



Nova Scotia Workplace Education Guide for Project Teams

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Contents

Is a Workplace Education program for you?	2
Getting started	3
What is Workplace Education?	3
Characteristics.....	3
Benefits.....	4
Sample topics.....	4
Reading skills.....	4
Document skills.....	4
Communication skills	4
Computer skills	5
Math skills	5
Skills for small business.....	5
Academic upgrading.....	5
Six steps to a successful program	6
Step 1: Set up a project team	7
Role of the Workplace Education coordinator	7
Role of the project team.....	8
Step 2: Assess the needs	9
Methods.....	9
Scope	9
Tips for communicating with workers	10
Sample letter of invitation.....	11
Sample survey/sign-up sheet.....	12
Step 3: Set goals	13
Step 4: Hire the instructor and deliver the program	14
The selection committee	14
Instructor’s job description	15
Sample interview questions and rating form	16
Sample contract.....	18
Orientation and support for the instructor.....	19
Individual needs assessments (INAs) for the instructor.....	19
Instructor’s guide	19
Step 5. Evaluate the program	20
Step 6. Celebrate success	21



Glades Lodge Long Term Care Center

Is a Workplace Education program for you?

Do this quick scan

	Yes	No
1. Do people in your organization need any of the following skills to do their jobs well?		
Math	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reading	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Writing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Speaking and listening	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Using a computer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Using forms, manuals, and other documents	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Finding information	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Resolving conflict	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Making decisions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Planning work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Thinking critically	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Solving problems	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Have there been changes in your workplace?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Do the changes require more workplace skills?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Has new technology been introduced in your workplace?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Do people resist new opportunities because they lack certain skills?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Would the right training help your business thrive?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If you answered **YES** to any of these questions, then a Workplace Education program may benefit your organization. Contact the Department of Labour and Advanced Education for more information.

www.nsworkplaceeducation.ca



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Getting started

This guide describes how to start and run a Workplace Education program in your organization. Use it to help your project team get organized, hire an instructor, and deliver a successful program.

The guide has been prepared by Nova Scotia's Department of Labour and Advanced Education. It is available online at www.nsworkplaceeducation.ca.

We would like to thank the many people who have helped to develop editions of this guide over the years—especially our partners, the Association of Workplace Educators of Nova Scotia (AWENS) and the Nova Scotia Partners for Workplace Education.

What is Workplace Education?

Workplace Education is a partnership involving your organization and the Nova Scotia government. Representatives from all levels of your organization form a project team to plan and carry out the program, with the help of a Workplace Education coordinator. The Workplace Education Initiative provides

- a Workplace Education coordinator
- funds for planning and program instruction
- multiple programs for a single workplace, depending on your needs

Your organization contributes time, space, commitment, and materials for the program, and may pay for some expenses.

To see a four-page brochure describing the Workplace Education Initiative, go to www.nsworkplaceeducation.ca.



Characteristics

These are some of the key characteristics of Workplace Education:

- The focus is on developing essential skills, such as math, reading, writing, speaking and listening, and critical thinking.*
- The content is tailored to the needs of the participants and the workplace.
- All interest groups are represented in the planning and implementation of the program, including management, the union, and workers.
- All employees have access to the program. Participation is voluntary.
- Each program has clear, measurable goals.
- Participants evaluate the process—both during and after the program.
- Each person's progress and results are confidential.
- Classes are small, with 7 to 12 workers in each program.
- Classes are usually held at the workplace during the workday.
- Programs can range in length from 40 to 120 instructional hours, delivered in 2- to 4-hour sessions, continuing over several weeks or months.
- The training is delivered by qualified and experienced instructors.

* Essential skills are the skills you need for work, learning, and life. They enable you to grow with your job and adapt to changes in the workplace. Find out more at www.rhdcc-hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/workplaceskills/essential_skills/general/understanding_es.shtml

Benefits

Workplace Education benefits the employer, the worker, and the union. These are some of the key benefits you can anticipate from a program:

- Build confidence and morale.
- Increase productivity.
- Improve communication and teamwork.
- Reduce staff turnaround.
- Strengthen management/labour relations.
- Improve health and safety.
- Manage change and help people to adapt.

Sample topics

Following are examples of skills that might be included in your program. Remember that each program will be tailored to the needs of the employees and the workplace.

Reading skills

Learn simple and effective ways to

- read faster
- understand what you read
- find the most important points
- remember details

and more.

Document skills

Discover better ways to use documents at work. This might include

- interpreting graphs, illustrations, and tables
- finding answers in manuals and quick reference guides
- completing forms

and more.

Communication skills

Learn ways to communicate more effectively with team members, customers, suppliers, and others.

Topics might include

- speaking and listening
- clear writing
- effective meetings
- effective supervision
- effective presentations
- team building
- problem solving and decision making
- conflict management
- customer service

Computer skills

Make the most of the computer hardware and software in your workplace. Topics might include

- using spreadsheets and other accounting tools
- designing better documents
- sharing documents

and more.

Math skills

Build confidence and improve accuracy. Topics might include

- measuring
- estimating
- metric conversion
- money math

and more.

Skills for small business

A program for small businesses might include a combination of skills, such as

- marketing
- money math
- business writing
- information management
- computer skills
- customer service

Academic upgrading

Academic upgrading programs generally focus on reading, writing, numeracy, and problem solving.

Participants become re-accustomed to working in a classroom and more confident about taking tests.

Participants might take this opportunity to work towards a specific goal. For example:

- Workers who have not completed high school might focus on essential skills to help them pass the General Educational Development (GED) tests. GED is nationally recognized as the equivalent to a high school diploma.
- Workers who have finished high school might want to refresh their basic skills and learn more advanced skills—for example, to prepare for a certification program or studies at the college level.

Six steps to a successful program

1. Set up a project team to oversee the Workplace Education program.
2. Do a needs assessment to learn more about the issues and challenges in your workplace. Your Workplace Education coordinator will lead the process.
3. Set goals and create a plan to achieve them.
4. Hire an instructor to deliver the program. The instructor will tailor the program to meet the specific needs of the workplace and employees.
5. Evaluate the program.
6. Celebrate success.

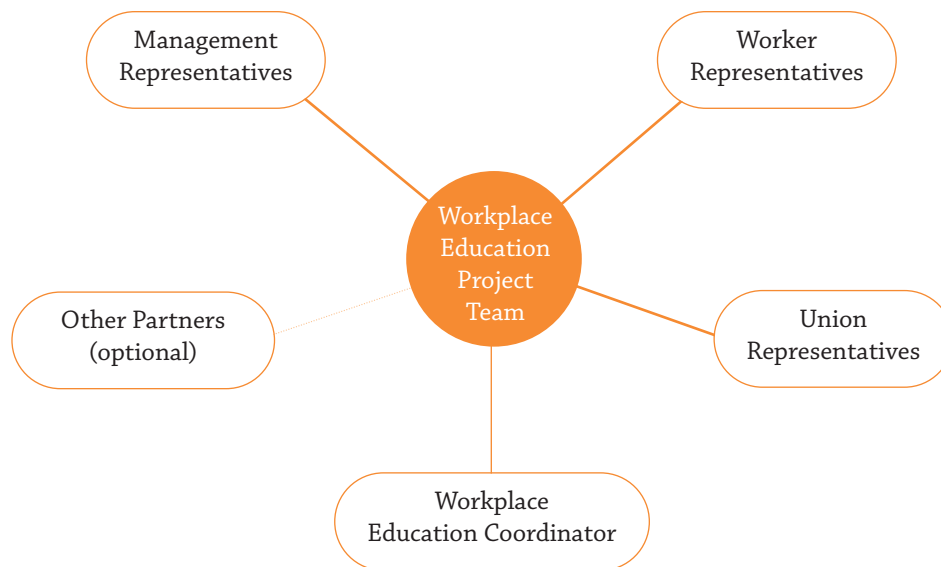
(Adapted from www.nsworkplaceeducation.ca/skills-of-my-employees/what-is-workplace-education/documents/2040_SD_WE_factsheetcolour.pdf)

Step 1: Set up a project team

The project team is a coalition of interest groups. It includes management representatives, worker representatives, and union representatives if there is a union. Your team might also choose to involve other groups—for example, an industry organization or a community group.

Diversity and commitment are two of your team's greatest assets. A diverse team can

- Increase support and commitment to change.
- Help everyone to see the big picture.
- Encourage ownership of the Workplace Education program.
- Advocate for organizational and individual goals.
- Share skills and expertise.
- Improve lines of communication within the workplace.



Role of the Workplace Education coordinator

Your Workplace Education coordinator will help you set up the project team and will participate as a team member. The coordinator will also do the following:

- Lead the initial needs assessment, or arrange for a consultant to do the assessment.
- Help you to apply for funding.
- Help you to hire an instructor.
- Provide ongoing support to your team and to the instructor.
- Help to prepare interim and final reports.

Role of the project team

The project team will

- Work with senior management and union officials to gauge interest and get approval for the Workplace Education program.
- Arrange information sharing sessions involving interested groups and the Workplace Education coordinator.
- Support the needs assessment process by
 - informing workers about the process
 - setting up interviews and focus groups
 - identifying barriers to involvement
 - reviewing the needs assessment report
- Set goals and priorities, based on the results of the needs assessment.
- Apply for funding.
- Hire and support the instructor.
- Promote the Workplace Education program and recruit participants.
- Meet regularly to ensure the following:
 - The program is on schedule and on track to achieve the goals.
 - The program complies with company policies and procedures.
- Complete an interim and final evaluation.
- Celebrate the success of participants who complete the program.

Step 2: Assess the needs

The Workplace Education coordinator, or a consultant hired by the coordinator, leads the needs assessment. This step is sometimes called an organizational needs assessment (ONA) to distinguish it from the individual needs assessments that the instructor does in step 4. The organizational needs assessment lays the essential groundwork for a successful Workplace Education program. The result is a report that documents the educational needs and goals of management, labour groups, and workers, along with recommendations about how to meet those needs.

Methods

Typically, the coordinator or consultant gathers information from 15 to 20 per cent of the employees, including workers and management. The information may be gathered in some or all of the following ways:

- face-to-face interviews
- meetings
- separate focus groups for managers, staff, and union representatives
- surveys
- workplace tours

It is important to assure participants about the following:

- Participation is voluntary.
- All information is strictly confidential. The assessment report will not identify the workers who participated in interviews, focus groups, or surveys.
- Interviews and focus groups will be conducted by the Workplace Education coordinator or consultant. Each session will take approximately 45 to 60 minutes. The sessions will be informal and require only verbal responses from participants.

Scope

Topics might include

- training practices in the workplace
- attitudes about training and learning
- essential skills that workers need to do their jobs
- essential skills that workers need for personal and professional growth
- strengths and weaknesses of communication in the workplace
- barriers to participation in Workplace Education
- recommendations about the types of programs that would benefit workers and the organization, and about preferred locations and scheduling

Tips for communicating with workers

- Management and the union should jointly endorse all information communicated to workers.
- Whenever possible, representatives from the project team should attend presentations made to workers.
- Include the names of all project team members on printed materials so that workers can choose who to contact with questions or to sign up for a program.
- Consider setting up an information table in a convenient location to make it easier for workers to find out about the program.
- Present information in a clear, memorable, and inviting way.
- Use a variety of methods to communicate with workers, including word of mouth, print, and e-mail.

Word-of-mouth communications might include the following:

- informal conversations
- announcements at regularly scheduled meetings of department heads, shop stewards, committees, and other groups
- information sessions arranged specifically to tell workers about the Workplace Education Initiative.

Print communications might include the following:

- a letter of invitation to participate in the needs assessment (see the Sample Letter of Invitation, below)
- posters and bulletin-board notices
- an article in the company or union newsletter
- a brochure or information page that workers can pick up in the lunchroom or other area.

E-mail might include a letter of invitation or notices about the Workplace Education Initiative.

Sample letter of invitation

[your letterhead]

[Date]

To All Employees:

We invite you to take part in a needs assessment that the Workplace Education project team is conducting. The project team is made up of workers, union, management, and a representative from the Department of Labour and Advanced Education.

This team, with the support of our union, will be asking workers about the skills and training they think people need to succeed at work, at home, and in the community.

The focus will be on reading, writing, math, computer skills, and oral communication for all workers.

We will be looking for workers to share their thoughts and opinions during the week of _____. We will be meeting [privately / in small groups] with interested workers. Your participation is voluntary and completely confidential.

If you would like to participate, or if you want more information, please contact [name]_____ by [date]_____.

Thank you.

Adapted from ABC Canada, *Collaborative Needs Assessment*, by Sue Folinsbee and Paul Jurmo, 1994.

Sample survey/sign-up sheet

[your letterhead]

Please take time to fill out this survey. The Workplace Education Project Team would like your input about the skills you need to participate at work and in the community.

I would like to improve these skills (check all that apply):

- Reading (for example, reading forms and manuals at work)
- Writing (for example, completing forms or writing letters)
- Math (for work or for a certification program)
- Using documents (for example, completing forms or finding information in manuals)
- Oral communication (for example, leading or participating in meetings, or giving clear instructions)
- Thinking (for example, planning tasks or solving problems)
- Using a computer (for example, using technology to enter information or to print forms)
- Working with others (for example, working as a partner or as a team member to do tasks)
- Other skills (please list them below)

Name (optional): _____

Department: _____

Step 3: Set goals

Each member of the project team will have ideas about what the Workplace Education program should achieve. Writing goals can bring all the different opinions together. Goals will focus the team's attention on common, agreed-upon ways to meet the needs identified in the organizational needs assessment.

For example, based on the needs assessment, the project team might decide on the following goals and objectives.

Goal: Develop a learning culture within the organization

Objectives:

- Offer workplace training programs to all employees.
- Customize the training to the workplace.
- Ensure training time is flexible so that all employees can attend.
- Promote the program through regular postings and at all department meetings.

Goal: Evaluate the effectiveness of the Workplace Education program

Objectives:

- Complete all program evaluation forms.
- Carry out focus groups and informal interviews immediately following the program and six months after the program is completed.
- Complete an annual review of workplace programs with all departments in the organization.
- Develop a database to record successes and quantify results.

Clear goals guide the team in hiring and orienting the instruction (step 4). They also lay the groundwork for evaluating the program (step 5).

Step 4: Hire the instructor and deliver the program

Before hiring the instructor, the project team completes and submits a funding application through the province's online Labour Market Programs Support System (LaMPSS). The Workplace Education coordinator will guide you through the application process.

The selection committee

The project team creates a selection committee to handle the hiring process. We recommend that your selection committee be made up of at least four members. For example, the selection committee might include

- the Workplace Education coordinator
- a management representative
- a union representative
- a potential participant

The potential participant can help to gauge the rapport an instructor may have with other workers who will take the program. The Workplace Education Coordinator provides input but should not have a decision-making role.

Project team members may know instructors who could be included in the competition. The Workplace Education coordinator can help the team by providing the resumes of qualified adult educators who have experience teaching in a workplace context.

The selection committee will interview potential instructors and recommend which one to hire. The final hiring decision belongs to the project team.

This guide includes the following tools to help you with the hiring process:

- instructor's job description
- sample interview questions and rating form
- sample contract

Instructor's job description

Scope of work

Instructors develop customized curriculum and instruct adults in essential skills for the workplace. Programs are delivered onsite to workers. The programs may include workplace-related skills in communications, reading, writing, math, critical thinking, problem solving, and other essential skills determined by the organizational needs assessment (ONA).

Responsibilities

Initial program planning

- Study the ONA report
- Tour the workplace and meet supervisors and workers
- Gather and review workplace print materials to be used in the course
- Help to develop or refine the program goals and objectives
- Help to promote the program and recruit participants

Curriculum development

- Assess learners' needs and areas of interest, as well as individual goals
- Incorporate relevant workplace materials and situations
- Adapt materials from other sources, such as resource libraries

Program implementation

- Work for and with the project team throughout the program
- Evaluate, record, and report student progress
- Evaluate and report on the success of the program
- Check progress against organizational and individual goals and objectives throughout the program
- Help with the closing ceremonies

Qualifications

- University degree or equivalent combination of education and experience
- Understanding of adult education principles and the needs of adult learners
- Experience instructing in an adult education program
- Flexible schedule to meet workplace needs

Payment

- The contract includes both administrative and program delivery time.
- Pay is administered by the participating workplace, not by the Department of Labour and Advanced Education.

Sample interview questions and rating form

	Weight	Rating
<p>Knowledge and Experience (20 points)</p> <p>1. Outline your teaching experience related to this position.</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>2. The courses you will be teaching involve the following areas. How confident are you in these areas?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications skills • Mathematics • Computers • Writing • Problem solving <p>Total value:</p> <hr/>		
<p>Methodology (30 points)</p> <p>3. As an instructor in a workplace education program, what kinds of information would you gather (and how) to customize the program to the needs of the workplace?</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>4. What methods would you use with learners to improve their essential skills in this particular program?</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>Total value:</p> <hr/>		
<p>Evaluation Skills (15 points)</p> <p>5. How would you evaluate and document learner progress?</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>Total value:</p> <hr/>		

Sample contract

Between

_____ Project Team and
_____ Instructor

Terms and Conditions

The project team agrees to pay the instructor the sum of ____ per hour for a total of ____ hours.

This includes _____ hours of instruction plus additional hours for individual needs assessments, evaluations, orientation, attendance at project team meetings, and the closing ceremony.

The total amount paid to the instructor will be \$ _____, which will be paid in a manner agreed upon by both the instructor and the project team. The amount will be paid in two (2) equal instalments; one at the halfway point of the program and one upon program completion.

The instructor will

- Deliver a program customized to the needs of participants and the workplace, following good practices of adult education and the Workplace Education model.
- Consult with the project team, the Department of Labour and Advanced Education, and workplace representatives, as required.
- Comply with all reasonable instructions given by the project team.
- Agree that any materials developed as a result of this agreement will become and remain the exclusive property of the Nova Scotia Department of Labour and Advanced Education.
- Agree that this contract does not include group benefits, pension plan membership, or medical or dental coverage.
- Ensure that all forms are completed as required by the Department of Labour and Advanced Education.
- Maintain an ethical, positive relationship with learners, the workplace and the project team, and the Department of Labour and Advanced Education.
- Hold in confidence information regarding student progress.

General

This agreement can be severed by either party upon two weeks notice, without cause or liability.

This agreement is not transferable without the consent of the workplace and the project team, and the Department of Labour and Advanced Education.

[date]

Instructor

Witness

Project Team Member

Orientation and support for the instructor

Once the instructor is hired, it is important to provide the person with a strong orientation to the workplace.

The project team should ensure that the instructor

- has a copy of the ONA report
- is aware of the program goals
- signs the contract before starting the program
- develops an understanding of the workplace by
 - touring the workplace
 - attending project team meetings
 - reading workplace literature and observing jobs
 - talking to key people

The instructor needs help from the project team to

- collect potential learning materials, such as workplace forms, documents, and general print materials
- learn about relevant issues, such as safety requirements or the introduction of new technology

The more an instructor is able to customize class sessions to the real learning needs of the individual and the work site, the more likely it is that workers will be able to learn and apply their enhanced skills.

Individual needs assessments (INAs) for the instructor

The instructor conducts an individual needs assessment with each worker to talk about learning goals and needs. The assessment generally takes one hour. It is a relaxed and informal process.

The assessment may include sample learning activities so that the instructor can measure the skill level of each worker. To reduce anxiety and fear, the assessment could take place in the context of a whole class.

The assessment occurs onsite in a suitable location. The location should be quiet, confidential, and preferably not the office of a supervisor or upper management personnel.

Instructor's guide

The Workplace Education coordinator will give the instructor an Instructor's Guide. The project team may have a copy of this guide, as well.

Step 5. Evaluate the program

The project team works with the instructor to prepare an evaluation plan. The plan includes

- continual monitoring to ensure the program is on schedule and to respond to concerns as they arise
- regular meetings to review progress
- a follow-up evaluation with all groups involved in the program
- a written summary and supporting documentation. The summary describes the results of the program, and gives both short-term and long-term recommendations on how to continue to provide essential skills training in the workplace.

Evaluation involves informal methods, such as discussions and check-ins with participants, and formal methods, such as forms and structured questions.

The Instructor's Guide includes a template that you can use to create your evaluation plan. It also includes sample forms. Your Workplace Education coordinator will give you the Instructor's Guide and evaluation forms.

It is part of the instructor's contract to give evaluation forms to the participants, compile the information, and report the results and recommendations to the project team.

The evaluation results offer concrete evidence of what worked and what didn't work. This evidence helps partners to grow in confidence. It inspires them to set higher goals. It also provides a solid foundation upon which to build plans for the future.

Step 6. Celebrate success

The participants in a Workplace Education program work hard to learn new skills. They deserve recognition for what they contributed to the program, what they learned, and how they are using their skills on the job. By taking the time to celebrate success, you reinforce the message that your organization values learning and teamwork.

The Workplace Education coordinator will provide a printed certificate for each participant who completes the program. The project team might want to host an awards ceremony to present these certificates, along with other tokens of appreciation. Take this opportunity to share stories, enjoy some food, and give and receive thanks.

Here are some other ways you might celebrate the success of your program:

- Send a letter of thanks from senior management to each participant.
- Print an article in the company newsletter.
- Post a “congratulations” sign in the lunchroom or other place where staff meet.
- Share news of your program with other organizations in your community and your business sector.

Congratulations to these workplace winners

Several Nova Scotia businesses have received awards from the Conference Board of Canada for their Workplace Education programs. A former Workplace Education learner, Kevin Landry, is now Chair of the Nova Scotia Partners for Workplace Education, and has won the Dr Alan Middleton award for Workplace Literacy, from ABC Life Literacy, Canada. Be inspired by these accomplishments and consider how your success might inspire others, as well.

www.nsworkplaceeducation.ca

