Sound Community Asset Mapping Project](#) (2012).

### **Why use this toolkit?**

The needs assessment process described in this toolkit is intended to be implemented by CCIs at the community level, with the active support and involvement of CALCs, community literacy providers and other community partners. The results will benefit the whole community because a well-designed assessment can:

- Demonstrate the commitment of CCIs, CALCs and other community literacy providers to meeting the learning needs of adults within their communities and build a solid base of support for adult learning programming
- Make decisions about planning and development of CCI and community learning programs
- Leverage and mobilize community resources and partnerships
- Identify the needs, strengths, and characteristics of adult learners within the community, which can be used to plan professional development for staff who work with adult learners and orient new staff and volunteers
- Gather information about needs to support annual funding applications and create a case for support for potential new funders of adult learning programs
- Uncover the skills, knowledge and expertise available from local citizens, who can then contribute to the learning process as volunteers or instructors
- Inform other strategic planning initiatives that may be undertaken by many community organizations

Users of this toolkit can approach the content in different ways. Some may want to start at the beginning and follow each step in sequence. Others may start with the section that interests them the most, or go directly to the sample tools.

# Assessment Process and Timelines

Every community is unique, with different networks of people and resources. Communities are also constantly changing in response to demographic trends, shifting settlement patterns, and economic growth and decline. This toolkit offers guidelines and ideas that can be adapted for use in both large urban communities as well as small rural and remote communities over a three-year assessment cycle period.

## Who should be involved?

A community needs assessment should involve a broad range of community partners in all aspects of the assessment: from initial planning to collecting data to interpreting results. Efforts should be made to involve as many different communities within the CCI stewardship region as possible.

A formal planning team, or Needs Assessment Committee (NAC), is critical to the success of the assessment. The team can be a valuable source of information, helping to avoid duplication of effort by bringing forward the results of previous needs assessments that may be relevant to understand community learning needs. Team members may be interested in conducting joint needs assessments with the CCI, and willing to contribute resources on behalf of the organizations they represent. By including a diversity of members, the team can be an effective way to let the broader community know about the process, and increase public awareness of the learning opportunities available. Finally, the team plays a vital role in maintaining the momentum generated by the assessment and ensuring that results are used after the assessment is complete.

In addition to members of the Needs Assessment Committee (NAC), the needs assessment process should engage a variety of participants, including:

- K-12 educational systems
- Post-secondary institutions (public and private)
- Employment service providers (public and private)
- Community literacy provider organizations
- Public libraries
- Community service agencies
- Social planning organizations
- Settlement service providers
- Aboriginal employment and training agencies
- First Nations and Métis leaders
- Employers
- Chambers of commerce and other employer organizations
- Community Futures and economic development offices
- Unions
- Alberta Works Centre offices
- Current learners
- Potential learners
- CCI and CALC staff
- CALC volunteers



## **How much time is required?**

The length of time involved depends upon the experience of the team conducting the assessment, the tools selected, and the time available. Depending on the activities selected, a comprehensive needs assessment will typically require about two to six months.

Research methods used most often in needs assessments include analysis of secondary sources, such as demographic information and administrative client records. Primary research may also be conducted to collect new qualitative and quantitative data. Primary research methods include:

- Interviews with key informants who bring particular knowledge of problems, needs, interests and desires of the population
- Interviews with representatives of different stakeholder groups
- Surveys of employers, service users and providers
- Focus groups
- Public meetings or community forums to build consensus on service and needs priorities

The steps set out in this toolkit incorporate each of these methods in the various phases of the assessment, and make recommendations as to when they should be used.

## **How much does it cost?**

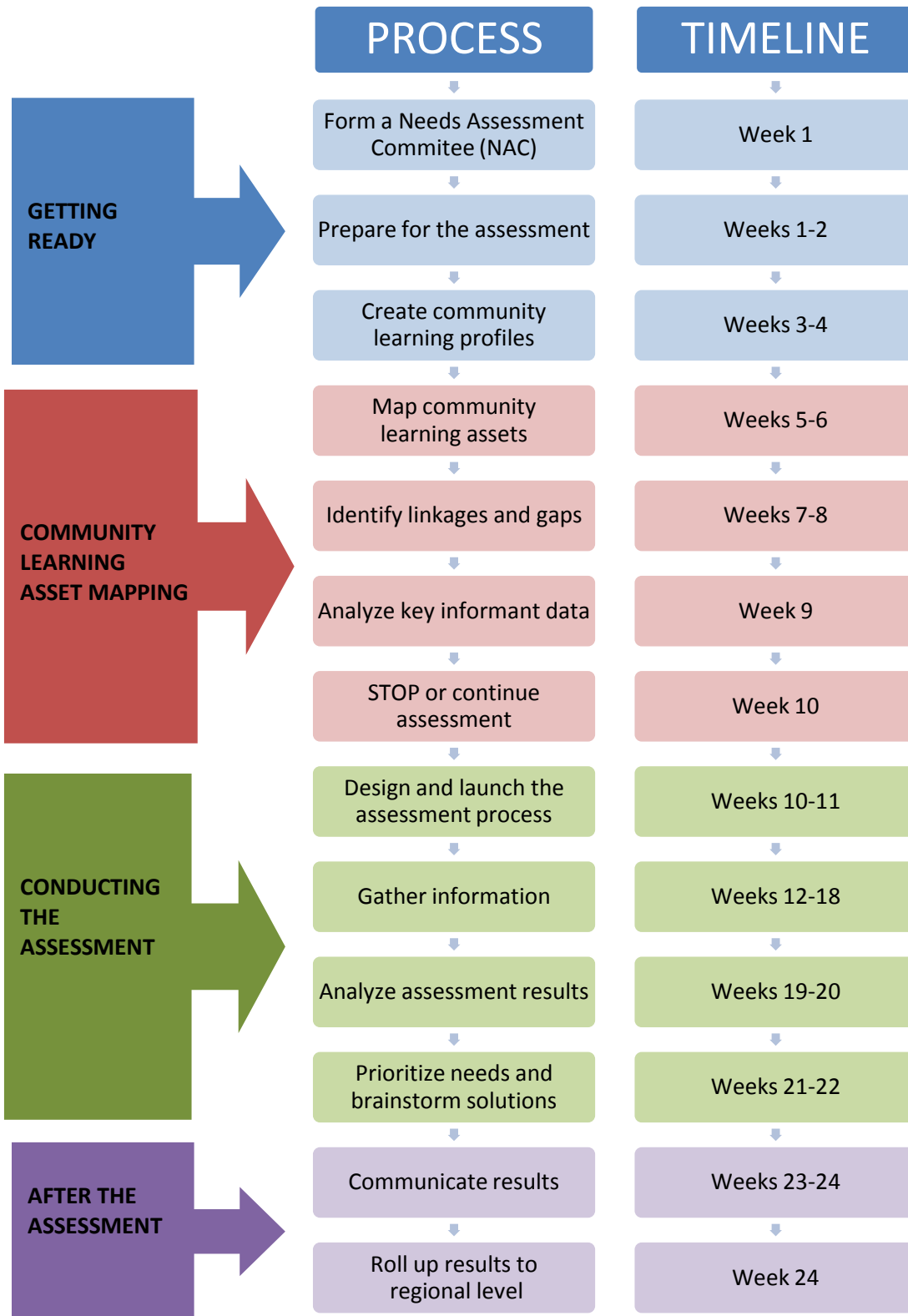
The costs depend on the process selected for the needs assessment, and whether it is conducted with the help of staff and volunteers, or by hiring an external consultant. This decision, in turn, will depend on whether the time and skill sets are available internally to implement the assessment. The Sample Tools section of this toolkit provides more detail about the budget needed for community learning needs assessments.

## **How often should needs be assessed?**

A full needs assessment should be conducted every three years, but reviewed and updated annually.

## **Needs Assessment Flowchart**

The flowchart below shows the process and timelines involved in conducting the comprehensive community learning needs assessment described in this toolkit. However, the process could also be implemented over a shorter time period, depending on the activities selected.



# Getting Ready

## Step 1 – Form a Needs Assessment Committee (NAC).

The Needs Assessment Committee (NAC) is the planning and advisory group formed to guide the CCI through the needs assessment project. It is also essential that the people who will be expected to implement the findings are involved in the NAC. The NAC might be formed as a sub-group of an existing committee, or it might be a new committee created through invitations to selected community representatives of a range of stakeholder organizations across the region.

In order to ensure that different perspectives are involved in the initial planning phases, the NAC should consist of about 10 people. It should be chaired by a CCI staff person (usually from the Regional Stewardship office, Continuing Education, or an academic division). It should include representatives from CALCs and other community literacy providers within the region, employment and training providers, as well as current and potential adult learners and business or employer representatives.

The Sample Tools section of this toolkit provides an example of a NAC Terms of Reference.

### Best Practice

In 2012, the Community Learning Network began the Culture of Collaboration Project. The project will help communities identify their levels of readiness for community engagement, and create new opportunities for collaboration between CALCs, community literacy providers and CCIs. The tools developed by the project will support the participation of CALCs in community learning needs assessment processes.

## Step 2 – Prepare for the assessment.

Good advance planning and preparation can streamline your community learning needs assessment process, ensure that you gather relevant, useful and adequate information, and save time.

### Task 2.1 – Gather and review any previous needs assessment research.

Reviewing findings from previous needs assessments or assessments conducted by other members of the NAC can help avoid unnecessary duplication. Past experiences with needs assessments – what went well and what could work better – can also help you make decisions about process and design. Previous needs assessments should be reviewed to consider:

- Was all of the data that was collected used?
- Was there additional data that would have been useful for the assessment?
- What were the results, and how were they shared with others in the community?
- Did the assessment inform decision-making?
- Were the decisions implemented?
- Did any implementation problems come up that were potentially related to data collected in the assessment?

### **Task 2.2 – Set the geographic boundaries for the assessment.**

The NAC should review the stewardship area to decide which communities should be grouped together and considered as geographic units for the needs assessment. Each geographic unit will be considered one “community” for the purposes of conducting the assessment.

Ideally, the geography of a needs assessment should reflect the way in which the labor market actually functions, as determined by where people shop and commute to work, the interactions among firms, and roadways and travel patterns. Organizing the assessment to correspond with pre-existing municipal boundaries may not correspond to the reality of local labour markets that are centred around “economic hubs”.

### **Step 3 – Create community learning profiles.**

This step begins with a review of available statistical data to provide baseline information about current “what is” conditions for the geographic units within the regional stewardship area, and insights into “what should be”. In thinking about “what should be,” the focus is on the level of lifelong learning, labour market participation, and economic development activities you would like to see in your community.

The community learning profile should include data collected directly by CCIs and CALCs and maintained in administrative records, as well as secondary data available from the government and other organizations. In addition to statistical information, the profile can highlight relevant findings from studies and reports produced by municipalities or other community partners that may only be available in narrative form.

#### **Best Practice**

For each of the primary communities within its regional stewardship area, Bow Valley College produces a detailed community profile, combining demographic information with customized analysis of survey results conducted by the college.

### **Task 3.1 – Assemble administrative data from CCI and other partners.**

One of the first rules of needs assessment is to “listen to your customers,” and ensure that good data is collected from current adult learners. Client data is most often collected through intake forms and evaluation forms. Additional data can be gathered via observations, conversations, discussion groups, or other means. This information can provide insights into the specific needs and interests of adult learners, and enable the development of appropriate service solutions. Administrative data available to CCIs includes:

- CCI program enrolment data by community and demographic characteristics
- Profiles and interests of potential learners tracked through requests for CCI programming
- Formal and informal feedback from volunteers and instructors

**Best Practice**

For the last three years, Bow Valley College's Office of Institutional Analysis has produced a Regional Fact Book for internal purposes. The fact book provides statistical information on non-credit enrolments by campus, and enrolments by campus for credit programs in academic foundations, health and community care, ESL and languages, and business and industry. It also reports numbers of full-time enrollees by their community of residence, and Aboriginal credit enrolment by campus.

Administrative data that could be contributed by CALCs to inform the community learning profile includes:

- CALC intake data on numbers of clients and demographic characteristics
- Learner course/program/session evaluation data on learner satisfaction and future interests
- Profiles and interests of potential learners identified through requests for CALC programming
- Formal and informal feedback from volunteers and instructors

**Best Practice**

Standardized intake forms allow data to be entered locally and aggregated at the regional and provincial levels. For example, the KETO client database enables the collection of standardized intake and assessment data for participants in Aboriginal Labour Market programs. Since all service provider sites are connected to only one database there are no duplicate records, and regional client profiles can be produced from data generated by multiple agencies.

The Sample Tools section of this toolkit includes examples of questions that could be included on CALC intake and evaluation forms, to enhance the community learning profiles.

**Task 3.2 – Assemble secondary data sources.**

The table below highlights the key indicator data most relevant to a community learning needs assessment. See the Sample Tools section for more information on various sources to access indicator data.

**Best Practice**

Detailed profiles and projections for Alberta's 10 stewardship regions are available from the Ministry of Enterprise and Advanced Education, through its Campus Alberta Planning System (CAPS) SharePoint site. The regional profile includes population data; high school enrolments, completions, and transitions to post-secondary; post-secondary enrolments, turn-aways, and completions; and engagement in foundation learning opportunities at publicly funded post-secondary institutions. Detailed CALC profiles are also available with additional information on literacy abilities, labour market, and income levels.

Type	Most Important Indicators by Community
Community demographics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Population</li> <li>• Age</li> <li>• Sex</li> <li>• Educational attainment (less than high school, completed high school, no post-secondary education)</li> <li>• Presence of children in the home and lone parent families</li> <li>• Median income (two parent and lone parent families)</li> </ul>
Learning indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Levels of prose literacy, document literacy, and numeracy</li> <li>• Population unable to conduct a conversation in English</li> <li>• High school graduation rates</li> <li>• E-campus Alberta participation rates</li> </ul>
Aboriginal demographics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aboriginal identity population</li> <li>• Numbers of self-identified Aboriginal students attending local elementary and secondary schools (on and off-reserve)</li> <li>• Age</li> <li>• Sex</li> <li>• Educational attainment</li> <li>• Presence of children in the home</li> <li>• Income</li> </ul>
Immigrant demographics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recent immigrants</li> <li>• Temporary foreign workers</li> <li>• Permanent residents</li> <li>• Numbers of ESL students attending local elementary and secondary schools</li> </ul>
Labour market information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employment outlooks</li> <li>• Labour market participation rates</li> <li>• Employment and unemployment rates</li> <li>• Occupation and industry profiles</li> <li>• Vacancy rates by occupation</li> </ul>
Economic overview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Major employers</li> <li>• Firm size</li> <li>• Average wages</li> </ul>

### Task 3.3 – Summarize data into a community learning market profile.

This brief profile should be no more than four pages in length, and include both a learner profile developed from administrative records and a high-level summary of key demographic and economic variables most relevant to adult learning and workforce development. In preparing the profile, the following questions should be kept in mind:

- What are the key characteristics of the population? Is it growing or declining, aging or young families moving in? Is there a large population of youth who will be transitioning into the workforce or to post-secondary training in the near future?
- How many adults live in lone parent families, with childcare responsibilities that may limit their ability to access education? Is there a large segment of stay-at-home parents who may be thinking about returning to work or retraining?
- What is the income distribution of the community? What proportion of adults are low income, with fewer financial resources to pursue further education or retraining, or to support their children to attend PSE?

- What is the educational profile of the community? What proportion of adults have post-secondary education (PSE) – making them more likely to encourage their children to attend PSE and more likely to engage in lifelong learning themselves? How many students graduate from high school? What are the levels of low literacy – indicating the need for foundational learning, upgrading, or GED preparation?
- What is the cultural and ethnic composition? How many immigrants locate to the community?
- How many First Nations and Métis people live in the community or in the surrounding areas?
- What are the characteristics of the labour force and what are the major occupations? What are the trends in rates of employment and unemployment? How does the unemployment rate compare to literacy levels (indicating opportunities for essential skills training)?
- What are the major industries in the area? Are they emerging, growing, stable, or declining? Are they service or manufacturing? Are there connections among them (i.e. are there industry “clusters”)?
- What are the major firms? How many people do they employ? What are the occupations and average salaries?

The Sample Tools section of this toolkit provides a community learning profile template.

# Community Learning Asset Mapping

Community learning asset mapping creates an inventory of the people, programs and services within the community that contribute to or promote **adult learning** and **labour market participation**. These resources can be captured in a spreadsheet or database, and can also be visually represented on a print or web-based map of the community. An asset map can identify opportunities for better linkages between adult education providers and employers, and for improved collaboration between agencies and institutions. It can also indicate where programs that would benefit adult learners in your community may be lacking, and where new program development could improve service gaps. Asset mapping should not be viewed as a one-time event that ends with a published list or directory. Rather, it is an ongoing process that provides a catalyst to improve alignment, coordination, and delivery of services, and leads to the development of new programs to address gaps. Communities should be re-mapped every three years.

## Best Practice

Examples of online asset maps are available from the [City of Calgary](#), [Trenton, New Jersey](#), and [Peterborough, Ontario](#). The Peterborough asset map identifies social service programs for children and youth and can be overlaid with relevant census data to compare the geographic location of assets to other services and community needs. [Alberta's Early Child Development Mapping Project](#) provides downloadable PDF versions of asset maps by community.

## Step 4 – Map community learning assets.

### Task 4.1 – Brainstorm assets to include in inventory.

The NAC should meet to develop an initial inventory of both community adult learning and labour market assets. Many of the assets will be associated with a physical location. Other assets are “intangible” and do not have a geographic identifier.

Assets include the individuals, facilities, organizations, services, programs, or other resources that exist within the community (or are outside the community but accessed by residents) that support or enable adult participation in lifelong learning and the labour market. They can be categorized into five types: individual, informal learning, formal learning, connective, and labour market. Since four of the asset categories represent physical locations, they can be visually displayed on a map of the community.

- **Individual assets** are people with skills and interests who could be enlisted as “learning champions,” volunteers, or instructors. They may have strong connections with identified groups within your community, such as Aboriginal people, newcomers, or Mennonites.
- **Informal learning assets** are groups and resources that support adult learning, but are not involved in the direct delivery of educational programming, for example, faith and cultural organizations, community centres, or Rotary clubs. Informal learning assets also include videoconferencing sites and other facilities that can enable learning activities.
- **Formal learning assets** are the educational institutions, employment and training agencies, community literacy providers, and other organizations that deliver education and training programs within the community. This category can also include organizations that are specifically mandated to fund formal learning programs, such as CALC granting councils.



- **Connective organizations** are groups or associations that connect businesses, employers, educational institutions and other community groups or organizations with an interest in economic and workforce development.
- **Labour market assets** include the key employers within your community, the sectors that make up your economic base, and any emerging industries or sectors.

**Best Practice**

Identifying community “sages” – the people who have established strong relationships of trust and respect with other members of their communities – is particularly important when working with rural, Aboriginal and newcomer populations. These local residents are assets who can be enlisted as volunteer “ambassadors” to promote learning opportunities within their communities.

The table below provides examples of the kinds of informal learning, formal learning, connective, and labour market assets that should be included in the community learning asset inventory.

<b>Informal Learning Assets</b>	<b>Formal Learning Assets</b>	<b>Connective Organizations</b>	<b>Labour Market Assets</b>
Community organizations Cultural organizations (particularly for immigrant and Aboriginal communities) Faith organizations Rotary clubs  Videoconferencing sites Community Access Point sites Community Engagement Sites	Community Adult Learning Councils (CALCs) Volunteer Tutor Adult Literacy Services (VTALS) Family Literacy Programs Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) Libraries Local CCI programs Continuing Education programs Adult Basic Education programs Apprenticeship training sites Local secondary schools K-12 adult education offerings Language schools Private trade and vocational schools University campuses Career advancement programs Executive Education programs Corporate Training programs Job placement agencies Programs for displaced workers Alberta Works offices	Community Futures Chambers of Commerce Municipal economic development offices Sector councils Professional business networks Business Industry Liaisons Human resources associations	Major employers by sector Emerging industries Workplace training programs Unions

Sources to assist the NAC in assembling the community learning asset inventory include:

- Information already collected for the community adult learning profiles
- Post-secondary institutions from EdInfo
- Ministry of Enterprise and Advanced Education funded programs by community from *Community Adult Learning Program 2010 Report to Partners*
- Service listings by community from [www.InformAlberta.ca](http://www.InformAlberta.ca)
- Newcomer information and services

- Aboriginal employment and economic development services from Aboriginal Canada Portal
- Community Futures offices
- Alberta Works Centre offices
- Alberta public libraries
- Family and Community Support Services offices
- Rotary clubs
- Videoconferencing sites
- Community Access Point sites
- Secondary schools
- E-Campus Alberta programs delivered in the community

The Sample Tools section of this toolkit provides a template inventory database that can be used to record details of the assets, including the programs delivered, the number and type of population served, and the services provided.

### Step 5 – Involve key informants to identify linkages and gaps.

Once the inventory has been assembled, 20-25 key informants should be selected from the asset inventory to be interviewed by telephone about the assets. Key informants are community, business and civic leaders knowledgeable about the asset base.

Key informants should be sent a copy of the initial inventory in advance of the interview (excluding the list of individuals). If desired, you can ask key informants for permission to audio-record the interviews, but careful, hand-written notes are also acceptable. Responsibility for conducting the interviews can be shared among members of the NAC, with those who have personal connections contacting the key informants they already know. The interview should end by asking key informants if they would be willing to help with next steps of the needs assessment process. This will create a list of potential volunteers to assist with Step 9 as employer interviewers or participants in the Community Forum, depending on the decisions of the NAC about additional assessment activities.

The key informant interview questionnaire and data capture template are provided in the Sample Tools section, along with the invitation to participate. The purpose of the interviews is to confirm the assets identified in the mapping exercise, and add any missing assets based on their knowledge of the community. In addition, key informants will be asked about:

- Factors that facilitate or **enable** the community to take full advantage of the assets (for example, funding/subsidies available, accessible by public transportation, history in the community, etc.)
- Potential **linkages** between assets
- Factors that present **barriers**
- **Gaps** in education and training programs and services

### Step 6 – Analyze key informant data.

The NAC should meet to review the data collected from the key informant interviews. Additional assets suggested by key informants should be added to the inventory, with notations made for any assets where questions were raised. Analysis of the key informant data should look for patterns and similarities, as well as points of divergence. A table summarizing the findings on enablers, barriers, linkages, and gaps should be prepared.

## **Step 7 – STOP or continue assessment.**

At this point, the NAC may decide that enough information has been gathered from the community profile and community learning asset map to provide a good sense of community learning needs and assist with program development and delivery. They should collectively strategize on how to leverage strengths, identify service gaps and develop solutions to address identified barriers. Alternatively, they may decide that more information is needed to better understand learning needs, which can only be obtained from employers, potential learners and members of the community. This will lead the NAC to the next phase of the assessment process.

# Conducting the Assessment

Planning the needs assessment involves selecting the tools that will be used to gather new information from the community. Once you have your plan in place, you are ready to inform the community about your process, and move to the next phase of the assessment. Remember that the quality of your needs assessment will be improved if you use several different methods to collect information, and involve multiple groups as sources of information. The methods suggested in this toolkit include:

- Online survey of education and training providers
- Employer interviews
- Prospective learner focus groups
- Community forum

## **Best Practice**

The quality of the methodology used to collect the data is more important than the quantity of information gathered. The random sampling and administration procedures necessary to produce generalizable survey findings can be difficult and expensive to implement, and response rates can be disappointingly low when community surveys are conducted online. Although you may not be able to generalize results, the data obtained from interviews and focus groups can be more valid and reliable than a poorly-designed survey.

## **Step 8 – Design and launch the assessment process.**

This step involves reviewing the research methods described in Step 9 and making decisions about which methods you will include in your assessment.

### **Task 8.1 – Select the assessment tools.**

The NAC should meet to consider the options set out in Step 9. To some extent, the design of your assessment will depend on your resources, budget and timelines.

### **Task 8.2 – Let the public know about your process.**

Once the design has been determined, notify the local media of the steps that you will be using to conduct your assessment. If a community forum is part of your assessment process, the date of the forum should be set now, to be included in promotional materials about your process.

The Sample Tools section of the toolkit provides an example of a media release announcing the launch of your needs assessment for distribution to local media and for posting on your webpage.

## **Step 9 – Gather information.**

This step involves implementing the methods selected to conduct the assessment. Whatever methods you select, it is critical to ensure that you are sensitive to cultural practices, and that you respect and honour cultural differences. The Sample Tools section provides guidelines on working with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities, and working with newcomers. A checklist is also provided to help you assess your organization's readiness for culturally competent outreach and partnership activities with culturally diverse communities.

### **Task 9.1 – Survey adult education providers in the community.**

The first step in planning any type of service strategy is to gain as full an understanding as possible of the customers you serve. In addition to administrative records and other client data gathered during Task 3.1, an online survey of representatives of the **formal learning assets** identified during the mapping process can shed light on the following issues related to adult learners in your community:

- What competencies and basic skill limitations do you see among your clients? (i.e., Do they have problems with English language fluency, reading, writing, math, decision-making, or other basic skills needed in the workplace? How many lack a high school credential?)
- If you serve immigrants, what are the most common languages these clients speak?
- What is the average age of your clients with limited basic skills?
- Do most of your clients with limited basic skills have children?
- Do clients miss appointments and job interviews due to difficulties handling transportation, housing, childcare, or other responsibilities?

The results of the survey can add value to all adult education service providers, and a commitment should be made to share the data gathered. In addition to providing more information about the perspectives of other providers, the survey can also help identify groups who may be interested in strengthening service coordination and collaboration.

To facilitate survey implementation, the community mapping process will have already generated email contact information for the population of adult learning providers in your community. The Sample Tools section of this toolkit provides a copy of the online survey instrument, and the email invitation to participate.

### **Task 9.2 – Conduct interviews with employers.**

Interviews with approximately 20 employers from **key and emerging industries** can provide more detailed information about specific occupations within each industry, and the wages and skills required. These interviews can be conducted with representatives who are directly connected to the primary firms within your community, including owners, managers, union representatives, and industry associations. Key informants who participated in the community asset interviews may be willing to help conduct some of the interviews.

The purpose of the interviews is to learn more about the actual skills associated with a job, the hiring practices and problems of firms, what they are really looking for in a particular category of employee, how they assess their competitive challenges moving forward, and what they intend to do to meet them. In particular, the interviews can probe for the following types of information:

- Occupational areas of greatest skill shortages
- Skill shortage areas with the best wages, job security or mobility
- Extent to which the demand will continue in the future
- Entry-level requirements in skill shortage occupations, including the education and skill requirements
- Educational background of current employees in skill shortage areas
- Number of trained graduates with the required skill set expected to hire (this year, next year, in five years, etc.)

- Wage differences between trained graduates and untrained employees hired for the same position
- Availability of, and interest in, workplace training programs

The Sample Tools section of this toolkit provides copies of the email invitation to participate and the interview questionnaire.

### **Task 9.3 – Hold focus groups with prospective learners.**

Depending on the demographic profile of the community of interest, it may be useful to hold more than one focus group to target specific groups (such as Aboriginal learners or newcomers). The focus groups should include adults who have not participated in Campus Alberta programs, but may be interested in accessing programs in the future. Participants can be identified through contacts with current learners, and by requesting assistance from representatives of the **informal learning assets** identified during the asset mapping process.

Incentives to participate in the focus groups should be offered, such as cash or gift cards. In addition, a meal or light refreshments should be provided to create a fun, social atmosphere for the group.

The Sample Tools section of this toolkit provides copies of the materials needed for participant recruitment, including the tracking spreadsheet and email to contacts requesting assistance with recruitment, as well as the focus group discussion guide.

### **Task 9.4 – Organize a community forum.**

The community forum builds on the community asset mapping process, and provides an opportunity to share findings about factors that facilitate and impede the community's ability to fully benefit from the assets available.

The forum should be held during the evening, and should include food. Donations of door prizes may be solicited from local businesses, and offered to encourage attendance at the forum. Maintain a sign-in sheet so you can follow up with participants about the results of the assessment.

Copies of the community learning profile prepared in Step 3 should be available at the event, as well as the revised community assets inventory (excluding the list of individuals). The Sample Tools section of this toolkit provides the community forum moderator's guide and activities.

The purpose of the forum is to get community input on:

- Opportunities for maximizing the conditions that enable the community to take advantage of community learning assets
- Leveraging opportunities
- Prioritizing the gaps or barriers that should be addressed first

## **Step 10 – Analyze assessment results.**

Once the information gathering phase is over, it will be necessary for you to review the data collected to find groupings, patterns, similarities and differences in how different groups see the key issues. This analysis will help to identify priorities and importance, which can then be used to strategize possible solutions and growth opportunities.

Some questions to keep in mind while analyzing the results include:

- What are the areas of agreement between key informants, service providers, employers, prospective learners and the community on adult learning needs?
- What are the areas of disagreement?
- Which needs of adult learners are currently being met?
- Which needs could be met through new partnerships or collaborations?
- Which needs are not being met that require new program development?
- Have you uncovered any areas that should be addressed that you were not previously aware of?
- Which services are easiest for learners to access and why?
- What are the barriers they may experience in having their needs met?
- What are the economic development implications of not meeting the identified needs? The answer to this will help you prioritize what needs to work on first.

### **Step 11 – Prioritize needs and brainstorm solutions.**

Data from the Community Forum will provide some valuable insights into the priority issues to be addressed and the potential solutions.

A helpful way to prioritize the needs is by means of a prioritization matrix. This is a decision-making tool that allows you to identify—in a simple and objective manner—those options that are most and least important to you. The method allows you to compare options systematically and record your comparisons, resulting in a prioritized list. The Sample Tools section of the toolkit includes an example of a Prioritization Matrix tool.

Once the list is prepared, the NAC should brainstorm suggestions for how these needs can be met using current resources, and how assets could be leveraged to bring in other resources to help meet the needs.

# After the Assessment

## Step 12 – Communicate results.

It is important to share the results of the assessment with all those who contributed in the process. This might be accomplished through a short report that outlines the key points with your plans to address the findings. The Sample Tools section includes an example of the report outline.

Providing feedback allows you to:

- Show your appreciation for your community’s involvement in the project
- Increase buy-in and ownership for the results
- Assist with the implementation of any decisions
- Make people more willing to participate in future needs assessments

In addition to following up with the individual participants in the assessment, you can share the results with the contacts created in the community assets inventory.

## Step 13 – Roll up results to regional level.

Once the Campus Alberta Needs Assessment System has been developed, it will be possible to aggregate community learning assessment data collected from different areas within the region to inform CCI program decision-making. The process outlined in this toolkit will generate the following sources of local data that can be entered into a provincial system:

- Learner profiles from CALC intake forms
- Learner preferences from CALC evaluation data
- Community asset enablers, linkages, barriers, gaps
- Service provider survey data
- Employer skill needs
- Prospective learner interests
- Community learning priorities



# Sample Tools

## Community Learning Needs Assessment Budget Template

The geographic scope of your assessment, and any cost-sharing arrangements with other community partners, will affect the overall budget. To help manage the tasks, it may be possible to hire an external consultant or postsecondary student. The table below shows some of the items that should be included in your needs assessment budget.

<b>BUDGET ITEM</b>	<b>AMOUNT</b>
NAC meeting refreshments	
Printing (community learning profile, asset tables, surveys , community forum poster, final report)	
Advertising	
Community forum facility costs	
Catering (focus groups, community forum)	
Materials and supplies (paper, name tags, markers, flip charts, tape, coloured dots)	
Focus group incentives (gift cards, cash, etc.	
Communication (postage, fax, courier, long distance, etc.)	
Data entry	
Data analysis	
Travel/mileage expenses	
Consultant fees	
Overtime costs	
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	
<b>TOTAL</b>	

## **NAC Terms of Reference**

**MEMBERSHIP:** Approximately 10 members, including at least one (1) representative of the CCI leading the needs assessment, up to five (5) representatives of CALCs, community literacy providers, and other employment, education, and training providers within the stewardship region, up to three (3) representatives of employers, and at least one (1) representative of adult learners. The committee will be chaired by the CCI representative.

**TIME COMMITMENT:** It is expected that the NAC will meet approximately twice a month over the duration of the project.

### **RESPONSIBILITIES:**

#### **Duties of the Chair**

- Assemble committee members
- Assist team to develop agenda items, collaborate and share responsibilities
- Conduct meetings
- Ensure that minutes are taken and distributed to members
- Ensure that members are notified of meetings and agendas
- Send out email invitations to key informants and service providers to participate in interviews and online survey
- Oversee the implementation of needs assessment tasks
- Liaise between the NAC and any external contractors
- Sign and administer any partner contracts/Letters of Agreement for joint assessments
- Manage budget and provide financial reports to the NAC

#### **Duties of the NAC**

- Share relevant information/previous studies with other NAC members
- Define geographic boundary for the assessment
- Participate in developing community learning profiles
- Brainstorm initial list of assets and create asset inventory
- Identify key informants and conduct key informant interviews
- Contribute to analysis of community learning profile and key informant interview findings
- Plan future phases of needs assessment activities
- Participate in conducting employer interviews
- Attend community forum
- Review analysis of data collected from needs assessment activities (which could include employer interviews, online survey and focus groups)
- Participate in prioritization exercise to determine solutions
- Review and help disseminate findings

## CALC Intake Survey

Name: (First) \_\_\_\_\_ (Last) \_\_\_\_\_

Address: (Street) \_\_\_\_\_

(RR #): \_\_\_\_\_

(City/Town/Village): \_\_\_\_\_

(Postal Code): \_\_\_\_\_

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

Year of birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Gender:

- Male
- Female

Where were you born?

- Canada
- Other country What country were you born in? \_\_\_\_\_  
How many years have you been in Canada? \_\_\_\_\_  
What languages do you speak? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you identify as an Aboriginal person?

- Yes, First Nation
- Yes, Métis
- Yes, Inuit
- No

Do you need childcare to participate in adult learning courses or programs?

- Yes
- No

How far would you be willing to travel to attend classes in another community?

- I would not travel to another community
- Up to 10 km
- 11-20 km
- 21-50 km
- More than 50 km

What is your highest level of education?

- Did not complete high school
- Completed high school
- Attended college or university
- Completed college or university

Are you currently employed?

- Yes
- No

If no. Are you currently seeking employment, or planning to seek employment within the next year?

- Yes
- No

**IF EMPLOYED**

What skills would help you do your job better?

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What other skills are you interested in learning?

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**IF SEEKING EMPLOYMENT**

What is your job or career goal?

---

What skills or qualifications do you need to help you achieve your goal?

---

What other skills are you interested in learning?

---

**IF NOT EMPLOYED AND NOT SEEKING EMPLOYMENT**

What skills are you interested in learning?

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What kind of classes would you be most interested in? (Check all that apply)

- Classroom instruction in the community
- Classroom instruction at a post-secondary institution
- Online/internet courses that I can do at home
- Correspondence/distance learning courses that I can do at home
- Videoconference facility with other learners
- Combination of classroom and online

When is the best time of year for you to attend classes? (Check all that apply)

- Summer
- Fall
- Winter

- Spring

What is the best day of the week for you to attend classes? (Check all that apply)

- Monday
- Tuesday
- Wednesday
- Thursday
- Friday
- Saturday

When is the best time of day for you to attend classes? (Check all that apply)

- Morning
- Afternoon
- Evening

### Course/Program/Workshop Evaluation Data

CALC evaluation forms can potentially provide a valuable source of data to inform community learning needs assessments. The forms can gather information about learner interest in a customized list of specific course options, developed to be relevant to the content of the CALC course or program being evaluated. Options for future learning opportunities can also be drawn from learner skill interests identified in the intake surveys, or from specific skill needs identified by employers. The list should be limited to about six or seven possible options.

Two examples of potential learning opportunities are provided in the table below. This question format offers the following advantages:

- Easy to complete
- Easy for clients to understand
- Information on levels of interest in future skills can assist with program planning decisions
- Can be used online or in print
- Easy to enter and track data

To help with future program planning, please use a check-mark (✓) to indicate the extent to which you would like additional training in the skills listed below.

SKILLS	No training needed	Some training needed	In-depth training needed
Communicating effectively			
Effective business writing			

Adapted from PennState Cooperative Extension (2008), *Using an Evaluation for a Needs Assessment*. Accessed September 23, 2012 from: <http://extension.psu.edu/evaluation/pdf/TS87.pdf>.

## Community Learning Profile

### Community Overview

- Population – Growing or declining?
- Age – Aging or young families moving in?
- Sex
- Educational attainment (less than high school, completed high school, no post-secondary education) – What proportion of adults are less than high school? How does distribution compare to province?
- Presence of children in the home and lone parent families – How many families have children living at home? How many adults live in lone parent families?
- Median income (two parent and lone parent families) – Above or below provincial average? What proportion of adults are low income?

### Community Diversity

- Aboriginal identity population
- Age
- Sex
- Educational attainment
- Presence of children in the home
- Income
- Numbers of self-identified Aboriginal students attending local elementary and secondary schools (on and off-reserve)
- Recent immigrants
- Temporary foreign workers
- Permanent residents
- Numbers of ESL students attending local elementary and secondary schools

### Community Learning

- Levels of prose literacy, health literacy, document literacy, and numeracy
- Population unable to conduct a conversation in English
- High school graduation rates
- CCI program data
- CALC program data
- E-campus Alberta participation data
- Skill interests (from intake and evaluation forms)

### Our Workforce

- Labour market participation rates
- Employment and unemployment rates – Increasing or decreasing? How does unemployment rate compare to literacy levels?
- Occupation profiles – What are the major occupations?
- Industry profiles – New/emerging, growing, stable, or declining? Any clusters?
- Major employers – What are the main occupations?
- Firm size – Are firms adding employees, maintaining or laying off?
- Average wages

- Vacancy rates by occupation
- Employment outlooks

### Community Learning Profile Data Sources

Type	Sources
<p>Community demographics</p> <p>Most important indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Population</li> <li>• Age</li> <li>• Sex</li> <li>• Educational attainment (less than high school, completed high school, no post-secondary education)</li> <li>• Presence of children in the home and lone parent families</li> <li>• Median income (two parent and lone parent families)</li> </ul>	<p>Statistics Canada, 2006 and 2011 Census</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">2011 Alberta community profiles</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">2006 Alberta community profiles</a></li> </ul> <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">2006-2011 population change by community</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">2011 age and sex by community</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">2011 private households by household type</a></li> </ul> <p>Community Information Database (CID) (<a href="http://www.cid-bdc.ca">www.cid-bdc.ca</a>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Go to “Generate a community profile”</li> <li>• Enter community name and generate profile</li> <li>• Use drop down menu to select indicators</li> </ul> <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Go to “Start mapping”</li> <li>• Click on census subdivision</li> <li>• In “Information about Selection” box, select “Detailed report”</li> </ul> <p>Early Childhood Development Mapping Project Alberta (<a href="http://www.ecmap.ca">www.ecmap.ca</a>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Socio-economic status (SES) data</li> </ul>
<p>Learning indicators</p> <p>Most important indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Levels of prose literacy, health literacy, document literacy, and numeracy</li> <li>• Population unable to conduct a conversation in English</li> <li>• High school graduation rates</li> <li>• E-campus Alberta participation rates</li> </ul>	<p>Canadian Council on Learning*</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://www.ccl-cca.ca/ccflash/proseliteracy/map_prairies_e.html">www.ccl-cca.ca/ccflash/proseliteracy/map_prairies_e.html</a></li> <li>• <a href="http://www.ccl-cca.ca/ccflash/healthliteracy/map_prairies_e.html">www.ccl-cca.ca/ccflash/healthliteracy/map_prairies_e.html</a></li> <li>• <a href="http://www.ccl-cca.ca/ccflash/documentliteracy/map_canada_e.html">www.ccl-cca.ca/ccflash/documentliteracy/map_canada_e.html</a></li> <li>• <a href="http://www.ccl-cca.ca/ccflash/numeracy/map_canada_e.html">www.ccl-cca.ca/ccflash/numeracy/map_canada_e.html</a></li> </ul> <p>*Given the closure of the Canadian Council on Learning, this data is unlikely to be updated</p> <p>High school graduation rates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://education.alberta.ca/media/6725992/hsc_ratesbyjur_may2012.pdf">http://education.alberta.ca/media/6725992/hsc_ratesbyjur_may2012.pdf</a></li> </ul> <p>E-campus Alberta</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participation rates by community</li> </ul>
<p>Aboriginal demographics</p> <p>Most important indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aboriginal identity population</li> <li>• Numbers of self-identified Aboriginal students attending local elementary and secondary schools (on and off-reserve)</li> <li>• Age</li> </ul>	<p>Community Information Database (CID) (<a href="http://www.cid-bdc.ca">www.cid-bdc.ca</a>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proportion of Aboriginal peoples by community from</li> </ul> <p>Local school boards</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-identified Aboriginal student enrolments</li> </ul> <p>Statistics Canada 2006 Aboriginal Population Profile</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://www12.statcan.ca/census-recensement/2006/dp-pd/prof/92-594/index.cfm?Lang=E">www12.statcan.ca/census-recensement/2006/dp-pd/prof/92-594/index.cfm?Lang=E</a></li> </ul> <p>Government of Alberta reports</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Alberta Labour Force Profiles, Aboriginals 2011</a></li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sex</li> <li>• Educational attainment</li> <li>• Presence of children in the home</li> <li>• Income</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Connecting the Dots: Aboriginal Workforce and Economic Development in Alberta</a></li> </ul>
<p>Immigrant demographics</p> <p>Most important indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recent immigrants</li> <li>• Temporary foreign workers</li> <li>• Permanent residents</li> <li>• Numbers of ESL students attending local elementary and secondary schools</li> </ul>	<p>Community Information Database (CID) (<a href="http://www.cid-bdc.ca">www.cid-bdc.ca</a>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proportion of immigrants by community</li> </ul> <p>Local school boards</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ESL student enrolments</li> </ul> <p>Citizenship and Immigration Canada</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Temporary foreign workers by selected urban community <a href="http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/statistics/facts2011/temporary/09.asp">www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/statistics/facts2011/temporary/09.asp</a></li> <li>• Permanent residents by selected urban community <a href="http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/statistics/facts2011/permanent/11.asp">www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/statistics/facts2011/permanent/11.asp</a></li> </ul> <p>Government of Alberta reports</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Alberta Immigration Progress Report 2011</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Alberta Labour Force Profiles, Immigrants 2011</a></li> </ul>
<p>Labour market information</p> <p>Most important indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employment outlooks</li> <li>• Labour market participation</li> <li>• Employment and unemployment rates</li> <li>• Occupation and industry</li> </ul>	<p>Working in Canada (<a href="http://www.workingincanada.gc.ca">http://www.workingincanada.gc.ca</a>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employment outlooks by community</li> <li>• Select “Job Market trends”</li> <li>• Go to “Wage &amp; Outlook Report”</li> <li>• Select “Compare outlook”</li> <li>• Enter location or postal code</li> </ul> <p>Community Information Database (CID) (<a href="http://www.cid-bdc.ca">www.cid-bdc.ca</a>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Labour market participation and employment rates</li> <li>• Occupation and industry information</li> </ul> <p>Government of Alberta reports</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Top 50 Occupations in Alberta by Vacancy Rates</a> by economic region</li> </ul>
<p>Economic overview</p> <p>Most important indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Major employers</li> <li>• Firm size</li> <li>• Average wages</li> </ul>	<p>Regional Economic Development Alliance (REDA) profiles <a href="http://eae.alberta.ca/economic-development/regional-development/redas.aspx">http://eae.alberta.ca/economic-development/regional-development/redas.aspx</a></p> <p>Economic Base and Economic Facts from <a href="http://www.albertacommunityprofiles.com/">www.albertacommunityprofiles.com/</a></p>



## Community Asset Mapping

Data gathered from the brainstorming exercise by the NAC should be entered in the spreadsheets below. The individual asset inventory should be stored as a separate spreadsheet, and available only to members of the NAC or other partner organizations. The data for informal learning assets, formal learning assets, connective organizations, and labour market assets can be captured in a single spreadsheet, to be made publicly available for community use. See the embedded Excel spreadsheets for inventory templates.



Asset Inventory.xlsx



Individual Assets.xlsx

The asset names and programs collected for the spreadsheet should be entered into the summary table below, to be provided to key informants in advance of the interviews. Enabling and barrier factors will be filled in following the key informant interviews.

### ASSET INVENTORY - SUMMARY TABLE

<b>Informal Learning Assets</b>	<b>Enabling Factors</b>	<b>Barrier Factors</b>
<i>Agency/group/association name</i>		
<b>Formal Learning Assets</b>	<b>Enabling Factors</b>	<b>Barrier Factors</b>
<i>Organization/agency and programs</i>		
<b>Connective Organizations</b>	<b>Enabling Factors</b>	<b>Barrier Factors</b>
<i>Group/association name</i>		
<b>Labour Market Assets</b>	<b>Enabling Factors</b>	<b>Barrier Factors</b>
<i>Names of major employers Sectors</i>		

## Key Informant Interviews – Invitation to Participate

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am (*position*) at (*name of CCI*). (*Name of CCI*) is working with (*names of NAC partner organizations*) to conduct a community learning needs assessment. I am contacting you on behalf of the committee to invite your participation in an interview about community learning assets.

The purpose of the needs assessment is to support adult learning and labour market participation by better understanding the educational needs of adult learners in the community and the skill needs of local employers. The assessment will help to identify the learning assets that already exist within the community, and contribute to the development of new education and training programs to address gaps.

As part of the needs assessment process, we created a community learning profile and an inventory of the learning assets that are currently available in the community. Assets are defined as “the facilities, organizations, services, programs, and other resources that exist within the community (or are used by local residents) to support adult learning and labour market participation.” They are grouped into four categories:

- **Informal learning assets** - groups and resources that support adult learning, but do not directly deliver programming (for example, faith and cultural organizations, community centres, or service clubs).
- **Formal learning assets** - formal education service providers who deliver education and training programs within the community.
- **Connective organizations** - groups that connect businesses, employers or other members of the community with an interest in economic and workforce development.
- **Labour market assets** - key employers within the community, the sectors that make up the economic base, and emerging industries or sectors.

Now we want to understand the factors that help the community make use of these assets, and the factors that present barriers. These factors might be related to proximity (e.g. physical location and public transit), access (e.g. hours of service, fees and eligibility), capacity (e.g. resources and staffing) and characteristics (e.g. cultural services, public awareness and reputation).

Given your knowledge of the community, we hope that you will participate in a telephone interview, about one hour in length, to review a summary of the asset inventory and help identify enabling and barrier factors. Please let me know if you would be willing to participate, and the best date and time to reach you. We would like to complete the interviews by (*date*), but have some flexibility to accommodate your availability.

If you agree to an interview, one of the members of our Needs Assessment Committee will contact you to schedule a convenient time. We will send you the community learning profile and the asset inventory in advance, and would ask you to review the inventory before the interview. I will also send you the interview questionnaire.

Thank you very much for considering this request. Please feel free to contact me at (*tel.*) or (*email address*) if you have any questions about the community learning needs assessment. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Regards,

## Key Informant Interviews – Questionnaire

KEY INFORMANT NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

COMMUNITY: \_\_\_\_\_

ORGANIZATION: \_\_\_\_\_

POSITION: \_\_\_\_\_

CONTACT: Tel. \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

INTERVIEWER: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you very much for agreeing to participate in this interview! Is this still a convenient time? Did you have a chance to review the asset summary we sent to you? *(If no, ask if the interview can be rescheduled to allow them to review the summary).*

I want to let you know that we will be sharing the overall findings from these interviews with the community later in the process. However, the results will be reported thematically only, and nothing you say during the interview will be attributed to you personally.

*(If audio-recording is used, Also, I would like to audio-record this interview to help me with my notes – do I have your permission to do that?)*

We would also like to be able to identify you as one of the key informants who participated in the process. Are you willing to be identified as a key informant?

- Yes *(confirm name, position and organization)*
- No

1. To begin, can you tell me a bit about the role of your organization in the community, particularly as it relates to adult learning and the local labour market?

### ASSET INVENTORY

2. When you were reviewing the list of assets we sent you before this interview, did you think of any other community learning assets that were not already on the list? Please describe them to me, and which category you would put them in.

We're now going to look at the first two categories of learning assets on the asset list: informal learning and formal learning. We want to understand the factors that encourage or enable people to make use of these assets. We also want to understand the barriers that prevent people from making the best use of the assets.

The factors and barriers can be related to location, fees, subsidies, waiting lists, eligibility, staffing, hours of operation, awareness of services, reputation, cultural services, employer involvement, and more.

For example, people might make of an asset because it is accessible by public transit or free of charge. They might be prevented from using it because of long waiting lists, costs, or eligibility criteria.

### **INFORMAL LEARNING ASSETS**

3. Looking at the list of informal learning assets, which would you say are most useful to support adult learning and skills training?
4. What are the factors that encourage adult learners to make use of these assets?
5. Which of these assets could be better used to support adult learning? How?
6. What are the barriers to people using these assets?

### **FORMAL LEARNING ASSETS**

7. Looking at the list of formal learning assets, which would you say are most useful to support adult learning and skills training?
8. What are the factors that encourage adult learners to make use of these assets?
9. Which of these assets could be better used to support adult learning? How?
10. What are the barriers to people using these assets?

Now I'd like to talk to you about the next two categories of assets: connective organizations and labour market assets. We want to understand the factors that enable these assets to support adult learning and skills training. Some factors might be: size of membership, numbers of employees, partnerships, sector involvement, workplace training programs, etc.

We also want to understand the barriers that limit the involvement of these assets with adult learning and skills training. Some examples of barriers might be size, lack of resources, lack of connections to other businesses, etc.

### **CONNECTIVE ORGANIZATIONS**

11. Looking at the list of connective organizations, which would you say are most useful to support adult learning and skills training?
12. What are the factors that enable these assets to support adult learning and skills training?
13. Which of these assets could be better used to support adult learning and skills training? How?
14. What are the barriers to the involvement of these assets with adult learning and skills training?

## **LABOUR MARKET ASSETS**

15. Looking at the list of labour market assets, which would you say are most useful to support adult learning and skills training?
16. What are the factors that enable these assets to support adult learning and skills training?
17. Which of these assets could be better used to support adult learning and skills training? How?
18. What are the barriers to the involvement of these assets with adult learning and skills training?

## **LINKAGES AND GAPS**

19. Looking over all four categories, are you aware of any partnerships or linkages that currently exist between assets?
20. Do you see any opportunities for NEW partnerships or linkages? Please describe.
21. Do you see any gaps in the community learning asset base? Please describe.
22. Do you have ideas on how the gaps could be addressed?

**Thank you very much for your time and assistance!** I only have a couple more questions before we complete this interview.

23. Would you be willing to help with the next phase of this needs assessment? We are looking for volunteers to help interview employers about their specific skill needs.
24. Can you suggest any one else who might be willing to assist with the employer interviews?
25. Do you have any other comments you would like to share?

**Thank you!!!**

## Key Informant Interviews – Data Capture Template

Once interviews are completed, data can be entered into the embedded Excel spreadsheet.



Key Informant Data  
Capture Template.xls

To enter the data, assign each completed interview a number as follows:

- Group organizations in similar sectors (1=municipal, 2=economic development, 3=education & training, 4=employment & workforce development, 5=community services)
- Assign each key informant a number by sector (1a, 1b, 2a, 2b, 2c, etc.)

When analyzing the data, look for patterns and similarities across key informant responses to identify key themes. Also look for points of divergence.

Once the data has been analyzed and the themes have been identified, enter the results into the summary tables below. These results will be shared with the community during the community forum.

<b>Informal Learning Assets</b>	<b>Enabling Factors</b>	<b>Barrier Factors</b>
<i>Agency/group/association name</i>		
<b>Formal Learning Assets</b>	<b>Enabling Factors</b>	<b>Barrier Factors</b>
<i>Organization/agency and programs</i>		
<b>Connective Organizations</b>	<b>Enabling Factors</b>	<b>Barrier Factors</b>
<i>Group/association name</i>		
<b>Labour Market Assets</b>	<b>Enabling Factors</b>	<b>Barrier Factors</b>
<i>Names of major employers Sectors</i>		

<b>Current linkages</b>	
<b>Potential linkages</b>	
<b>Gaps</b>	
<b>Solutions</b>	

## Community Learning Needs Assessment – Media Release

DATE, LOCATION - (*Name of CCI*) is working with (*names of NAC partner organizations*) to conduct a community learning needs assessment. The purpose of the assessment is to support adult learning and labour market participation by better understanding the educational needs of adult learners in the community and the skill needs of local employers.

The community learning needs assessment will help to identify the learning assets that already exist within the community, and contribute to the development of new education and training programs to address gaps.

The first phase of the needs assessment involved the development of a community learning profile and community learning asset map (an inventory of the resources available that support adult learning and labour market participation). Key informants from within the community helped to identify the factors that enable and prevent learners from taking full advantage of the assets.

The next phase of the needs assessment will focus on leveraging and strengthening the links between the assets, and developing solutions to address gaps. It will include the following activities:

- Online survey of education and training providers
- Employer interviews to identify specific skill needs
- Focus groups with prospective adult learners

Findings from the needs assessment will be shared at a Community Forum to be held at (*location*) at (*time*) on (*date*).

For more information, contact \_\_\_\_\_ at (*tel*) or (*email address*).



## Engaging With First Nations, Métis and Inuit Communities

Engaging with Aboriginal communities means respecting the rights of First Nations to approve and participate in developing the research paradigm. It requires the researchers to ensure transparency, to learn about and adhere to local protocols, and to allow the proper time to develop relationships (Assembly of First Nations, 2009). The National Aboriginal Health Organization identifies four basic principles that affirm the rights of First Nations and Métis communities to self-determination in the area of research:

- **Ownership** – First Nations communities have a right to own their cultural knowledge and all information that is produced from this knowledge, the same way that individuals own their personal information.
- **Control** – First Nations, their communities and leaders have the right to control every stage of a research project, from start to finish. This includes the resources involved, the review process, creating the research design, handling the information, and developing new policy based on the research results.
- **Access** – First Nations must have access to information about themselves and their communities without facing any barriers, regardless of where it is held. They must also be able to make decisions concerning who has access to their information and how this access is given.
- **Possession** – While ownership describes the relationship between a people and its information in terms of a right, possession is the physical control over the information. Possession is a way for First Nations to assert their ownership and protect their information. If information is owned by someone but possessed by someone else, there is a risk that the information can be leaked or misused.

From National Aboriginal Health Organization – Métis Centre. (2005). *Needs Assessment Guide for Métis Communities*. Accessed November 24, 2012 from [www.naho.ca/documents/metiscentre/english/MCNeedsAssesmentGuideforMetisCommunitiesFINAL\\_June\\_07.pdf](http://www.naho.ca/documents/metiscentre/english/MCNeedsAssesmentGuideforMetisCommunitiesFINAL_June_07.pdf)

In Alberta, each Aboriginal community has its own cultural and social traditions, with protocols that reflect the customs of the people or community. Since protocols vary between communities and individuals, it is important to connect with a knowledgeable member of the community to understand the proper protocols. This must be done each time you enter into a partnership, since protocols can change in a community, for example when a new chief and council are elected, and can also depend on whether the situation is informal or formal.

Protocols are codes of etiquette that describe appropriate and respectful behaviour and ways of communicating when working with or visiting Aboriginal communities. Understanding and following protocols can bring about meaningful conversations that are relevant to the people involved. Following protocols can help:

- Build trusting, honest relationships
- Show respect for Aboriginal cultures, values and beliefs

- Allow people to speak in the voice and style of their cultural group
- Create balance in the consultation and negotiation process
- Improve relationships with Aboriginal communities.

When respecting protocols, it is important to keep Aboriginal beliefs and values in mind:

- **Respect** – Get to know the community members, and understand and honour their protocols, expectations and unique qualities without stereotyping.
- **Diversity** – There are similarities and differences within and between Aboriginal communities, related to languages, cultures and traditions.
- **Oral traditions** – Personal contact and dialogue are extremely important.
- **Time** – It takes time to learn about Aboriginal communities and their members.
- **History** – Western cultures have played a role in shaping Aboriginal communities in the past and present.
- **Humility** – Treat each person as an equal. Titles and positions, such as teachers and school administrators, may not be considered authoritative positions in a community.
- **Family** – Family, extended family and community obligations have a higher priority than business and other concerns.

Adapted from Alberta Education. (2005). *Our words, our ways : Teaching First Nations, Métis and Inuit learners*. Accessed October 14, 2012 from [www.education.gov.ab.ca/k\\_12/curriculum/other.asp](http://www.education.gov.ab.ca/k_12/curriculum/other.asp).

## Engaging with Newcomer Populations

As shown in the table below, working with newcomers requires understanding the ways in which cultural norms shape many different dimensions of culture. The table is included in *The Toolbox of Ideas for Smaller Centres on Attracting & Retaining Immigrants*, developed by the Inter-Cultural Association of Greater Victoria (<http://integration-net.ca/english/ini/wci-idca/tbo/index.htm>).

Dimensions of Culture	Western Culture	Non-Western Culture
Sense of self & space	Informal Handshake	Formal Hugs, bows, handshakes
Communication & language	Explicit, direct communication Emphasis on content (meaning found in words)	Implicit, indirect communication Emphasis on context ( meaning found around words)
Dress & appearance	"Dress for success" ideal Wide range in accepted dress	Dress seen as a sign of position, wealth, prestige Religious rules
Food & eating habits	Eating as a necessity (fast food)	Dining as a social experience Religious rules
Time & time consciousness	Linear and exact time consciousness Value on promptness (time = money)	Elastic and relative time consciousness Time spent on enjoyment of relationships
Relationships, family, friends	Focus on nuclear family Responsibility for self Value on youth, age seen as handicap	Focus on extended family Loyalty & responsibility to family Age given status and respect
Values & norms	Individual orientation Independence Preference for direct confrontation of conflict	Group orientation Conformity Preference for harmony
Beliefs & attitudes	Egalitarian Challenging of authority Individuals control their destiny Gender equity	Hierarchical Respect for authority and social order Individuals accept their destiny Different roles for men & women
Mental processes & learning style	Linear, logical, sequential Problem-solving focus	Lateral, holistic, simultaneous Accepting of life's difficulties
Work habits & practices	Emphasis on task Reward based on individual achievement Work has intrinsic value	Emphasis on relationships Rewards based on seniority, relationships Work is a necessity of life

(Adapted from Gardenswartz & Rowe. (1994). *The Managing Diversity Survival Guide*.)

The toolbox offers the following guidelines to support community collaboration with diverse ethnocultural groups:

- **Learn** from generalizations about other cultures, but don't use those generalizations to stereotype, "write off," or oversimplify your ideas about another person. The best use of a

generalization is to add it to your storehouse of knowledge so that you better understand and appreciate other interesting, multi-faceted human beings.

- **Practice**, practice, practice in order to improve cross-cultural communication.
- **Don't assume** that there is one right way (yours!) to communicate. Keep questioning your assumptions about the “right way” to communicate. For example, think about your body language. Postures that indicate receptivity in one culture might indicate aggressiveness in another.
- **Search** for ways to make the communication work, rather than searching for who should receive the blame for the breakdown. Don't assume that breakdowns in communication occur because other people are on the wrong track.
- **Listen** actively and empathetically. Try to put yourself in the other person's shoes. Especially when another person's perceptions or ideas are very different from your own, you might need to operate at the edge of your own comfort zone.
- **Respect** others' choices about whether to engage in communication with you. Honor their opinions about what is going on.
- **Stop**, suspend judgment, and try to look at the situation as an outsider.
- **Be prepared** for a discussion of the past. Use this as an opportunity to develop an understanding from “the other's” point of view, rather than getting defensive or impatient.
- **Acknowledge** historical events that have taken place. Be open to learning more about them. Honest acknowledgment of the mistreatment and oppression that have taken place on the basis of cultural difference is vital for effective communication.
- **Awareness** of current power imbalances – and openness to hearing each other's perceptions of those imbalances – is also necessary for understanding each other and working together.

Adapted from Inter-Cultural Association of Greater Victoria. (2007). *Toolbox of Ideas for Smaller Centres on Attracting & Retaining Immigrants*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Accessed November 12, 2012 from [www.icavictoria.org/services/resources/toolbox-ideas](http://www.icavictoria.org/services/resources/toolbox-ideas).

## Assessing Your Organization's Cultural Competence

The following checklist can be used to assess your organization's readiness to engage in culturally competent outreach and partnership activities with culturally diverse communities.

A culturally competent organization:

- ✓ Has a plan in place to develop and nurture relationships with culturally diverse communities.
- ✓ Involves culturally diverse staff, volunteers and community members in developing outreach strategies.
- ✓ Identifies communication networks (such as use of ethnic newspapers, and TV and radio programs) that will reach members of diverse cultural groups.
- ✓ Promotes cultural diversity and is sensitive to cultural nuances in developing its messages for communication.
- ✓ Allocates adequate human and financial resources for outreach activities.
- ✓ Develops meaningful partnerships between the organization and ethnocultural and immigrant serving organizations.
- ✓ Encourages employees to use, as appropriate, the expertise of community leaders, natural healers, elders and other cultural brokers in service delivery.
- ✓ Encourages employees to participate in community networks that advance cultural competence in the organization and in the community.
- ✓ Has ongoing consultations with culturally diverse communities that help guide its policy development, management and administration practices, and service delivery.
- ✓ Has a comprehensive strategy to seek and facilitate participation of culturally diverse communities in the different organizational levels (governance, administration and management, and service delivery).
- ✓ Has support in place for culturally diverse members to facilitate their equitable, effective participation in the different organizational levels (governance, administration and management, and service delivery).

Adapted from Ngo, H. V. (2008). *Cultural competence: A guide for organizational change*. Calgary: Citizenship and Immigration Canada. Accessed November 13, 2012 from [http://justice.alberta.ca/programs\\_services/humanrights/pubsandresources/Publications/CulturalCompetency.aspx](http://justice.alberta.ca/programs_services/humanrights/pubsandresources/Publications/CulturalCompetency.aspx)

## Education Service Provider Survey – Invitation to Participate

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am (*position*) at (*name of CCI*). (*Name of CCI*) is working with (*names of NAC partner organizations*) to conduct a community learning needs assessment. I am contacting you on behalf of the committee to invite your participation in a survey of local education and training providers.

The purpose of the needs assessment is to support adult learning and labour market participation by better understanding the educational needs of adult learners in the community and the skill needs of local employers. The assessment will help to identify the learning assets that already exist within the community, and contribute to the development of new education and training programs to address gaps.

The first phase of the needs assessment involved the development of a community learning profile and community learning asset map (an inventory of the resources available that support adult learning and labour market participation). Assets are defined as “the facilities, organizations, services, programs, and other resources that exist within the community (or are used by local residents) to support adult learning and labour market participation.” Following the needs assessment process, the information collected in the asset inventory will be shared with the community.

We invite you to participate in a brief online survey about your experiences with adult learners. The survey will also collect more details for the asset inventory. Please click on the link below to access the survey: \_\_\_\_\_

The information you provide will help us strengthen linkages, identify gaps, and develop new programs to address learning and labour market needs.

We hope you will consider participating in the online survey. Please feel free to contact me at (*tel*) or (*email address*) if you have any questions about the survey or the community learning needs assessment.

Regards,

## Education Service Provider Survey – Online Survey Instrument

### Welcome to the Community Learning Needs Assessment Survey (Landing Page)

(Name of CCI) is working with (names of NAC partner organizations) to conduct a community learning needs assessment. The assessment will help identify the learning assets that are available within the community to support adult learning and labour market participation. The results will help better leverage existing programs and develop new education and training programs to address gaps.

### Information and Privacy Statement

This survey is designed to collect information on the learning assets that exist within the community. The survey also gathers information about the needs of adult learners and the local labour market.

The information collected in this survey is in accordance with the Alberta Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act and will be used solely for the purposes of the community learning needs assessment. Your participation in this survey is completely voluntary. You have the right to refuse to answer any questions and to leave the survey at any time.

One of the goals of the assessment is to create an asset inventory that will become a shared community resource. To help create the inventory, some identifying information will be requested from you in this survey. You will be asked for consent to share this information in the asset directory. In addition, you will be contacted before the asset inventory is made public, to review and approve the information that is included about your organization.

This project has been approved by the (CCI) research ethics committee. If you have any questions or concerns about the collection or use of this information, please contact (name) at (tel.) or (email address).

By clicking on the link below, you are consenting to participate in the Community Learning Needs Assessment Survey.

### **PART 1 – COMMUNITY ADULT LEARNING ASSETS**

What is the name of your organization, group or agency? \_\_\_\_\_

Please indicate the communities that you serve (check all that apply):  
(Customized drop-down list)

What is the sector of your organization, group or agency?

- Municipal
- Provincial government
- Federal government
- Non-profit
- Private
- Other, please specify

Please indicate the main types of programs/services you provide (check all that apply).

- Adult basic education/essential skills
- Postsecondary credit programming
- English as a Second Language (ESL) or French as a Second Language (FSL)
- Adjustment programs for displaced workers
- Re-training for injured workers
- Employability enhancement
- Workplace training programs
- Vocational programming/certification
- Other, please specify

Approximately how many clients do you serve each year? (open-ended)

Who are the main client groups you serve? (check all that apply)

- Youth (18-24)
- Adults (25-49)
- Older adult learners (50+)
- Newcomers/immigrants
- Aboriginal learners
- Persons with disabilities
- Other, please specify

For each client group, please estimate the number of clients you serve each year. In addition, please indicate the proportion of your overall clients represented by the target group, so that the proportions total to 100%. For example, if you only serve newcomers, enter 100% for newcomers.

TARGET CLIENT GROUP	ESTIMATED NUMBERS SERVED (ANNUALLY)	PROPORTION OF TOTAL CLIENTS
Youth (18-24)		
Adults (25-49)		
Older adult learners (50+)		
Newcomers/immigrants		
Aboriginal learners		
Persons with disabilities		
Other, please specify		
		100%

If you serve newcomers, what are the main languages spoken? (Check all that apply)

(Drop-down list)

- English
- French
- Chinese
- German
- Spanish
- Punjabi
- Tagalog



- Ukrainian
- Arabic
- Hindi
- Vietnamese
- Polish
- Dutch
- Other, please specify

Do you have eligibility criteria for access to services?

- Yes
- No

*If yes, Please describe the specific criteria for service eligibility.*

PROGRAM/SERVICE NAME	SPECIFIC ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Do you have a waitlist for services?

- Yes
- No

*If yes, Please indicate the average length of time on waitlists.*

PROGRAM/SERVICE NAME	AVERAGE LENGTH OF TIME ON WAITLIST

For each type of educational credential below, please estimate the proportion of clients you serve each year (based on level of education when clients first access your services), so that the proportions total to 100%. For example, if half your clients do not have high school certificates, and the other half have journeyman certificates, enter 50% for no credentials and 50% for journeyman certificates.

TYPE OF CREDENTIAL	ESTIMATED PROPORTION OF TOTAL CLIENTS
No credentials	
High school diploma/GED	
Journeyman certificate (Trades ticket)	
College certificate (usually 1 year or less of study)	
College diploma (usually 2 years of study)	
Undergraduate degree (usually 3-4 years of study)	
Post-graduate certificate	
Master's degree or Doctorate	
Other ( Please specify)	
	<b>100%</b>

**PART 2 – COMMUNITY ADULT LEARNING GAPS AND LINKAGES**

The next set of questions asks about the skill levels of the adult learners you serve, and the availability of programs and services to address adult learner skill needs.

	Level of client skills/knowledge					
<b>Thinking generally about the clients you serve, please rate their overall levels of skills and knowledge in the following areas at the time they complete your program:</b>	<b>Low (1)</b>	<b>(2)</b>	<b>Moderate (3)</b>	<b>(4)</b>	<b>High (5)</b>	<b>DK</b>
Communication and presentation skills						
English language fluency/ ESL						
Interpersonal and teamwork skills						
Customer service skills						
Basic literacy skills (reading)						
Basic literacy skills (writing)						
Numeracy skills						
Basic computer skills						
Information technology skills						
Cross-cultural skills and diversity awareness						
Workplace safety						
Entrepreneurship skills						
Leadership and management skills						
Accounting and financial skills						
Sales skills						
Research and development skills						
Environmental stewardship and awareness						
Job-specific skills						

Do your clients need skills in any other areas to fully participate in the labour market? Please describe. (open-ended)

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Thinking about the community learning assets that exist within the community, please indicate the extent to which you agree that sufficient programs and services are available in specific skill areas.

	Level of agreement about program availability				
<b>There are sufficient programs and services available within the community to address adult learner skill needs in the following areas:</b>	<b>Strongly disagree (1)</b>	<b>(2)</b>	<b>Neither agree nor disagree (3)</b>	<b>(4)</b>	<b>Strongly agree (5)</b>
Communication and presentation skills					
English language fluency/ ESL					
Interpersonal and teamwork skills					
Customer service skills					
Basic literacy skills (reading)					
Basic literacy skills (writing)					
Numeracy skills					
Basic computer skills					
Information technology skills					
Cross-cultural skills and diversity awareness					
Workplace safety					
Entrepreneurship skills					
Leadership and management skills					

Accounting and financial skills					
Sales skills					
Research and development skills					
Environmental stewardship and awareness					
Job-specific skills					

Are there opportunities within the community to enhance or expand adult learning programming in specific skill areas? Please describe.

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Do you partner with other community organizations/groups/agencies to develop or deliver programs and services for adult learners?

- Yes  
 No

*If yes, Please list the specific organizations/groups/agencies you partner with, and the purpose of the partnership.*

PROGRAM/SERVICE PARTNER NAME	PURPOSE OF PARTNERSHIP

Do you refer your clients to other community organizations/groups/agencies for additional adult learning or skills training opportunities after they have completed your program or service?

- Yes  
 No

*If yes, Please list the specific organizations/groups/agencies you refer your clients to, and the approximate number of clients you refer each year.*

PROGRAM/SERVICE REFERRAL	ESTIMATED NUMBER OF REFERRALS (ANNUALLY)

Based on your experience, to what extent do the following barriers below prevent adult learners from pursuing additional adult learning or skills training opportunities?

	Not a barrier (1)	(4)	Somewhat of a barrier (3)	(2)	Significant barrier (5)
Program costs					
Lack of flexibility in class schedules					
Lack of necessary language skills					
Lack of sufficient qualifications or prerequisites					
Lack of a computer at home					
Lack of Internet at home					
Travel time to classes					
Lack of personal transportation					

Parking or transit concerns					
Lack of support for persons with disabilities in the classroom					
Lack of support for cultural diversity in the classroom					
Lack of access to child care					
Workplace responsibilities					
Lack of employer support					
Lack of government financial support					
Lack of programming available locally					
Other, please specify					

We are using a variety of public information sources to create the asset inventory. In addition to information that is publicly available, we are requesting your consent to include the following data collected from this survey. (Please note that some of this data may already be publicly available from other sources.)

	<b>I consent to sharing this information in the asset inventory.</b>	<b>I do NOT consent to sharing this information in the asset inventory.</b>
Name of organization		
Communities served		
Sector		
Main type of program/service		
Number of clients served annually		
Main client groups		
Eligibility criteria		

Thank you for participating in this survey!

Findings from the needs assessment will be shared at a Community Forum on *(date)*, to be held at *(location)* at *(time)* – we hope you can attend!

## Employer Interviews – Invitation to Participate

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am (*position*) at (*name of CCI*). (*Name of CCI*) is working with (*names of NAC partner organizations*) to conduct a community learning needs assessment. I am contacting you on behalf of the committee to invite your participation in an interview about the skill needs of employers within your sector.

The purpose of the needs assessment is to support adult learning and labour market participation by better understanding the educational needs of adult learners in the community and the skill needs of local employers. The assessment will help to identify the learning assets that already exist within the community, and contribute to the development of new education and training programs to address gaps.

We hope that you will participate in a telephone interview, about 15 to 20 minutes in length, to discuss your perceptions of the skills needed by employees in your sector. Please let me know if you would be willing to participate, and the best date and time to reach you. We would like to complete the interviews by (*date*), but have some flexibility to accommodate your availability.

If you agree to an interview, I will send you the questions in advance and one of our volunteers will contact you to schedule a convenient time. The overall findings from the interviews will be shared with the community later in the process. However, your identity will remain confidential, and nothing you say during the interview will be attributed to you personally. Only employer sectors and sizes will be reported, along with findings by theme.

Thank you very much for considering this request. Please feel free to contact me at (*tel.*) or (*email address*) if you have any questions about the community learning needs assessment. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Regards,

## Employer Interviews – Questionnaire

EMPLOYER NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

POSITION: \_\_\_\_\_

BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION: \_\_\_\_\_

COMMUNITY: \_\_\_\_\_

CONTACT: Tel. \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

INTERVIEWER: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you very much for agreeing to participate in this interview! Is this still a convenient time?

I want to let you know that we will be sharing the overall findings from these interviews with the community later in the process. Your identity will remain confidential, and we will only be reporting the sectors and sizes of the employers we spoke with, along with the themes of the comments that were made. Nothing you say during the interview will be attributed to you personally.

*(If audio-recording is used, Also, I would like to audio-record this interview to help me with my notes. Do I have your permission to do that?)*

1. First, could you please tell me your industry or sector: (DO NOT READ)

- Biotechnology, Pharmaceutical or Nutraceuticals
- Business and Professional Services
- Construction and Related Trades
- Educational Services
- Film, Video, Multi-Media, Printing and Publishing
- Health
- Hospitality and Tourism
- Manufacturing
- Natural Resources and Environment
- Public Administration
- Retail and Wholesale
- Social Service and Justice
- Technology
- Transportation, Trucking, Heavy Equipment
- Other, please specify

2. How many people do you employ within the (CCI region)?

3. Do you have other work-sites outside the region?

- Yes
- No

4. *If yes*, What is the total number of employees across all work-sites?

I'd now like to ask you some questions specific to your industry or sector, and its contribution to the regional economy. If you do not feel comfortable responding on behalf of your sector, please think about your own company or firm.

5. Over the next three to five years, do you expect your sector to grow, decline or remain stable?

- Grow
- Decline
- Remain stable
- Don't know

6. What are the factors or trends that are contributing to your sector's growth or decline? (For example, new technologies, regulatory changes, consumer demand, etc.)

7. In the past 12 months, have firms within your sector experienced difficulties hiring qualified staff?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

*If yes*, What are the main reasons for the hiring difficulties? (DO NOT READ)

- High number of retiring employees
- Workers leaving to other communities
- Sector growth and expansion
- Wages too low
- Unattractive working conditions
- Unable to find workers with the right skills
- Other

8. Over the next five years, which specific occupations within your sector will face the greatest hiring challenges?

9. What are the entry-level education requirements for each of these high demand occupations?

OCCUPATION	EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS
1.	
2.	
3.	

10. What are the specific skills most often lacking for each of these high demand occupations?

OCCUPATION	SKILLS NEEDED
1.	
2.	
3.	

11. On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means you strongly disagree and 5 means you strongly agree with the statement, please rate the following statement:

Issues related to human resources are a major challenge for my sector or industry

Strongly disagree (1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	Strongly agree (5)
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12. I'm going to read you a list of skill areas in which training could be provided to current employees within your sector. Using a scale of 1 to 5 (where 1 is not at all important and 5 is very important), please rate the importance of training in these areas to develop your sector's workforce.

	Not at all important (1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	Very important (5)
Communication and presentation skills					
English language fluency/ ESL					
Interpersonal and teamwork skills					
Customer service skills					
Basic literacy skills (reading)					
Basic literacy skills (writing)					
Numeracy skills					
Basic computer skills					
Information technology skills					
Cross-cultural skills and diversity awareness					
Workplace safety					
Entrepreneurship skills					
Leadership and management skills					
Accounting and financial skills					
Sales skills					
Research and development skills					
Environmental stewardship and awareness					
Job-specific skills					

13. Is there any other training that you feel is important to develop current workforce skills within your sector? Please describe.

14. What kind of workplace training for employees is preferred by employers within your sector?

- Online/internet-based
- Correspondence distance learning
- Videoconference courses
- Classroom instruction in the community
- Classroom instruction at a post-secondary institution
- Combination of classroom and online

15. Does your firm currently work with an external education and training provider to deliver training to your employees?

- Yes
- No



16. If you required workplace training opportunities for your current employees, which adult learning providers would you contact? Why?

**Thank you very much for your time!**

Findings from the needs assessment will be shared at a Community Forum on *(date)*, to be held at *(location)* at *(time)* – we hope you can attend!

## Prospective Learner Focus Groups – Recruitment Email

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am (*position*) at (*name of CCI*). (*Name of CCI*) is working with (*names of NAC partner organizations*) to conduct a community learning needs assessment.

The purpose of the needs assessment is to support adult learning and labour market participation by better understanding the educational needs of adult learners in the community and the skill needs of local employers. The assessment will help to identify the learning assets that already exist within the community, and contribute to the development of new education and training programs to address gaps.

We would like to hold a focus group with adults who have not participated in Campus Alberta learning programs, and hope that you will be willing to assist us with the recruitment of focus group participants.

We are seeking 8-12 people who meet the following criteria:

- Has not taken any Campus Alberta courses
- *Any other specific criteria of interest*

The focus group will be held at (*location*) at (*time*) on (*date*). A light supper will be served, and we will also provide (*specify incentive*) to acknowledge participants for their time and to thank them for participating. If you are aware of any clients who meet the criteria, please ask them to contact (*name*) at (*tel.*) or (*email address*).

Thank you very much for considering this request. Please feel free to contact me at (*tel.*) or (*email address*) if you have any questions about the community learning needs assessment. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Regards,

## Prospective Learner Focus Groups – Tip Sheet

The embedded spreadsheet can assist with focus group recruiting and confirmations.



Focus Group  
Tracking Sheet.xlsx

### BEFORE

- Make a list of people you would like to attend (8 to 10 people is ideal, but you should confirm 12 participants in case of last minute cancellations).
- Select a mix of people who have not participated in Campus Alberta programs, across genders, age, region.
- Decide on a date, location and time (make sure the facility has seating so people can make eye contact with everyone).
- Two weeks before, phone and invite participants using the focus group tracking sheet .
- Send an e-mail to confirmed participants stating the purpose, logistics and your contact information.
- The day before the group, call to remind participants about the group.
- Arrange for BOTH a facilitator and a note taker.
- Purchase name labels to provide for participants, and bring markers.
- Order refreshments.
- Purchase honoraria.

### DURING

- Establish an atmosphere where people are comfortable.
- Seat participants around a table to enable everyone to see each other.
- Go over housekeeping details (eg. washrooms, breaks, refreshments).
- Review the purpose of the meeting.
- Try to stay on target and follow the agenda, but allow flexibility for new information to be brought forward.
- Encourage everyone to participate and try to prevent one or two people from dominating the discussion.
- Give a careful verbal summary of what you heard after each question is answered (the note taker may also do this).
- Move on when things become unproductive.

### AFTER

- Record meeting notes as soon as possible following the session, jotting down any additional ideas and observations.

## Prospective Learner Focus Groups – Discussion Guide

### WELCOME AND REFRESHMENTS (15 MIN)

- Give participants name tags, and ask them to write their first name only.
- Ask participants to complete the sign-in sheet.
- Invite participants to help themselves to food and beverages.
- Let them know that the group will start in approximately 15 minutes.

### GROUND RULES (5 MIN)

- Thank you for attending!
- CCI is working with community partners to better understand adult learning needs within the community
  - Focus group is one of the activities that is being conducted
  - Focus group will last about an hour and a half
- Participation is voluntary - you may leave at any time and you can decide not to participate in any part of the discussion
- Location of washrooms
- Refreshments/snacks available
- Session is being audio-recorded to help keep track of what was said
- Participants will remain anonymous – no names will be attached to any comments that are made
- No right or wrong answers – want to hear everyone’s opinions
- Respectful disagreement
- There is a lot to cover and we may have to move things along
- Everyone is encouraged to participate
- Remember to have fun!
- Questions?

### INTRODUCTIONS (5 MIN)

- Please tell us if you are working, not working, or retired  
*AND*
- Have you ever taken any programs or courses since you left high school?

### POTENTIAL PROGRAMS/COURSES (60 min)

1. If you were going to attend an adult learning program, what kinds of topics or activities would interest you the most?
2. Adult learners within the community can choose from credit course that eventually lead to a certificate or credential, or from non-credit courses that develop specific skills.
  - a. What do you think motivates some adults to choose credit courses?
  - b. What are some of the reasons that adult learners would choose non-credit courses?
3. When programs for adult learners are being developed, what kind of things should the people developing the programs keep in mind? (*Probe for costs, length, time of day, course materials, online options, etc.*)

4. How important is location? (*Probe for distance from home, specific venue, etc.*)
5. Why do you think that some adults don't attend courses that are available, even when they are interested in the topic?
6. What supports or services do you think would make it easier for people to participate in adult learning? (*Probe for travel, childcare, financial assistance, etc.*)
7. What are the best ways to advertise adult learning programs in this community?
8. What specific information do people need to know to help decide whether to participate in adult learning?
9. At the beginning, some of you indicated that you had taken programs or courses after you left high school. What aspects of the courses or programs did you like best? Why? What did you like least? Why?
10. Does anyone have any other comments to make before we wrap up?

**WRAP UP (5 min)**

- Thank you very much for your time!
- Interesting for me
- Hope you enjoyed sharing your thoughts
- Findings from the needs assessment will be shared at a Community Forum on (*date*), to be held at (*location*) at (*time*) – hope you can attend!
- Please accept this token of appreciation for your time

## Community Forum – Moderator’s Guide

### ROOM SET-UP AND MATERIALS

- Room set up with small tables (five or six to a table)
- Note paper/pens provided on each table
- Flip chart with markers at front of room
- Tape and wall space for hanging flip chart paper
- Coloured dots for participants (10-15 each)
- Door prize draw jar

### WELCOME AND REFRESHMENTS (15 MIN)

- Ask participants to complete the sign-in sheet with email address – enter draw for door prizes
- Provide participants with copies of the community learning profile and asset summary table
- Provide participants with 10-15 coloured dots for prioritization exercise
- Invite participants to help themselves to food and beverages
- Group will start in approximately 15 minutes

### GROUND RULES (5 MIN)

- Thank you for attending!
- CCI has been working with community partners to better understand adult learning needs within the community
- Purpose of the community forum is to:
  - Report back to the community on key findings and issues
  - Do a final check on our interpretation of research findings
  - Facilitate a community discussion of the implications of findings for the delivery of adult learning programs
- Forum will last about two and a half hours
- Location of washrooms
- Break midway – door prizes will be drawn during the break and at the end of the session
- Each table should designate a recorder with legible hand-writing - notes will be collected at end of session

### POWERPOINT PRESENTATION (20 MIN)

1. Welcome and overview of the session
2. Review needs assessment process and participants
  - Community learning profile
  - Asset inventory
  - Interviews with key informants
  - Online service provider survey
  - Employer interviews
  - Focus groups with prospective learners
3. Presentation of key findings and issues
  - Key community demographics
  - Profile of adult learners
  - Community learning assets
  - Local labour market needs
  - Possible solutions

### **SMALL GROUPS – COMMUNITY LEARNING ASSET MAP (20 MIN)**

- Are any community resources missing from the asset map?
- Are there any other enabling or barrier factors to use of the assets?
- Where are the gaps in services?

### **REPORTING OUT (3 ideas per table) (10 MIN)**

### **BREAK AND DOOR PRIZE DRAWS (15 MIN)**

### **SMALL GROUPS – LINKAGES AND SOLUTIONS (20 MIN)**

- How can the barriers be overcome?
- How can assets be linked and leveraged to address gaps?
- What are some other possible solutions/programs/activities to increase participation in adult learning and the labour market?

### **REPORTING OUT (3 ideas per table) (10 MIN) (Facilitator to record potential solutions on flip chart paper and display on walls around room)**

### **PLENARY – PRIORITIZING SOLUTIONS (20 MIN)**

- Were there any other solutions discussed at the tables that are not yet recorded on the flip chart paper? (*Facilitator to record on flip chart paper*)
- Please use your coloured dots to indicate the solutions you think should be the highest priorities for this community. You can put all your dots on one solution, or divide your dots across several solutions.

### **WRAP UP AND DOOR PRIZE DRAWS (5 min)**

- Thank you very much for your time!
- Hope you enjoyed sharing your thoughts
- Make sure all note-takers turn in their notes
- Input received will be incorporated into the final report available in (*month*)
- Report will be emailed to all participants
- Final door prize draws

## Prioritization Matrix

The following steps outline the procedure for using a prioritization matrix to prioritize community adult learning needs.

- 1. Develop criteria to assess the needs** – The NAC should meet to decide the criteria that will be used to assess the identified needs. For example, the following criteria could be identified: impacts regional economic priorities, identified by two or more groups, and cannot be addressed by leveraging existing assets.
- 2. Create a matrix** – List all identified community adult learning needs vertically down the left hand column of the matrix and all the criteria horizontally across the top of the matrix. Each row will represent a potential solution, and each column will represent a criterion. Include an additional column for the priority score.
- 3. Rate each solution against specified criteria** – Fill in cells of the matrix by rating each need against each criterion. The rating scale can be as simple as: 3 = criterion fully met, 2 = criterion met, 1 = criterion not met.
- 4. Weight the criteria** – If each criterion has a differing level of importance, weights can be assigned to reflect the variations in importance. For example, if Criterion 1 is twice as important as Criterion 2 and Criterion 3, the weight of Criterion 1 could be 1 and the weight of Criterion 2 and Criterion 3 could be 0.5. Multiply the rating established in Step 2 with the weight of the criteria in each cell of the matrix. If the chosen criteria all have an equal level of importance, this step can be skipped.
- 5. Calculate priority scores** – Once the cells of the matrix have been filled, calculate the final priority score for each adult learning need by adding the scores across the row.

### WITHOUT WEIGHTED CRITERIA

	Criterion 1	Criterion 2	Criterion 3	Criterion 4	Average Rating
Need 1					
Need 2					
Need 3					
Need 4					

### WITH WEIGHTED CRITERIA

	Criterion 1	Criterion 2	Criterion 3	Criterion 4	Sum of weighted ratings
	Weight = 2	Weight = 0.5	Weight = 1	Weight = 1	
Need 1					
Need 2					
Need 3					
Need 4					



## Community Learning Needs Assessment Report Outline

### Introduction and Background

- Timeframe over which the needs assessment took place
- Members of NAC
- Geographic boundaries of needs assessment
- Key community demographics (from Community Learning Profile)

### Methodology

- Overall process
- Description of data collection methods
  - Sampling strategy
  - Administration procedures
  - Respondent profile (number of participants, characteristics)

### Key Findings

- Profile of Adult Learners
  - Characteristics of adult learners from Community Learning Profile
  - Intake data and focus group findings on learner interests
- Community Learning Assets
  - Summary of asset inventory
  - Enabling and barrier factors to use of assets, including perceptions of barriers from online service provider survey, barriers and preferred supports from focus groups
  - Linkages/partnerships across assets
  - Gaps
- Local Labour Market Needs
  - Summary of labour market data from Community Learning Profile
  - Skill areas with low client skills and low program availability
  - Skill shortage occupations and employer needs by sector
  - Training needs of current employees

### Recommendations for Program Planning

- Possible solutions identified in key informant and employer interviews, community forum
- Recommended solutions and rationale

# Selected Resources

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